DIVERGING WILSONIANISMS:

LIBERAL INTERNATIONALISM, THE PEACE MOVEMENT, AND THE AMBIGUOUS LEGACY OF WOODROW WILSON

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Abstract

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Wilsonian liberal internationalism has provided a consistent, sustaining ideological basis for U.S. foreign policy since America’s entry into the First World War. Since Woodrow Wilson’s day, however, the credo he originated has undergone several substantial reformulations in response to changing circumstances—reformulations that necessarily involved successive reinterpretations of those precepts that comprise the credo: the imminent threat to international order; democratic self-determination, collective security, an integrated world economic system, and American exceptionalism. Through an historical study of liberal internationalists from the American peace movement, the organizations they created, and the political leaders they sought to influence, the origins, divergent evolution, and demise of alternative Wilsonian systems can be understood.

Between 1917 and 1968, internationalists in the American peace movement significantly shaped an ongoing process of formulating and reformulating Wilsonian ideals, variously cooperating with dominant policy-making elites or promoting alternative Wilsonian foreign policy prescriptions as they did so. The overall picture, then, is one of
contending internationalist elites that can trace their intellectual roots back to Wilson, even as they clashed over the ultimate meaning of his legacy.

Liberal internationalism originated as a response to World War I. In conjunction with internationalists from the peace movement, Wilson formulated and promoted the first iteration of Wilsonianism—and, in a number of ways, planted the seeds of future conflict over its interpretation. That conflict would arise only in the second half of the twentieth century, however, with the emergence of two subsequent reformulations of Wilson’s ideals. The first of these was a progressive Rooseveltian interpretation that emerged in the years just before and during World War II. The second, a more conservative interpretation, came together in the late nineteen forties and fifties in response to the Cold War. Devotees of these two diverging Wilsonianisms clashed with one another, although the Cold War Consensus prevailed—at least until Vietnam. The war brought on the demise of the Consensus, but its unsuspected fragility in the nineteen sixties was itself, at least in part, a result of the continued influence of the Rooseveltian worldview.
Introduction

Wilson’s Ghost

“The ghost of Woodrow Wilson walks again,” declared Lawrence F. Kaplan, senior editor of The New Republic, in the editorial pages of The Wall Street Journal in March of 2003. A new war between the United States and the regime of Saddam Hussein was then imminent, and President George W. Bush had, according to Kaplan, committed the country to exporting democracy—“remaking the world in America’s image,” in fact—“beginning with Iraq.”¹ The following September, popular historian Thomas Fleming also glimpsed Wilson’s restless, disembodied spirit in unfolding events in the Middle East. In an article for the online History News Network entitled “What We’re Grappling with in Iraq Is Woodrow Wilson’s Legacy,” Fleming, who had just published a book highly critical of American participation in the First World War, had a somewhat more ambivalent perspective on Wilson’s influence than that expressed earlier by Kaplan. Instead of highlighting the advance of democracy, Fleming referred back to the work of Lloyd C. Garner in associating Wilson’s foreign policy with the origins of an American “covenant with power”—with all the opportunities, ambiguities, and pitfalls that ascendance to great power status necessarily entailed.² Interestingly, despite their very different perspectives on Woodrow Wilson otherwise, these two contemporary observers seemingly had no trouble discerning his impact on contemporary U.S. foreign affairs. They had arrived at the same general conclusion as to the power and pervasiveness of

Wilson’s influence, although they obviously disagreed about what the nature of that influence was exactly.

Neither Kaplan nor Fleming was mistaken regarding Wilson’s centrality. Indeed, it was Woodrow Wilson who articulated and codified the earliest intellectual foundations of modern American liberal internationalism, a credo that decisively influenced the formulation of American foreign policy through much of the twentieth century and beyond. Even such a well-known practitioner and champion of foreign policy “realism,” or realpolitik, as Henry Kissinger ultimately had to concede—perhaps grudgingly—that it has been to “the drumbeat of Wilsonian idealism that American foreign policy has marched since his watershed presidency, and continues to march to this day.”\(^3\) But that still leaves us with unresolved issues: what, precisely, is the nature of Wilson’s influence? In other words, what, in the end, does Wilsonianism really mean? And how has the influence of Wilsonian ideas been perpetuated over the many decades that have elapsed since Wilson’s two historic terms as president?

At its heart, the following study is an attempt to resolve those questions. On a very basic level, it addresses the general subject of ideology and the creation of American foreign policy. Michael Hunt usefully defines ideology as “an interrelated set of convictions or assumptions that reduces the complexities of a particular slice of reality to easily comprehensible terms and suggests appropriate ways of dealing with that reality.”\(^4\) And since America’s entry into the First World War, Wilsonian liberal internationalism has quite often served that purpose, providing a consistent, sustaining ideological basis for U.S. foreign policy.

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There is more to it than that, however. The straightforward characterization offered above, as valid as it is as a broad generalization, masks a good deal more complexity than is often realized. The vision of a Wilsonian world order that emerged from the era of the First World War was itself ambiguous in a number of respects. That ambiguity, in turn, would allow for several substantial reformulations of Wilsonianism in the decades that followed—reformulations that necessarily involved successive reinterpretations of those precepts that comprise the credo: the imminent threat to international order; democratic self-determination, collective security, an integrated world economy, and American exceptionalism. The first such reformulation, Rooseveltian Wilsonianism, was developed in the years immediately before and during the Second World War. Yet another, competing Wilsonian system, the Cold War Consensus, quickly took shape after 1945, in the wake of the war. And these two decidedly disparate Wilsonian systems clashed repeatedly with one another in the policy debates that took place in the post-World War II era. What follows is, at least in part, an account of these competing Wilsonianisms—their origins, divergent evolution, and, eventual decline in the context of shifting political conditions.

That the interrelated precepts that together comprise Wilsonianism are ambiguous and contingent—that they have been defined in different ways by different people over the course of decades, often in response to changing circumstances—is a point that is not well developed in the extant literature on the subject. And for that very reason, historians have not previously explored in any thorough and systematic way the distinct schools of thought into which Wilsonian internationalism may be subdivided. This line of analysis, therefore, represents a unique contribution to the scholarship on the subject.
The subject of the present study is not simply ideology, however. Contrary to what is sometimes popularly claimed, ideals do not have lives of their own apart from the flesh-and-blood human beings who create, study, promote, and fight for them. And so this inquiry will be a social history of ideals that is concerned not only with various Wilsonian worldviews, but also the interrelationships of the policymaking elites who championed them—those who actually made foreign policy decisions and those who sought to influence those decisions. More specifically, this dissertation will focus on prominent liberal internationalists from the American peace movement, the organizations they created, and the political leaders they sought to influence during the process of policy development and implementation. Between approximately 1917 and 1968, internationalists within the peace movement significantly shaped the ongoing evolution of Wilsonian ideals as they variously cooperated with dominant policymaking elites or promoted alternative Wilsonianisms in opposition to them. The overall picture, then, is one of contending internationalist elites that can trace their intellectual roots back to Wilson, even as they clashed over the ultimate meaning of his legacy. It is through a study of these internationalists that we may come to a better understanding of the classic Wilsonian precepts, their evolution over the first half-century following their initial pronouncement, and the means whereby their influence over public policy was sustained.

The history of twentieth century liberal internationalist peace activism in the United States is one that has been treated with relative neglect, and even periodic hostility, by dedicated peace historians. U.S. foreign policy historians, meanwhile, have generally not made use of peace history in their treatments of the subject of Wilsonianism—or any other subject, for that matter. By elevating the liberal
internationalist wing of the modern peace movement as a worthy subject in its own right and highlighting the role it played in the emergence of diverging Wilsonian ideologies, the present study expands our understanding of how the movement shaped the conduct of American international relations in the last century. This, again, represents a unique contribution to the relevant scholarship on the subject.

In the first chapter, “The First Wilsonian Era,” we will see how Woodrow Wilson emerged from World War I and the progressive movement to become, if only briefly, a towering figure in the realm of international relations with his vision for remaking the postwar world order. And we will see, too, how the modern American peace movement came of age at the same time as a result of that conflict. The secular pacifists who partook of that movement always remained opposed to the war, as one might expect; but liberal internationalists, on the other hand, actually came around to support Wilson’s war policies and his postwar plans in the hopes of making a better world. But more than that, they continued to promote and sustain the Wilsonian vision long after Wilson himself had passed from the scene.

Wilson’s thinking regarding the future of the international system focused on world organization and the rule of law, the free-flow of trade goods, and national democratic self-determination, at least for Europeans. But even during this early, formative period one can observe the emergence of potential alternative interpretations of various Wilsonian ideals. Already, the first seeds of future contention over the ultimate meaning of the Wilsonian legacy were being planted. For example, while Wilson and his supporters emphasized the rule of law as the long-term solution to establishing world peace, some among them also foresaw the necessity of armed force as an adjunct of the
law. Indeed, when push came to shove, none of them—Wilson included—shrank from the prospect of using armed force in the short term, i.e. entering America into the war as a combatant nation, as a practical means to achieve their long-term goals. Meanwhile, in the realm of foreign trade, neither Wilson nor his liberal internationalist allies were strict advocates of *laissez-faire*. On the contrary, they were Progressive champions of the newly-emerging regulatory state who advocated for an increasing role for international institutions in the world economy. The resulting ambiguity was perhaps the inevitable product of a diverse and highly dynamic political movement having coalesced around Wilson’s dream. That movement was, to use a more contemporary political expression, a “big tent” in which there were substantive disagreements even in Wilson’s day. And the obscureness that resulted would have very important implications for the future evolution of Wilsonian internationalism.

Chapter two, “Reinventing Wilson—the Rooseveltian Formulation,” will focus on the era of the Second World War, a period in which Wilson’s vision was resurrected and reinvented by Franklin D. Roosevelt and liberal internationalists who enlisted in America’s war against the Rome-Berlin-Tokyo Axis. Importantly, liberal internationalists in the peace movement broke with pacifists to lend their considerable support and expertise to the nation’s senior political leadership during World War II, just as they had in the First World War a quarter-century before. And what ultimately emerged from the war as a result was a Wilsonianism that was somewhat revised in a number of important respects from that promoted by Wilson and his contemporaries. As to the imminent danger hanging over the international system, the Wilsonianism of the Roosevelt era certainly acknowledged the threat posed by illiberal political systems, which had been
Wilson’s main concern. But in the end, it placed more of an emphasis on the long-term danger of war itself as a threat—something Wilson might have done with much greater vigor himself had the implements of war been much more destructive in his day.

Moreover, efforts under Roosevelt’s leadership to create an integrated world economy were, comparatively speaking, geared much more than Wilson’s towards the establishment of superintending international organizations, even as the idea of free trade retained its essential importance. Rooseveltian Wilsonianism was, at its heart, still very much a progressive project. In some of the respects noted above, it may fairly be characterized as being even more progressive than Wilson’s original iteration.

In other ways, however, this newly-revised Wilsonian vision was more ambiguous. The pursuit of democratic self-determination for the peoples of the world continued, for example, although the importance of democracy itself was somewhat deemphasized in the mix by the administration—even as liberal internationalists outside the government were having increasing doubts about nationalism. On the subject of collective security, meanwhile, Roosevelt’s basic concept continued to center on global organization and the rule of law, just as it did in Wilson’s day—again, a progressive conception at heart. But there was, at the same time, a much stronger element of peace enforcement incorporated into the new United Nations organization—an element introduced as a result of hard-won experience with both the failed prewar League of Nations and the successful wartime military alliance. In a manner in which the old League never could, the UN would act decisively to secure peace for the world, FDR and his liberal internationalist allies believed.
The new era of world peace was not to be, however. In a turn of events that was probably inevitable, the coalition that won the war very quickly came apart afterwards. And with the advent of the totally unforeseen Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union, Roosevelt’s new Wilsonian world order was almost immediately overtaken by events. But in its place, yet another elaboration of Wilsonian internationalism was forged with remarkable rapidity by FDR’s successors. This new elaboration took the form of a liberal Cold War Consensus—“A Wilsonian Postwar Consensus,” as the present author has characterized it in chapter three of the work.

In some respects, at least, there is a strong element of continuity between the Consensus and the Rooseveltian Wilsonianism that it superseded. The newer system, for instance, continued to give a heavy emphasis to the development of the regulatory state alongside expanding trade in its pursuit of an integrated world economy. And American exceptionalism would continue to serve as a unifying force among liberal internationalists, as well, although by this point the basis for exceptionalism was shifting away from a sense of historical and religious destiny and more towards a sense of duty, or obligation, owing to America’s preeminent position of power in the world.

Otherwise, the Consensus was, in retrospect, actually rather conservative in many ways. With regard to the imminent danger hanging over the international system, the Wilsonianism of the postwar period returned to Wilson’s own focus on the threat posed by illiberal political systems—particularly those of the communist variety, in this case. Indeed, anticommunism was a hallmark of the Consensus, defining not only the threat to world order, but also the practical terms in which the principles of free trade and national democratic self-determination would be defined and promoted. The concept of collective
security was transformed in an especially dramatic fashion, with the previous emphasis on world organization and the rule of law increasingly supplanted—especially in actual practice—by a far-reaching system of regional and bilateral military alliances to which the United States would become a party.

The differences that existed between the Cold War Consensus and its Rooseveltian predecessor were heightened by the fact that the latest Wilsonian formulation followed so closely on the heels of the still very new system forged during FDR’s presidency. It is not surprising, therefore, that a notable rift appeared among liberal internationalists regarding the conduct of U.S. foreign policy during this period. Liberal internationalists were, for the most part, generally supportive—or, at least, accommodating—of the foreign policy Consensus in its early years. Some were noticeably reluctant to part with aspects of the more progressive Wilsonian formulations of the Roosevelt era, however. This is particularly true with regards to the ideal of collective security, which obviously became even more militarized under the rubric of the Consensus. But go along they did in the end. None of the readily-available alternatives to the Consensus in the late nineteen forties were able to gain traction. For decades after the end of World War II, Wilsonianism remained a proverbial “big tent.”

In the meantime, the issue of nuclear weapons inevitably became bound up with that of the Wilsonian world order. Such weapons first appeared in 1945, although for a number of reasons their importance as a major factor in international relations would increase dramatically in the nineteen fifties. And in the fourth and final chapter, we will see that the rising arms race, along with a gradual abatement of the “red scare” after its McCarthy-era peak, revived the American peace movement in a major way late in the
decade—even as the influence of Wilsonianism within the movement generally waned at the same time for a number of different reasons.

This new peace movement sought to accommodate the Cold War Consensus, at least initially. And, as if in return, the Washington establishment, still dominated as it was by the Consensus, embraced causes like arms control and Third World economic development in the late nineteen fifties and sixties. But elements of Roosevelt-era Wilsonian thinking actually continued to survive, and even thrive, within the peace movement. Indeed, the survival of Rooseveltian Wilsonianism as an influence among some liberal internationalists ultimately helped set the stage for a shattering political rupture that would take place in the decade of the sixties. The Consensus broke down especially over the issue of war in far-off Vietnam—in no small part because of the continuing influence of the Rooseveltian worldview. Through the changes that took place within the peace movement in terms of organization, personnel, and policy advocacy, the process that resulted in the final demise of the Consensus and the Wilsonian “big tent” can be observed and charted.

In the wake of the terribly divisive conflict in Southeast Asia, Consensus internationalism ultimately found a home only with elements of the Republican Party and allied neo-conservative Democrats, while at the same time, opponents joined with pacifists and the New Left in a new progressive movement. To the extent that any form of Wilsonianism still survived on the leftward end of the American political spectrum at all, it was a rump form of Franklin D. Roosevelt’s older formulation, albeit one shorn of its more free-trade elements in favor of an enlarged emphasis on the role of the United Nations in world affairs. The end result, at least over the short term, was the temporary
demise of Wilsonianism generally as a major influence on U.S. foreign policy by the end of the nineteen sixties.

**Historiography and Contributions to the Literature**

In exploring the history of Wilsonianism and liberal internationalists in the American peace movement, as outlined above, we will necessarily have to engage with several bodies of historical literature—one authored by historians of U.S. foreign relations and the other produced by peace historians. Surprisingly, while peace historians would appear to cover a good deal of the same territory tramped by their counterparts in the field of American foreign policy history, the works collectively produced by these two groups of scholars are not much conversant with one another in actual practice. The present study, in contrast, seeks to contribute meaningfully to both. Indeed, the goal here is to bring the two sets of literature together so that they may fruitfully inform each other in ways that they typically have not in the past, thereby remediating a number of fundamental shortcomings inherent to both.

The essential shortcoming exhibited by the work that peace historians have produced as a group is the overwhelming dominance of just a few select interpretive frameworks. There is a general lack of diversity in interpretive approach to be found in the scholarship produced by peace scholars. And that lack of diversity, in turn, can place some real limitations on the quality of analysis produced by the field as a whole, insofar as such a state of affairs easily lends itself to the rise of insularity, parochialism, and “groupthink.”
What are the dominant interpretive frameworks in question here? First of all, peace history literature has typically reflected the point of view of the Progressive-Revisionist school and its intellectual heirs, especially that school’s critical, if not openly hostile, stance towards both American institutions, in particular, and the “liberal capitalist” system more broadly. War, poverty, and racism are typically viewed as inevitable byproducts of American-style capitalism in this view. Therefore, American society, as depicted by Progressive-Revisionist scholars, is fundamentally immoral and in need of radical change. But more than that, the United States is also generally cast as an imperialistic and expansionistic power in this interpretation as well.

Charles DeBenedetti, in his classic *The Peace Reform in American History*, defined the peace movement as a whole in decidedly progressive terms. For him, it represented “a major part of the American reform tradition,” one seeking not only “alternative means of resolving human conflicts,” but also the development of new “forms of group harmony so that peace might persist as a living social dynamic.” In other words, the movement’s ultimate goal is nothing less than a thorough reformation of modern society. Such a reformation became especially urgent and necessary in the twentieth century—a “simple necessity of survival,” as DeBenedetti put it—as a result of what he saw as an intensification of “tribal nationalism and military influence” in the contemporary world, a development he identified with the “very process of modernization—including industrial interdependence, advancing science and technology, and the bureaucratic organization of mass violence.” Just how badly does America’s “dominant power culture and power realities” need to be reformed? In a closing passage,

DeBenedetti offered a telling diagnosis of the issues—and how the peace movement seeks to redress them:

The peace subculture speaks of forbearance within a culture that has flowered in conquest. It speaks of reconciliation within a society that works better at distributing weapons than wealth. It speaks of supranational authority among a highly nationalistic people who dislike all authority. It speaks of a just global order to governing officials anxious for pre-eminence and profit.⁶

The analysis offered by another leading peace historian, Lawrence Wittner, in *Rebels Against War: The American Peace Movement, 1933-1983*, follows along very similar lines. Certainly his diagnoses of the essential causes of war place his work well within the progressive tradition: “nationalism, racism, greed, and imperialism,” as well as the “inequitable distribution of wealth and resources.” Indeed, among the difficulties that the movement has faced over the course of its history, Wittner draws special attention to “Military Keynesianism,” the search for global profits, and “popular beliefs in national, racial, economic, sexual, or religious superiority” among other factors. His critiques of “American ‘defense’ policies,” too, are decidedly progressive, insofar as he consistently characterizes them as dangerous, unnecessarily provocative, and reflective of an “obsession” on the part of “American policymakers with ‘winning’ the arms race and the struggle for global supremacy.”⁷ Notice the quotation marks Wittner places around terms such as “defense” and “winning” in the passages quoted above—a clear indication of his skepticism regarding the value and usefulness of those terms in the context in which they have been employed.

In contrast, Charles F. Howlett and Robbie Lieberman, in the opening pages of a more recent survey, *A History of the American Peace Movement from Colonial Times to the Present*, offer a formal definition of the movement that is much simpler and ideologically inclusive: “A loose assemblage of groups and individuals, often with dissimilar programs but in accord on seeking to reduce conflict or end war through achieving some change in foreign policy.”\(^8\) The material that follows, however, belies this apparent inclusiveness. “The broad notion of peace as not only the absence of war but also the presence of justice defines the history of the movement and participants,” they write just a few pages later. And when Howlett and Lieberman employ the term “justice,” they mean social justice. “Social and economic equality resonates throughout the story of peace activism,” they explain. “Proponents of peace have been, and always will be, about making America a better society…”

[Int]eacemakers have diligently connected their actions to broader social and political concerns including civil rights, feminism, socialism, and ecological devastation. They have argued that war is an integral part of an unjust social order. They have pointed out that the instruments of political control involve the hidden threat of violence and that these were in the very hands of the classes opposed to change. Thus throughout the course of America’s past, peace proponents and their organizations have both formed ideal communities for the larger society to emulate and engaged in reform activities intended to replace those political policies, social institutions, or cultural patterns that have prevented the triumph of lasting peace.

That being the case, Howlett and Lieberman adopt a “better America for all” as one of the primary “organizing principles and central themes” for their historical account of the peace movement.\(^9\)

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\(^9\) Ibid., 3, 7, 9-10.
In retrospect, the close kinship of progressivism and peace historiography is not too surprising given the extent to which they have typically been intertwined with one another. Some of the first works of dedicated peace history written by professional scholars were turned out by early progressive historians—Merle Curti, most significantly, in works like *Peace or War: The American Struggle, 1636–1936* (1936). Then, in the nineteen sixties, there was a great surge in peace-related scholarship that accompanied the Vietnam War, a surge that roughly coincided with the rise to prominence of William Appleman Williams and other like-minded critics of U.S foreign policy. It was during this period, in fact, that peace history first became established as a distinct field of study in its own right.\(^\text{10}\)

In fact, there is a natural affinity between Progressive-Revisionism and peace history that extends even to questions of practical emphasis. Not only have peace historians quite naturally embraced the characteristic stress that progressives place on the domestic sources of foreign policy, they have taken that emphasis to new heights in their desire to chronicle the progress of the peace reform in America. Indeed, in too many instances, the literature that peace historians have produced focuses very narrowly on portraying—invariably in very sympathetic terms—the noble struggles of unheralded visionaries, both great and small, who have stood against the dark forces of reaction to champion the cause of world peace, even in the face of great personal sacrifice and seemingly insurmountable odds.

And that is not happenstance. Curti, along with Charles A. Beard, Carl Becker, and other progressives of the early twentieth century, believed that historians should be aware of the ways in which they construct narratives. They thought that historical narratives could be crafted either to protect the status quo or to establish a foundation for a brighter future; their preference was for the latter, of course. And contemporary peace history—as well as the modern field of peace studies, more generally—certainly embraces that same sense of engagement with present-day interests and concerns. Especially in the decades that have passed since the Vietnam War, peace historians have, in the pursuit of their scholarship, fully replicated the same crusading spirit of reform that they see as animating the activists they research and write about.\textsuperscript{11} Even today, one of the most fundamental drives within the discipline is the desire to create a “usable past”—a narrative with which unselfconscious, reform-minded scholar-activists can promote contemporary political agendas in the here and now. Howlett and Lieberman make this very point, albeit in decidedly more benign terms, when they write:

Peace historians generally see themselves as engaged scholars, involved in the study of peace and war and in efforts to eliminate or at least restrict armaments, conscription, nuclear proliferation, colonialism, racism, sexism, and, of course, war. The work of peace historians presents alternatives to the policies they oppose.\textsuperscript{12}

Lawrence Wittner has more recently offered a similar perspective: “War, after all, is a genuine problem… a good case can be made that it is perfectly appropriate for scholars to seek solutions to this problem and that, in their search for solutions, they will not

\textsuperscript{12} Howelett and Lieberman, 511.
necessarily lack objectivity… [S]hould the phenomenon of mass violence not be studied by historians in an effort to help end it?“13

The desire on the part of historians to be engaged with such present-day concerns is certainly understandable. However, it can be a double-edged sword. Scholarship can, and should, inform decisions on public policy. Nevertheless, when scholars—and even entire disciplines—become tied to particular political interests or agendas, they leave themselves open to questions regarding their objectivity, independence, and, ultimately, even their authority as reliable and trustworthy sources of knowledge. Perhaps—just perhaps—this is one of the reasons why historians from other disciplines have not sought to integrate peace research into their work more than they have. This study, in contrast, has been written with the limitations outlined above firmly in mind. In writing peace history from the perspective of an outsider who is not of the movement himself, the present author has been free to draw on relevant insights from a range of different perspectives found in the literature of American foreign relations—progressive, realist, and post-revisionist—where appropriate. The result, hopefully, is a more balanced account that illuminates the successes and failures of both American policy and those who have sought to reform it.

Beyond the dominance of the Progressive-Revisionist framework, peace history literature has also long been informed by the ethos of antiwar pacifism that defines the core of the movement. Famously, Lawrence Wittner, in the first edition of his Rebels Against War, likened the structure of the American peace movement to that of an onion, with the most zealous advocates of pacifism at the core while those less beholden to the

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cause constitute the outer layers. As Wittner then goes on to explain, during periods of heightened popular antiwar activism, the onion may increase in size as new layers of transient interests attach themselves to the movement. But at other times, when the movement falls into disfavor with the public, those outer layers are shed entirely, leaving only a comparatively small cadre of the most dedicated pacifist true-believers to carry on the struggle.¹⁴ Not surprisingly, it is that pacifist cadre at the core of the movement that commands most of the attention, as well as the admiration, of peace historians. Indeed, peace history scholarship generally reflects the rather parochial view that non-pacifists are not true peace seekers at all. And the historical surveys crafted in recent decades by DeBenedetti, Wittner, and Howlett certainly all reflect that view.

The antiwar pacifist ethos has remained ascendant among peace scholars despite changes that have taken place within the discipline in recent decades. In the nineteen sixties, seventies, and eighties, according to Howlett, peace historians broadened the scope of their narratives in a major way from a traditional focus on “pacifist and antiwar thought” to “incorporate nonpacifist allies as part of a larger reform movement.”¹⁵ But the “nonpacifist allies” he refers to are very often reformers from beyond the confines of the peace movement proper who have pursued complimentary progressive social, economic, and environmental causes—causes that contribute in their own way to bringing about precisely the transformed society that pacifist-minded peace scholar-activists view themselves as working towards. In no way was traditional “pacifist and antiwar thought” ever seriously questioned by peace scholars in the course of this narrative broadening. And so, as an interpretive framework, antiwar pacifism retains a

very powerful hold over the field and a privileged position in the work that peace historians currently produce.

This orientation, in turn, also creates an issue of bias. Indeed, the twin emphases on the point of view of the Progressive-Revisionist school and the ethos of antiwar pacifism have together led to a situation where very few scholarly books or articles are produced by peace historians that take as their principal subject matter the liberal internationalists who populated the American peace movement during much of the twentieth century.

It also frequently leads to dedicated liberal internationalist peace-seekers fading in and out of the narratives that peace historians construct—that is, when they are incorporated into such narratives at all. While always striving towards the future goal of a world without war, these internationalists were not always consistently antiwar when confronted with the immediate prospect of armed conflict. Nor were they always at the forefront of the drive to radically transform society in ways that contemporary progressive scholar-activists deem desirable and necessary. This, unfortunately, places liberal internationalists in layers of the onion some distance removed from the all-enticing core. And for that reason, peace historians tend to treat them with comparative neglect—and, at time, even outright hostility. In the pages of *The Peace Reform in American History*, Charles DeBenedetti devoted at least some attention to the subject of liberal internationalism, although it was far from his central concern. Internationalists play a much less prominent role in Wittner’s *Rebels Against War*. And in Howlett and Lieberman’s more recent survey, they almost vanish entirely in favor of an increased focus on women’s rights, civil rights, labor, and environmentalist organizations.
On the other hand, this study, by integrating the subject matter of the two major bodies of literature at hand—peace history and American foreign relations literature—will bring back into focus as subjects worthy of study in their own right the liberal internationalists of the peace movement who contributed so much to the formulation of various Wilsonian approaches to U.S. foreign policy in the last century. Indeed, as the chapters that follow will illustrate, writing peace history from a vantage point outside the interpretive frameworks that dominate the discipline, focusing instead on liberal internationalists while also drawing on insights from the scholarship of foreign policy specialists, can often cast seemingly familiar subject matter in a new light, yielding dramatically different perspectives on both American international relations and the part that liberal internationalists played in shaping it.

Such an approach, if embraced by scholars more generally, might even encourage new interest in the field of peace history on the part of those who have remained outside it. Just as they do the accomplishments of those they chronicle, scholars already in the field invariably try to put the best possible face on the discipline’s current state, as well as its future outlook. “[T]he prospects are encouraging,” Charles Howlett insisted in an article for the December 2010 issue of the American Historical Association’s Perspectives on History newsmagazine. But there is reason to take a somewhat more pessimistic view of the situation—that is, if an exchange that recently took place on the dedicated peace history listserv on the H-Net network, H-Peace, is any indication. In a brief message that was sent out to subscribers on April 12, 2011, Patricia Roberts-Miller, who administers H-Peace, remarked on the almost total lack of activity on the listserv:

16 Howlett, “American Peace History since the Vietnam War.”
“The question has come up whether this is really an active list; my sense is that it is not.”

The few contributors who responded to the post agreed with her assessment, although a number of them insisted that the list was still a worthwhile endeavor—especially if more people could be induced not only to subscribe, but to actively participate. According to Roberts-Miller, H-Peace currently has “approximately 445 subscribers.”

In contrast, the vastly more active H-Diplo listserv, the Diplomatic and International History Discussion Network, boasts some 5,000 subscribers.

The other body of work that this study seeks to contribute to is that produced by scholars of American foreign policy, again with the idea of bringing the relevant literature into contact with that from the field of peace history. Charles Howlett and Glen Zeitzer noted two and a half decades ago that “American historians for the most part continue to view peace history as a separate discipline and have not sought to integrate peace research into their own work.” And, unfortunately, that situation has not changed appreciably in the years since they set down that observation. Of course, there are a few fleeting exceptions that one can point to—occasional instances in which scholars from outside the field of peace history have taken at least some notice of personalities or organizations from the peace movement in writing about American foreign relations; a number of different examples will be cited in the pages that follow. Nevertheless, such examples are much more the exception than the rule. Peace history is, therefore, a subject

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17 Trish Roberts-Miller, <redball@mindspring.com> “List Activity,” 12 April 2011, H-PEACE@H-NET.MSU.EDU (22 June 2011).
18 Trish Roberts-Miller, <redball@mindspring.com> “Re: List Activity,” 13 April 2011, H-PEACE@H-NET.MSU.EDU (22 June 2011).
ripe for further exploration by U.S. foreign policy historians, as Michael J. Hogan has pointed out.21

The particular body of work relevant to the present study is that regarding Wilsonianism. A good portion of the literature that has been written on the subject is focused rather narrowly on Woodrow Wilson and his presidency, naturally enough. Indeed, the subject of Wilsonian internationalism is scarcely commented on by peace historians at all beyond treatments of the Wilson administration itself. But especially since the end of the Cold War, historians and political scientists in the foreign policy field have turned out a substantial and remarkably diverse body of scholarship identifying Wilsonianism as one of—if not the—dominant frameworks within which U.S. policy developed over the course of the twentieth century. This literature is quite complex, though, defying easy break down and categorization. Just as popular pundits have staked out markedly differing perspectives on the meaning of Wilson’s legacy, so too have professional scholars. As Lloyd Ambrosius has pointed out, even historians from the same general school of thought have not all “adopted the same approach or reached the same conclusions.”22 And so, unlike the body of work produced by peace scholars, that turned out by their counterparts in the foreign policy field offer a wide variety of different perspectives and insights to consider and draw upon.

For example, Michael Hunt, in his groundbreaking Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy, utilizes a cultural approach inspired by the work of Clifford Geertz to position himself in opposition to both the realism of George F. Kennan’s American Diplomacy

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and the progressive-revisionism of William Appleman Williams’ *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*. The former he derides for its pejorative, even dismissive approach to ideology; the latter he criticizes for its apparent economic determinism and reductionism. Neither approach, he suggests, treats ideology as seriously as is warranted. But even so, Hunt delivers a broadside against American cultural imperialism that echoes Williams’ attitude towards American economic imperialism. He proceeds to outline what he argues is a consistent American foreign policy ideology reaching all the way back to the origins of the nation itself—an ideology encompassing visions of national greatness, hierarchies of race, and the perils of revolutionary change abroad. Without a doubt, this is ideology on a very high level of abstraction. And in the context of that ideology, he writes quite critically of Wilson’s thinking on foreign relations, pointing out in particular his implicit racism and paternalism.  

Like Hunt, Frank Ninkovich, too, employs a cultural approach that holds up Kennan and Williams to critical scrutiny. His is a self-consciously postmodern analysis that explicitly rejects the so-called “objectivist approaches” of realists and progressive-revisionists—approaches that he characterizes as generally treating both structures of power relations and national or economic interests as if they were “objective, hard, substantial realities.” For Ninkovich, these are knowledge-claims that deserve “to be met with much more skepticism than they typically receive.” Like Hunt, he also maintains that realism and progressive-revisionism give short shrift to the influence of ideology on U.S. foreign relations. Instead, Ninkovich argues that historians are faced with a “menu

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of narratives from which to choose,” and that his Wilsonian narrative is the most coherent and consistently in accord with the available evidence.

Unlike Hunt, however, Ninkovich regards the unfolding of U.S. foreign policy in the twentieth century as a success story—and that this success is firmly rooted in that policy’s Wilsonian intellectual foundations:

…the Wilsonian century was the product of an imaginative interpretation of history that survived not only because it seemed to make sense of a confusing modern world, but also because it successfully passed the test of experience. In the face of numerous crises, Wilsonianism maintained enough plausibility as an explanation of world politics—in fierce competition with realist doctrines, it should be remembered—to convince American statesman of its rightness. And to an amazing degree, it succeeded through a pragmatic process of trial and error in structuring the world in accord with its own preconceptions.25

The success of Wilsonian foreign policy was not so apparent to progressive-revisionist historians like the aforementioned William Appleman Williams, however. That Hunt and Ninkovich both felt the need to respond to Williams’ The Tragedy of American Diplomacy so many years after it was initially published is a testament to the enduring impact and continuing influence of that work. And it is for precisely that reason that it bears mentioning here, as well. Williams and the generation of progressive-revisionist scholars he inspired in the nineteen fifties and sixties were very much focused on and generally critical of international free trade—an age-old element of U.S. foreign policy that became inexorably bound up with Wilson’s vision of a just international order. Indeed, Williams argued in his seminal work that the “tragedy” of American diplomacy arose from the contradictions of what he derisively termed “open door imperialism”—a policy that, in his view, paid lip service to self-determination and humanitarian concerns even as it denuded the economic and political independence of

other peoples. Although perhaps not intending it at the time, in its own way, Williams’ thesis was a path-breaking and decidedly hostile critique of Wilsonian political economy. And in more recent years, revisionist historians like Lloyd Gardner and Emily Rosenberg have built upon this critique, broadening it to incorporate American cultural influences as well.\textsuperscript{26} Interestingly, but by no means, unexpectedly, to the extent that they have taken cultural influences into consideration, their conclusions tend to converge with those arrived at by Michael Hunt.

Meanwhile, amongst neo-realists, too, there is quite a diversity of approaches to the study of Wilsonianism—and, as is the case among cultural historians, a diversity of interpretive conclusions. For example, Lloyd Ambrosius has striven to create what he terms a “pluralist variant” of realism that highlights the conflicts produced by modern trends towards global integration—and the paradoxical fragmentation that results from it. And from this perspective, he criticizes Wilson and his heirs for the “inherent dilemmas and contradictions” involved in their thinking. They promoted global integration on explicitly American terms, but did not reckon on the backlash that such an approach might provoke on the part of other peoples around the world, he suggests. Moreover, they failed to understand how various Wilsonian precepts—collective security, national democratic self-determination, free trade—might actually conflict with one another in actual practice. For Ambrosius, then, the history of Wilsonianism is a cautionary tale demonstrating the “unintended negative consequences of pursuing even laudatory purposes in international relations.”\textsuperscript{27} In a similar vein, Walter A. McDougal, in \textit{Promised Land, Crusader State}, has described Wilson’s “otherworldly vision” as a

“chimera,” simultaneously parochial and utopian, its practical results an “operational boondoggle,” particularly with regard to self-determination: “a Pandora’s box that spews forth new horrors to this day.”

In contrast, other evaluations have been much more charitable. For instance, Amos Perlmutter’s comparatively benign interpretation is derived from his neo-realist understanding of how ideology might contribute to the strength and security of great world powers. While continuing to stress the importance of successfully practicing realpolitik, Perlmutter suggests that Wilsonianism served as an ideological weapon which the United States used fruitfully over the course of the twentieth century to resist, and ultimately defeat, the competing totalitarian ideological systems of Nazism and Communism—while strengthening its own status as a hegemonic world power in the process. It was “Wilsonian moralism,” he concludes, that allowed the country’s political leaders to successfully vanquish their challengers in the always high-stakes game of world power politics. In a similar vein, postrevisionist historian John Lewis Gaddis, in his book We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History, credits the application of Wilsonian values like democracy and self-determination by the United States in its administration of a consensual, informal post-World War II “empire” as a practical political advantage that contributed materially to the nation’s ultimate triumph in its decades-long standoff with the Soviet Union.

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Tony Smith, also inspired in part by realism, takes an even more positive view of Wilsonianism. He framed his study, *America’s Mission: The United States and the Worldwide Struggle for Democracy in the Twentieth Century*, in terms of trying to bridge the gap between realism and liberalism as frameworks for the study of U.S. foreign relations. And he did so by arguing that the country’s efforts to promote democratic government abroad—“liberal democratic internationalism,” an enterprise that Smith unambiguously identifies with Wilsonianism—has, in fact, been very beneficial to American national interests—although “unwise efforts” to do so had sometimes produced “disastrous consequences” abroad. “Americans might well ask themselves how much the worldwide demand for democracy is the result of their century-old determination to promote the cause,” Smith writes approvingly. “Certainly the new global enthusiasm for democracy is the closest the United States has ever come to seeing its own traditional foreign policy agenda reflected on an international scale.”

With such an onslaught of scholarly writing, William R. Keylor might be forgiven for the bout of “Wilson fatigue” he wrote of suffering from in the pages of *Diplomatic History* in the spring of 2001. A foreign policy realist inclined to dismiss appeals to Wilsonian principles as mere “rhetorical window dressing” intended to curry favor with public opinion, Keylor indicated that he had become quite weary of “Wilsonmania.” The present writer can only hope that he has sufficiently recovered since then to entertain at least one more addition to the literature. In any case, Keylor did make one substantive criticism of this recent body of work that is well worth considering here. That is, having discerned “the ubiquitous invisible hand of our twenty-eighth president guiding

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policymakers at every turn,” the Wilsonianism that emerges from this literature appears to him to be “an ideology of such nebulosity” that it is, in fact, “no coherent ideology worthy of the name” at all. In his review of Ninkovich’s *The Wilsonian Century*—and in accompanying critical comments directed at Smith’s *America’s Mission* besides—Keylor actually likens the Wilson portrayed therein to the title character of Woody Allen’s 1983 film comedy *Zelig*, a mock documentary about a “human chameleon” who literally takes on the physical characteristics of whomever he is surrounded by at any given time.\(^\text{32}\)

In contrast, the present author believes that the case for Wilsonianism as the dominant intellectual framework shaping U.S. foreign policy in the twentieth century is compelling. All the same, though, Keylor’s “Wilson as Zelig” criticism does have some merit. Indeed, it points up a number of weaknesses in the current literature and the understanding that it conveys of the development of the Wilsonian framework—weaknesses that together limit the ability of scholars to account adequately for the adaptability of Wilson’s ideas, as well as their enduring influence over so many decades. This study will seek to redress those weaknesses by utilizing liberal internationalist peace activists and the organizations they created as a means of following the evolution of Wilsonianism across the middle portion of the twentieth century.

What are the weaknesses referred to above? For one, the image of Wilsonianism presented in the literature often lacks contingency—an awareness that the various precepts that make up the Wilsonian credo have not been stable over time, but have, in fact, been interpreted and reinterpreted in different ways by activists and policymakers alike through the decades in response to past experience and changing circumstances. It

frequently lacks a sufficient awareness that there has been persistent conflict and controversy over the ultimate meaning of those ideals that Wilson and his intellectual heirs sought to promote. Not that the above cited works of Ninkovich, Perlmutter, and Smith—the three works that we will be concerned with here primarily—proceed in utter disregard of the notion that Wilsonianism has changed over time. As a general point, all three openly acknowledge that it has.\(^{33}\) In the details of their analysis, however, this awareness does not always translate into definite form.

And at least part of the reason for that, in turn, is because Wilsonianism is not always treated entirely systematically. Instead, scholars sometimes emphasize certain particular elements of Wilsonian thinking instead of treating them together as part of a larger, integrated ideological system. Walter Russell Mead, for example, identifies no less than four different schools of thought shaping U.S. foreign policy over the course of its long history, with Wilsonianism defined only very narrowly in terms of “spreading American democratic and social values throughout the world.”\(^{34}\) In a similar vein, Tony Smith, while not completely disregarding other dimensions of liberal internationalist thought, very heavily stresses the Wilsonian promotion of global democracy in the pages of *America’s Mission*. In the opening pages of that book, he essentially defines Wilsonianism as “the conviction that American national interests could best be pursued by promoting democracy worldwide.”\(^{35}\) For him, it is the basis of the entire edifice:

In short, the foundation of Wilson’s order was the democratic nation-state; its superstructure was an international order of economic, military, and moral interdependence. Nationalism wed to democracy; democracies wed in peace,

\(^{33}\) Ninkovich, 12; Perlmutter, 5; Smith, 19.


\(^{35}\) Smith, xv.
prosperity, and mutual respect embodied in international law and institutions: such was Wilson’s essential vision…³⁶

This was Smith’s overriding focus, and it ultimately leads him to cast the evolutionary development of Wilsonianism writ large rather narrowly in terms of shifts in how the United States approached the task of promoting democracy abroad.

Frank Ninkovich, too, focuses on what he takes to be certain singular aspects of Wilsonian thought—two, to be exact—as representing the essence of the entire system. First of all, Wilsonianism is, according to Ninkovich, a “crisis internationalism that surfaced in bad times, only to give way to normal internationalism once the turbulence had passed”:

…America’s response to modernity, like modernity itself, was double-edged: extraordinarily optimistic and progressive, on the one hand, yet afflicted by a sense of extraordinary, perhaps unmanageable crisis on the other, depending on the circumstances…

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, American foreign policy turned slowly in the direction of greater international involvement on the basis of an optimistic and unproblematic mental image of global progress. Then, during World War I, Woodrow Wilson painted a disturbing new picture of the world situation and its potentially disastrous impact upon American security.

Wilson’s “disturbing new picture,” as Ninkovich relates, was one in which modern war had become too destructive, too disruptive, and too costly—so much so that, “given the obsolescence of the balance of power and the interconnectedness of the modern world, any conflict anywhere, unless nipped in the bud, threatened to escalate into another world war more calamitous than the first.” [emphasis in original]. This, then, is the first half of Ninkovich’s two-part characterization of Wilsonianism—Wilsonianism as a “crisis internationalism.”³⁷

³⁶ Ibid., 87.
³⁷ Ninkovich, 12-13.
Of course, Wilson did not simply identify a problem; he endorsed a solution as well. And the foundational basis for a Wilsonian remedy, in Ninkovich’s assessment, was world opinion: “the popular liberal sentiment embedded in all peoples that was being unleashed by the global spread of democracy.” World opinion was the “cement” that was to have bound together the member states of the League of Nations. And Ninkovich also clearly associates world opinion with the spread of democracy, as well, although he also makes it clear that the global spread of the democratic ideal is just one aspect of what is actually a much broader and rather complex social phenomenon.38

And so, in the end, Wilsonianism, for Frank Ninkovich, is an ideological system defined by: (1) a diagnosis of the danger menacing the world, i.e. Wilsonianism as a “crisis internationalism”; and (2) the postulation of a solution to that danger, i.e. Wilsonianism as means of promoting the ultimate triumph of world opinion by various means. This, to put it mildly, is a rather unorthodox interpretation, one that the present author does not find very persuasive on the whole. Not that it is completely without merit. The observation that Wilsonianism represents a kind of “crisis internationalism” is actually quite useful, and in the pages that follow, some good use has been made of the idea for analytical purposes. And, of course, the notion of world opinion is also relevant to any historical discussion of Wilsonianism. But neither “world crisis” nor “world opinion” really captures the essence of the Wilsonian system, whether those concepts are considered in isolation or in tandem. Wilson’s legacy is more complex than that. Thus, more than a few of the details in Ninkovich’s subsequent interpretive analysis are also open to question.

38 Ibid., 14-15.
On the other hand, the current study suggests that treating Wilsonianism more consistently as a tightly-woven system of multiple interrelated ideals—and exploring much more thoroughly the contingency and even the ambiguity inherent in those ideals—will yield more persuasive results. Utilizing this approach is really key to grounding our understanding of Wilsonian internationalism upon a solid foundation. It is imperative, as well, in ultimately explaining both the surprising adaptability of Wilsonianism—the “Wilson as Zelig” phenomenon—and its lasting influence in American foreign relations. And bringing in the peace movement as a worthy subject of study for foreign policy historians is a means towards that end insofar as it allows us to view the evolution of diverging Wilsonian traditions as they have grown and changed over time.

Research Materials and Sources

The original research upon which this study is based was done in the manuscript collections of the Swarthmore College Peace Collection in Swarthmore, Pennsylvania—“the most important single depository of peace research material in the United States,” according to Charles Howlett. It is a diverse archive first founded in 1930 and encompassing materials gathered from a great many individuals and organizations at the heart of the modern American peace movement. Among the archive’s collections the present writer has drawn on include those of the League to Enforce Peace, the Foreign Policy Association, the Woodrow Wilson Association, the Commission to Study the Organization of Peace, the American Association for the United Nations, and the Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy, among others. The materials located therein

include the published literature and public pronouncements of these various organizations—flyers and pamphlets, press releases, membership materials and donor appeals—as well as internal documents such as memoranda, financial statements, and private correspondence. It should be noted here that, because of the biases of peace history scholarship previously discussed, the great majority of these document collections are little consulted by contemporary researchers.

Another key source of material necessary for the present study consisted in the published works of important and influential liberal internationalists themselves. These men were, in many cases, noted public intellectuals or well-known in other professional pursuits, and they left behind a sizable literature of their own—personal memoirs, speeches, commentaries on contemporary events, and histories of the organizations of which they played such a prominent role. The collected papers of Woodrow Wilson and Franklin D. Roosevelt provide a wealth of source material, for instance. Other men whose works have been consulted range from Andrew Carnegie, Charles S. Macfarland, and Hamilton Fish Armstrong to James T. Shotwell and Clark M. Eichelberger. In some cases, liberal internationalist organizations like the Woodrow Wilson Foundation and the Church Peace Union commissioned and even published such works. Taken together, all of these sources shed some light on the web of ideological, organizational, financial, and personal interrelationships central to the thesis of this study.
Chapter One

The First Wilsonian Era

The history of modern American international relations may very well date back to the country’s emergence as a global power in the last years of the nineteenth century. Indeed, the war with Spain in 1898 was a milestone the importance of which should not be underestimated. And noteworthy developments in the years following the war, from John Hay’s “Open Door” diplomacy in China and a bloody guerilla war in the Philippines, to the construction of the Panama Canal and Theodore Roosevelt’s famous—or infamous—corollary to the Monroe Doctrine, also signify, in one way or another, the dawn of a new age in America’s relationship with the rest of the world. As influential as these episodes were in shaping the course of later U.S. foreign policy, however, they are ultimately overshadowed by the aftermath of America’s intervention in the World War of 1914-18. It is the ramifications of this truly epochal event that reverberate most clearly across the intervening decades as a defining influence on subsequent government policy.

That this should be the case is, by and large, the end result of one man’s great ambition—Woodrow Wilson. In the aftermath of the First World War, Wilson became a statesman of unrivaled global stature. And this was due, in large measure, to the blueprint he had crafted for a dramatic reordering of the post-war international system—and the ideals that his plan embodied. In fact, the credo of liberal internationalism he did so much to formulate served as a consistent, sustaining ideological basis for U.S. foreign policy throughout much of the twentieth century. But Wilson could not have created this tremendously influential edifice single-handedly. Even in its earliest stages,
internationalists in the American peace movement played a significant role in the
development of Wilsonianism—promoting and popularizing Wilson’s ideals during and
immediately after the war, and sustaining them long after Wilson himself had fallen out
of favor with the public. With their help, the president’s vision for a dramatically
reformed international order would endure.

The situation is more complex than that, however. Even in this formative period,
there existed the basis for significant alternative interpretations of various Wilsonian
precepts—alternative interpretations that would, in time, lead to conflict among
internationalist elites over how an ideal liberal world order should be defined exactly.
Indeed, the basis for conflict between latter conservative and progressive strains of
Wilsonianism was laid here. How did it come about? At least to some extent, it was
perhaps the inevitable product of a diverse and highly dynamic political movement
having coalesced around Wilson’s dream. Even in its earliest incarnation, Wilsonianism
was a “big tent” under which a range of different elites pushed conflicting policy
proposals and strategies. But it is also true that the seeds of future contention over the
ultimate meaning of Woodrow Wilson’s legacy were, at least to some extent, planted by
Wilson himself, either by word or by deed.

Woodrow Wilson and His Vision

American Progressivism, an exceedingly diverse movement of often-contending
activists, groups, and coalitions pursing an array of political, economic, and social
reforms, has always been notoriously difficult to define with precision—so much so that
any reference to a unitary “progressive movement” is, in many ways, inherently misleading. Nevertheless, Alan Dawley has usefully pointed out the fact that progressives in general drew upon multiple political traditions—“republican, socialist, and liberal”—in order to forge a shared reform agenda that “crossed national boundaries” to champion “international cooperation against balance-of-power politics.”

For early progressive political reformers in the first decades of the twentieth century, “changing the world always carried the double meaning of combating the evils afflicting their own society, while also improving the wider world,” according to Dawley.

And nowhere are the mixed origins and dual domestic-internationalist nature of the progressive impulse more apparent than in the improbable political career of Woodrow Wilson. In the decidedly peculiar three-way presidential election of 1912, which pitted the successful Democratic candidate against a Republican Party fatally split between partisans of “Bull Moose” progressive Theodore Roosevelt and incumbent president William Howard Taft, Wilson emerged as the nation’s leading progressive political leader—and, as it would turn out, the most consequential before the election of Franklin Roosevelt in 1933. “Political progressivism, however we define it, found fulfillment and reached its apogee under Woodrow Wilson,” in the retrospective judgment of Arthur Link and Richard L. McCormick. Still, Wilson’s considerable progressive political achievements were all on the domestic front during his first term as president. His supremely ambitious and grandiose international reform agenda, on the other hand—inspired as it was by the Great War—would be the defining issue of his

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2 Ibid., 1.
second. What did that reform agenda, and the rationale behind it, consist of exactly? There are five basic elements, all of which are outlined in the pages that immediately follow. And in the treatment below, something of the ambiguity in Wilson’s own thoughts and actions should become apparent.

*Crisis of the old order*

From its earliest formulations, the Wilsonian reform agenda contained no small dose of idealism, as realist foreign policy critics like Henry Kissinger like to point out. Unfortunately, Wilson has often been unfairly stereotyped as a starry-eyed dreamer as a result. In reality, neither he nor his successors were unmindful of the inevitable imperfections of the “real” world and the practical considerations that must necessarily shape foreign policy decision-making. As Frank Ninkovich has persuasively argued, Wilson’s prescription for a new global order was very much informed by a darkly pessimistic diagnosis of the dangers that plagued the old order. From the Wilsonian perspective, the world at the beginning of the twentieth century “was continually haunted by the fear of terrible failure,” as Ninkovich notes: “The interdependence of world society, the globalization of warfare, and the end of power politics and warfare as practical instruments of foreign policy were phenomena that, harnessed to a runaway modernity, could spell disaster for civilization of a kind never before witnessed.”

Wilsonianism, according to this interpretation, was, first and foremost, a “crisis internationalism” that defined the World War in “apocalyptic world-historical terms.” Interestingly, it was a formulation of internationalism well in keeping with the uniquely

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5 Ibid., 61.
American propensity for defining war as “an abnormal state of affairs… accounted for only in terms of an uncommon eruption of evil into the world,” as Russell F. Weigley once put it.6

What was the fundamental character of this world crisis? What was the essential issue that defined it? Wilson himself actually seemed to be of two minds on the subject. The increasing destructiveness of modern war itself was certainly a concern. He was very much aware that in his day “the great discoveries of science” and “the quiet study of men in laboratories” had been turned to the development of terrible new weapons that increasingly threatened the very basis of modern civilization.7 Indeed, he was concerned enough about the situation that he openly advocated disarmament as a fundamental element of his proposed postwar peace settlement, as we shall soon see. Yet, he believed that the real root of the crisis then engulfing the world was not war or weapons per se, but the illiberal political systems that engendered war—“autocratic governments backed by organized force,” as he described them in his war message to the U.S. Congress on April 2, 1917.8 And Imperial Germany was, of course, the foremost exemplar of this autocratic threat to world peace. Charging in his war message that Berlin’s submarine campaign against neutral shipping in the Atlantic Ocean constituted a “throwing to the winds [of] all scruples of humanity” and international law, Wilson declared:

We are accepting this challenge of hostile purpose because we know that in such a Government, following such methods, we can never have a friend; and that in the presence of its organized power, always lying in wait to accomplish we know not

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what purpose, there can be no assured security for the democratic governments of the world.9

Wilson envisioned the forthcoming struggle against Germany as having truly epoch-making ramifications. For him, the war being fought in Europe was one that, in his words, harkened back to a quickly fading era, “the old, unhappy days,” when non-representative and unaccountable regimes, such as the one in Berlin, waged war for the benefit of greedy and exploitative elites: “little groups of ambitious men who were accustomed to use their fellow men as pawns and tools.” In contrast, the president foresaw the imminent dawn of a new age in world affairs in which “the same standards of conduct and of responsibility for wrong done shall be observed among nations and their governments that are observed among the individual citizens of civilized states.”10

But how, exactly, would this new age be ordered and administered? The new post-war international order Wilson called for was most fully elaborated for popular audiences in his justifiably famous Fourteen Points address to a joint session of Congress in early January of 1918, although the general ideals that underlay those proposals are clearly evident in many of Wilson’s other pronouncements, both before and after the war. Tony Smith has very usefully distilled Wilson’s proposed program down to four basic maxims, and we will make use of those maxims as categories of analysis: (1) national, democratic self-determination; (2) an open, interdependent world economic system; (3) collective security via international organization; and (4) an America engaged in world affairs to the purpose of ensuring the success of this vision.11

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9 Ibid., 525.
10 Ibid., 523.
“The cardinal aspirations of Wilson’s ideology,” writes Amos Perlmutter, “fit into phrases that, although admittedly clichés, included a world safe for democracy, free trade, open borders, open diplomacy, and collective security.”12 At least in part, such phrases are clichés because the basic concepts they represent have become so influential and widely shared across the globe at the dawn of the twenty-first century. While competing ideologies from the extreme right and the radical left—Nazism, fascism, and communism—fell by the wayside over the course of the last sixty years, losing much of their once formidable legitimating power in the process, the basic tenets of Wilson’s liberal internationalism rose to nearly hegemonic status, as Michael Mandelbaum has recently argued: “when Wilson unveiled his ideas at Paris they were utopian; eight decades later they had become pedestrian.”13

Wilson did not literally invent any of these ideals out of whole cloth, of course. Most of the precepts that made up his brand of internationalism were, in one form or another, well grounded in an American political tradition stretching at least as far back as the eighteenth century. Moreover, there were ambiguities in the president’s formulation and subsequent implementation of many of these ideas, just as was the case with his diagnosis of the crisis afflicting the old world order. Wilson’s “cardinal aspirations” were not always so simple and straightforward as they have often been portrayed. Nevertheless, Wilson’s unique contribution to the theory and practice of U.S. foreign policy was to take all these various basic concepts, weave them together into a coherent and systematic approach to modern international relations, and then articulate that

approach for public audiences around the country and across the world. For this very reason, Mandelbaum has quite aptly described Woodrow Wilson as “the Henry Ford of international liberalism.”

*National, democratic self-determination*

In what is perhaps the turn of phrase that he is best remembered for, Woodrow Wilson declared to the Congress in his April 1917 war message that “The world must be made safe for democracy.” And the promotion of democracy around the world is today the ideal perhaps most closely associated with Wilson. Indeed, as we noted in the introductory chapter, some recent scholars, such as Tony Smith and Walter Russell Mead, have defined Wilsonianism as consisting in the advancement of global democracy first and foremost. This conception of the Wilsonian worldview is too narrow, certainly. Yet there is no denying the centrality of democracy in Wilson’s thinking.

But how did the president define democratic governance? On a very basic level, his was a very different conception from that which had animated the founding generation in the late eighteenth century. Indeed, years before, during his successful career as an academic political scientist and scholar of American government, Wilson had written critically of the institutional limitations on democratic decision-making that had been incorporated into the U.S. Constitution. And that places Wilson very firmly within the Progressive tradition. Where the founding generation had once looked upon governmental power as a potential threat to individual liberty and freedom, progressives

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14 Ibid.
like Wilson instead embraced the power of the state as a benevolent and nurturing force that would lift people up and help them to realize their true potential. In other words, the state would become the chosen instrument that the progressive elite would employ in their crusade to make a better world. This represented a fundamental reinterpretation of the American political creed—one in which the term “liberal” itself came to be defined, or, rather, redefined, by the “reform liberalism of Progressivism,” as Dorothy Ross put it. That is, under the new rubric of progressivism, such classical liberal precepts as individualism, representative democracy, and free market economics would all be adapted to social democratic politics.16

But beyond the embrace of state power, Wilson also consistently promoted a conception of liberal democracy that linked state sovereignty and popular self-government with nationalism—the self-identification of a people with a common national community and a nation-state. He was “the first world leader to respect the power of nationalism and to try to channel its great strength in the direction of democracy and international cooperation,” according to Tony Smith.17 For Wilson, the successful marriage of liberal democracy and nationalism was central to the struggle against autocratic government.

As we have already seen, the principle of democratic self-determination featured prominently in Wilson’s explanation of how the war started, insofar as that principle was honored only in the breach by nations like Imperial Germany. And it also played a central role in his proposals for a new post-war global order. “A steadfast concert for peace can

never be maintained except by a partnership of democratic nations,” Wilson told the Congress in his war message. “No autocratic government could be trusted to keep faith within it or observe its covenants.”\(^{18}\) That being the case, it is not surprising that the president emphasized the importance of promoting democracy and national sovereignty in the pursuit of peace and American national security. In truth, he had done so even before the prospect of direct U.S. intervention in the European conflict ever presented itself. At a May 1916 meeting of the League to Enforce Peace, an influential non-partisan advocacy group promoting the notion of a post-war league of nations, Wilson expressed what he believed to be “the thought and purpose of the people of the United States” regarding an eventual peace settlement:

> We believe these fundamental things: First, that every people has a right to choose the sovereignty under which they shall live… Second, that the small states of the world have a right to enjoy the same respect for their sovereignty and for their territorial integrity that great and powerful nations expect and insist upon. And, third, that the world has a right to be free from every disturbance of its peace that has its origin in aggression and disregard of the rights of peoples and nations.\(^{19}\)

In his second inaugural address not quite one year later, Wilson reiterated these same principles, which, he declared, “we shall stand for, whether in war or in peace.”\(^{20}\)

Many of the specific points in Wilson’s post-war peace plan further elaborated on these basic concepts. Fully eight of the Fourteen Points explicitly recognized the sovereign rights of various peoples across Europe and the Middle East, many of whom were still under the domination of, or otherwise obligated in some way to, the Central Powers. A more broadly worded statement on the “adjustment of colonial claims” was also included, stating in very general terms that, in questions of sovereignty, “the interests

\(^{18}\) An Address to a Joint Session of Congress, 2 April, 1917, *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, vol. 41, 524.


of the populations concerned must have equal weight with the equitable claims of the
government whose title is to be determined.”

Even as the president championed democracy and national self-determination, however, his own personal devotion to those great ideals was tempered by other considerations in both theory and practice. According to Lloyd E. Ambrosius, Wilson considered the development of a nation-state to be an organic, evolutionary, and historical process—a viewpoint he had developed from his own study of American history. It was a vision that emphasized disparate stages of historical development across the globe, where some peoples had developed the maturity necessary for self-rule, while others simply had not. Moreover, this vision was also decidedly colored by Wilson’s adherence to the common wisdom of his day regarding issues of race. Like most of his contemporaries, Wilson was convinced that Anglo-Saxon peoples rightfully occupied the highest reaches of a racial hierarchy and that non-white races consigned to the lower levels of this hierarchy were inherently inferior to whites. The refusal of the American and British governments to support a Japanese proposal for a clause in the Treaty of Versailles acknowledging racial equality undoubtedly reflected the influence of this racial ideology.

On the other hand, Wilson did not take this state of affairs to mean that non-whites were utterly incapable of ruling themselves democratically, at least in theory. The president did believe that, “when properly directed, there is no people not fitted for self-

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government.” But achieving that aim would, he thought, require the emulation of Anglo-American political models—and, in some cases, active guardianship on the part of the United States or other more advanced nations. In an address published in The Atlantic Monthly magazine back in late 1902, Wilson faithfully articulated this view of the “white man’s burden,” calling it a national “point of conscience” that America should prepare the people of the Philippines, in particular, for liberty and democratic self-rule by imparting to them the requisite qualities of discipline and self-control. And during his two terms as president, both the desire to promote democracy and a paternalistic sense of mission vis-à-vis non-whites would drive Wilson’s numerous armed interventions in Mexico and the Caribbean region.

An interdependent world economic system

As noted above, most of the precepts that make up Wilsonian internationalism were grounded in an American political tradition stretching back to the nation’s founding. That is certainly the case with the ideal that the country should be “integrated into the global economy on favorable terms”—an ideal that Walter Russell Mead identifies with Alexander Hamilton and his intellectual heirs. In the early twentieth century, however, Wilsonians would incorporate that basic ideal into their own vision of how the new postwar world order should function—a vision predicated on an integrated global economic system that would foster both peace and prosperity for all.

26 Hunt, 109-10, 132; Smith, America’s Mission, 5, 73-4.
The notion of free trade in the international arena is one that is often identified with Wilsonianism, and for a number of different reasons thriving and robust trade relations are certainly important in Wilsonian thinking, as the present study will make abundantly clear. But that is not the whole story. In the realm of economic policy, too, the influence of Wilson’s progressivism was also evident; no simple advocate of laissez faire was Woodrow Wilson. Believing that the main task of Progressive reform was to revitalize free enterprise by opening up markets to more competition, his 1912 “New Freedom” campaign platform emphasized equality of opportunity and a market unfettered by private monopoly or special privilege. And for that very reason, Wilson was much inclined to advocate strong government action to break up the monopolistic trusts whose unrestrained power he routinely attacked as a candidate on the campaign trail. Indeed, during the years of his first administration, he introduced a series of far-reaching progressive reforms that followed through on that advocacy by greatly expanding the role of the federal government in the national economy, most notably by the establishment of the Federal Trade Commission and the Federal Reserve System. For all the harsh criticism Wilson leveled against progressive opponent Theodore Roosevelt’s “New Nationalism” program during the 1912 campaign as being coercive and paternalistic, he, no less than TR, would become in actual practice a champion of the newly-emerging regulatory state—an increasingly powerful administrative apparatus run by scientific and technical “experts.”

This basic scheme of a mixed economy—a free market overlaid by a progressive regulatory state—is one that Wilson would eventually bring to the international system, as well. But that would only take place in the wake of the First World War, when the
opportunity to create such a system presented itself. During the years of his first term, in contrast, Wilson was by necessity more focused on what could be achieved directly from Washington. Even so, one can easily discern the continuities between his progressive economic policy in the domestic realm and his evolving approach to worldwide issues.

In Wilson’s day, the international economic system was already an increasingly globalized one—the first era of real globalization actually occurred in the second half of the nineteenth century and extended into the first decades of the twentieth. And it was a system into which America was already deeply interwoven, as Wilson well knew—hence his early interest in it. As far back as the aftermath of the war with Spain, he had written that the United States “had come to a turning point in the progress of the nation,” and that, in the future, the country would be making a transition “from developing its own resources” to conquering “the markets of the world.”\(^{28}\) That being the case, he made international trade a major issue during his 1912 presidential campaign; and he placed tariff reform squarely at the forefront of his first legislative program once he had been elected. Just as was the case on the domestic front, Wilson believed that government policy should be guided as well by the idea of fostering the competitiveness of American business in expanding global markets. And for him, that necessarily meant lowering trade barriers—barriers that, in his view, had become a form of political patronage in the service of well-connected business interests. “We must build up trade, especially foreign trade,” Wilson told a joint session of Congress in April 1913. “We need the outlet and the enlarged field of energy more than we ever did before.”\(^{29}\)


As important as the issue of foreign trade was before the World War, it took on much greater significance once the fighting started. Both sides in the conflict sought to impede each others’ commerce as much as possible, and that, as much as anything else, ultimately led to direct US intervention. The proximate cause of America’s entry into the conflict, in fact, was the resumption by Imperial Germany of unrestricted submarine warfare against shipping bound for British ports in early 1917—a new form of warfare that inevitably entailed the violation of the traditional rights of neutral, non-combatant nations. And that is something that the government in Washington was not going to let pass. Since the nation’s founding, the United States had consistently championed the commercial rights of non-combatant nations during war. The Wilson administration’s defense of these rights, therefore, faithfully conformed to a long-established tradition in American foreign policy.

Even so, as the possibility of U.S. intervention in the war loomed, the president cast the issue in terms much grander than that of mere “neutral rights” and the promotion of American export goods. Speaking to the Senate on the subject of prospective peace terms in January 1917, Wilson argued:

So far as practicable, moreover, every great people now struggling towards full development of its resources and of its powers should be assured a direct outlet to the great highways of the sea… With a right comity of arrangement no nation need be shut away from free access to the open paths of the world’s commerce.

And the paths of the sea must alike in law and in fact be free. The freedom of the seas is the sine qua non of peace, equality, and cooperation… There can be no trust or intimacy between the peoples of the world without them. The free, constant, unthreatened intercourse of nations is an essential part of the process of peace and of development.  

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In other words, international commerce, economic development, and world peace were all inextricably linked, in Wilson’s view. For this very reason, the second and third of his Fourteen Points called for “[a]bsolute freedom of navigation upon the seas” and the “removal, so far as possible, of all economic barriers and the establishment of an equality of trade conditions among all the nations consenting to the peace.”

The reference in the document to equalizing trade conditions serves as yet another reminder that Wilson was not simply an advocate of *laissez-faire*. Nor was the system that was created in the immediate aftermath of the war, strictly speaking. Instead, the Allied powers at least attempted to establish a framework for more equitable economic relations amongst the nations of the world via international agreement. A “universal peace,” according to the pact negotiated at Paris, “can be established only if it is based upon social justice.” And the institutional embodiment of that commitment to social justice was the International Labor Organization (ILO), a League of Nations-affiliated agency tasked with fostering “humane conditions of labor” across the world through education, industrial regulation, and the recognition of “freedom of association,” according to Part XIII of the Versailles Treaty. In his attempts to promote the treaty directly to the American public in September of 1919, Wilson variously described Part XIII as “a Magna Carta of labor” and “a great charter of liberty for the workingmen of the world,” a guarantee “that labor shall have the councils of the world devoted to the discussion of its conditions and of its betterment.” And so, at least in rudimentary form, the postwar international trading system Wilson envisioned—the “open, interdependent

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world economic system referred to by Tony Smith—was in principle a mixed economy akin to that which was already taking shape in the United States at that time—an economy based on expanding trade but also incorporating at least some elements of progressive oversight and regulation as well.

Collective security

The ideal of collective security—that nations should jointly shoulder the responsibility for protecting and promoting their shared security interests—is one that long predates Wilson’s presidency. Yet, of all the various precepts that have collectively acquired the label “Wilsonianism,” this is one that Americans, both in Wilson’s day and much later, have associated especially closely with the nation’s twenty-eighth president. This is, no doubt, due to Wilson’s absolutely indispensable role in bringing about the creation of the League of Nations in 1920—and, paradoxically, his conspicuous failure to persuade his fellow countrymen of the wisdom of actually joining the organization.

Proposals for an organized community of nations appear frequently in Wilson’s public wartime pronouncements. While addressing the League to Enforce Peace in May, 1916, the president spoke of the desirability of a postwar “universal association of nations” that would guarantee freedom of the seas, as well as the “territorial integrity and political independence” of the nations of the world:

…the principle of public right must henceforth take precedence over the individual interests of particular nations, and that the nations of the world must in some way band themselves together to see that right prevails as against any sort of selfish aggression; that henceforth alliance must not be set up against alliance, understanding against understanding, but that there must be a common agreement for a common object, and that at the heart of that common object must lie the inviolable rights of peoples and of mankind.33

Such a common agreement would obviate the pursuit of traditional power politics and reliance on military force in the international system, he felt: “There must be, not a balance of power, but a community of power; not organized rivalries, but an organized common peace,” Wilson told the Senate in early 1917.34

The “community of power” that Wilson spoke of would be institutionalized in the postwar League of Nations. And the principle mechanism through which it was to exert its authority was world opinion, according to Wilson. “There is only one power to put behind the liberation of mankind, and that is the power of mankind,” Wilson told a large gathering at the City Auditorium in Pueblo, Colorado on September 25, 1919. “It is the power of the united moral forces of the world.” Attempting to drum up public support for U.S. membership in the League, the president reassured the assembled crowd that day that all nations participating in the new organization had to agree in advance to submit any disputes that might arise among them to binding arbitration, or, alternatively, public debate before the League’s Council for a period of at least six months. This legal process, in Wilson’s view, virtually assured that the “judgment of mankind” would dissuade any would-be aggressor from considering a resort to armed force: “The most dangerous thing for a bad cause is to expose it to the opinion of the world,” he claimed.35 Given Wilson’s expressed distrust of autocratic government, however, one can only surmise that this rosy assessment was also predicated, at least to some extent, on the expected triumph of democratization across the globe once the war was over.

Beyond his essential faith in the beneficent and moderating influence of world opinion, Wilson’s revulsion against the clandestine diplomacy practiced by various European governments—both before and during the war—also led him to promote openness and transparency as necessary virtues for the new post-war political order. “It will be our wish and purpose,” the president declared in his “Fourteen Points” address, “that the processes of peace, when they are begun, shall be absolutely open and that they shall involve and permit henceforth no secret understandings of any kind.” In fact, the principle that legitimate international diplomacy could only be conducted “frankly and in the public view” was codified in the very first of the Fourteen Points.\(^36\)

Quite understandably, Wilson took a dim view of the militarism of the prewar era, as well. In the decades preceding the World War, the major powers of Europe, loosely organized into two hostile power blocks, had kept unusually large military establishments under arms. And to Wilson, it was clear that such a state of affairs should never be permitted to develop in the future. “There can be no sense of safety and equality among the nations if great preponderating armaments are henceforth to continue here and there to be built up and maintained,” he told the Senate in January 1917. “The question of armaments, whether on land or sea, is the most immediately and intensely practical question connected with the future fortunes of nations and of mankind.”\(^37\) Not surprisingly, then, Wilson’s conception of collective security openly embraced negotiated disarmament “to the lowest point consistent with domestic safety,” and this element was also incorporated into the Fourteen Points.\(^38\)

\(^36\) Address to a Joint Session of Congress, 8 Jan., 1918, *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, vol. 45, 536.


\(^38\) Address to a Joint Session of Congress, 8 Jan., 1918, *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, vol. 45, 537.
The rhetoric of disarmament, especially, pursued by a cooperative “community of power” would seem to contrast sharply with actual practice in the case of the Wilson administration. In reality, the president was, if anything, all too willing to employ U.S. military power in the pursuit of the nation’s particular interests, whether in Mexico and the Caribbean basin, or in Europe itself as in the case of America’s intervention in the war in 1917. Indeed, as we will see shortly, some internationalists in the peace movement certainly foresaw an important future role for military force deployed in the name of collective security. But the conflict between rhetoric and reality, in this case, was more apparent than real from Wilson’s perspective. As a short-term, practical matter, he knew that such measures were necessary in a world in which each country had to shoulder the responsibility for safeguarding its own interests. Only a world reorganized around a “community of power” could dispense with armed force as the ultimate arbiter of international disputes, he believed—as long as the arrangement could be made to work, that is. But he apparently had no doubt that such an arrangement was, in fact, workable.

American involvement in the world

When the World War broke out in the summer of 1914, there was little prospect of the United States becoming immediately involved in the hostilities. As much as Theodore Roosevelt may have devoutly wished for it for nationalistic reasons, there was simply no political support for such an intervention. Wilson’s exhortation to Americans to remain “impartial in thought as well as action” with regards to the fighting in Europe was undoubtedly very much in keeping with the tenor of the times. And, not surprisingly,
“he kept us out of war” would become one of the defining slogans of his successful campaign for reelection to the presidency in 1916.

But Wilson’s early stance on neutral rights, as much as his willingness to eventually allow the Allied nations access to loans from private American investors totaling several billion dollars, belied his sense that the fate of the country, neutral or not, was inevitably bound up with that of the rest of the world. “We are participants, whether we would or not, in the life of the world,” Wilson told the League to Enforce Peace in May 1916. “The interests of all nations are our own also. We are partners with the rest. What affects mankind is inevitably our affair as well as the affair of the nations of Europe and of Asia.”39 In other words, in an interdependent world threatened by war, political isolation was simply no longer feasible, and it was unavoidable that the United States would have to become more actively engaged in ensuring a stable global system friendly to U.S. interests.

From the beginning, however, neither Wilson’s immediate war aims nor his proposals for a new postwar international order were justified solely, or even principally, in terms of narrow, national self-interest. Instead, in embarking upon war in April 1917, Wilson took some pains to emphasize the altruism of America’s wartime objectives:

We have no selfish ends to serve. We desire no conquest, no dominion. We seek no indemnities for ourselves, no material compensation for the sacrifices we shall freely make. We are but one of the champions of the rights of mankind. We shall be satisfied when those rights have been made as secure as the faith and the freedom of nations can make them.40

Indeed, the president had come to the conclusion that, win or lose, no combatant nation engaged in the World War should profit in any way by the final outcome of the conflict.

“Only a peace between equals can last,” he told the Senate on January 22nd of that year, just months before the country entered the war. Such a peace, Wilson was certain, could never come about from “a peace forced upon the loser, a victor’s terms imposed upon the vanquished.” Had the post-war settlement ultimately negotiated at Paris actually embodied this approach, a far more just and lasting peace may well have been successfully established.

In any case, if the nation was, in fact, “but one of the champions of the rights of mankind,” as Wilson put it in his war message, it was as a result of America’s unique world historical destiny, he believed. On that same day in January, the president had proclaimed before the Senate that the principles underlying his vision of a post-war order were both reassuringly American and universally applicable:

These are American principles, American policies. We could stand for no others. And they are also the principles and policies of forward looking men and women everywhere, of every modern nation, of every enlightened community. They are the principles of mankind and must prevail.

And in the work of bringing about this new international order, Wilson did not doubt that America would take the initiative. “It is inconceivable that the people of the United States should play no part in the great enterprise,” he told the assembled senators, for the nation had been founded “in the high and honorable hope that it might in all that it was and did show mankind the way to liberty.” As we have already seen, his administration had taken a highly aggressive political and military role across Latin America for precisely that reason, at least in part, and aspired to do the same in areas as far flung as the

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42 Ibid., 539.
43 Ibid., 534.
Philippines and even post-revolutionary China.\textsuperscript{44} Now the opportunity to take a firm hand in leading the entire world towards that noble consummation was, by all appearances, very close at hand, and he was not about to waste it.

This notion so integral to Wilson’s vision, that America was destined to fulfill a great mission of moral leadership in the world, was very widely held; few seriously questioned the notion.\textsuperscript{45} In fact, it has long been a central tenet of the traditional nationalist ideology of American exceptionalism—an ideology with historical roots going at least as far back to John Winthrop’s famous characterization of the early Puritan community of colonial New England as a “City upon a Hill.” The colonists that populated North America generally “entertained little doubt about God’s presence and superintending purposes in the settlement of the New World,” as Richard M. Gamble has written.\textsuperscript{46} And this “millennial enthusiasm” persisted. Progressively adapted by subsequent generations to incorporate a more secular vision of advancing modernity, material progress, and societal regeneration, it has continued to inform American politics and culture all through the intervening centuries to one degree or another—although, at least in the early twentieth century, one might still easily encounter more overtly religious formulations of the ideal as well. It is hardly surprising, then, that Wilson, on the occasion of an early postwar meeting of Allied peace negotiators in Paris, and in other instances besides, characterized the soldiers of the American Expeditionary Force as “crusaders, not merely to win the war, but to win a cause.”\textsuperscript{47}

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{Hunt}Hunt, 129, 132-33.
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At the same time, it must be pointed out that Wilson’s essential message was not simply one of righteous patriotism or American destiny—although to some extent it certainly was that. Nor, in the end, was it one of utterly disinterested altruism. Rather, the president’s public remarks during and after the war indicate an overt and quite sincere identification of U.S. national self-interest with that of the world writ large. In the new Wilsonian world order, American national interests would be harmonized with the larger interests of humankind through the triumph of universal liberal democratic values—values that, according to popular belief, the United States had embodied since its inception. But rather than simply serve as an exemplar of such values—a model for the world to emulate—as early incarnations of American exceptionalism like Winthrop’s called for, Wilson’s ambitious designs for the postwar world would require that the nation take an active role in institutionalizing these values and putting them into practice on a truly global scale.

Wilson, the War, and the Peace Movement

On occasions such as his address to the U.S. Senate in January 1917, Wilson expressed his sense that, in advocating a new liberal postwar international system, he was speaking not only on behalf of the American people, but also for “liberals and friends of humanity in every nation” around the world.⁴⁸ Considering the tremendous global stature the president achieved during the course of the war, this belief was by no means without foundation. And among those “liberals and friends of humanity” on the home front was a diverse and highly dynamic political movement drawn from various elements of the

American peace movement—a “big tent” from which numerous, sometimes conflicting influences on latter Wilsonian thought would originate. “Peace seekers played a measurable role in the development of Wilson’s internationalism,” Thomas J. Knock correctly noted—and his influence on them was even greater:

Their influence on him was not altogether decisive; but they helped prepare the soil that he was soon to till. He breathed deeply of the same heady atmosphere that they breathed and shared their confident vision of the future. He also maintained a steady correspondence with the leaders of the movement and supported many of their specific aims. As President of the United States he would incorporate into his own program their proposals for arbitration of international disputes and disarmament, and others pertaining to world federation.49

Their importance actually runs far deeper that Knock acknowledges, however. To the extent that Wilson bequeathed to subsequent practitioners of American foreign policy an ambiguous legacy, it was due in no small part to the efforts of the motley assortment of internationalists who chose to rally behind the president and champion his efforts to remake the world.

The First World War was the “great watershed” that led to the emergence of the “modern American peace reform,” in the words of Charles DeBenedetti.50 This newly-emerging modern peace movement was by no means a unified effort, however. Almost from the beginning, it was divided into two distinct wings, each representing a fundamentally different approach to the problem of creating a world without armed conflict. This division inevitably led to a terribly conflicted, contradictory response on the part of the movement to the Wilson administration and its war policies—a response that would largely work to Wilson’s immediate political advantage. In fact, the entry of the United States into the war in early 1917 exacerbated this fundamental division to the

49 Knock, 6-7.
point of establishing it as a defining characteristic of the peace movement at least until the late nineteen sixties.

On one side of the divide was a secular, progressive pacifist movement that would oppose utterly both the war and America’s participation in it. This new, politically oriented, transnational movement drew on precepts of nonviolence rooted in the religious pacifism of an earlier age. But it was, at the same time, “acutely aware of the need for social change in effecting the elimination of war and violence from the world,” as Peter Brock and Nigel Young have so ably documented.\(^ \text{51} \) It was typified by emerging organizations like the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), formed in April 1917 as an adjunct of the Religious Society of Friends, and the Women’s Peace Party, which later became the U.S. chapter of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF). It was also typified by influential progressive activists such as Jane Addams, who presided over the WILPF officially from 1919 to 1929—and in an honorary capacity for the rest of her life.

At the same time, though, the World War also inspired a younger generation of leaders to take up the pacifist cause. Norman Thomas and A. J. Muste were each some months shy of their thirtieth birthday when the war broke out in 1914. Ordained ministers, both men embraced pacifism in response to the outbreak of hostilities and subsequently launched into long and highly esteemed careers as influential peace activists. Their chosen career paths would bring both men into active involvement with the interdenominational, pacifist Fellowship of Reconciliation in the years immediately following the war. It would also lead them both into the realm of radical politics, with

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\(^ {51} \) Peter Brock and Nigel Young, *Pacifism in the Twentieth Century* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1999), 15.
Thomas assuming the leadership of the Socialist Party after the death of Eugene V. Debs in 1926, while at about the same time Muste was gravitating towards a decade-long embrace of revolutionary Marxism-Leninism. Nevertheless, they would each go on to play a significant role in the progressive pacifist peace movement for many decades to come.

On the other side of the divide, liberal internationalists, dedicated as they were to constructing a cooperative world order within a framework of international law and global organization, viewed the war from a much different perspective. Like secular, progressive pacifism, liberal internationalism was a new political force in the second decade of the twentieth century. But in many ways, it was actually a successor to what DeBenedetti termed the “practical reform enterprise,” the influential Republican-dominated “pro-law movement” led by prominent conservative lawyers, corporate and government leaders, educators, and Protestant clergyman that dominated American peace activism in the decades prior to the World War.  

And it is to this movement that we must now briefly turn.

To the extent that any one man may be taken as representative of this prewar internationalism, that man is steel magnate and philanthropist Andrew Carnegie. In an address at the University of St. Andrews in his native Scotland in 1905, Carnegie explained both the lengthy history of reform efforts directed at restraining and moderating the practice of war and the glimmer of hope this history gave him that “the days of man-slaying”might be numbered.  

No doubt, he believed that the development of legal devices such as peaceful arbitration were especially important in the ongoing

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struggle of civilization against war. On this particular occasion, a good portion of his speech was devoted to exploring the evolution and practical applicability of the concept. But Carnegie saw an even greater potential in a “League of Peace,” which, in his mind, could banish war utterly if the world’s dominant powers, acting in concert through such an agency, simply chose to do so.\textsuperscript{54} Indeed, the sketch he made of such an organization and how it would operate, including a worldwide membership, as well as the employment of arbitration, economic sanctions, and even cooperative military force to keep the peace, obviously anticipates the subsequent experiments in global collective security that would be undertaken during the twentieth century.

For Carnegie, world peace was a pressing issue, and he used his great personal wealth and stature to act. In 1910, he played a pivotal role in establishing both the forerunner of the World Peace Foundation and the present-day Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (CEIP).\textsuperscript{55} And that, in turn, would allow other, like-minded activists to make contributions of their own. The Carnegie Endowment’s first president, Senator Elihu Root, was, perhaps not coincidentally, another figure that typified this older, pre-war internationalist movement. Root was an influential Republican lawyer who had held prominent cabinet level positions in the administrations of both William McKinley and Theodore Roosevelt. In 1912, in fact, Root received the Nobel Peace Prize. That prize was, at least in part, given in recognition of his work in negotiating the Root-Takahira Agreement, which cemented, at least temporarily, peaceful diplomatic relations between the United States and Japan. Perhaps even more importantly, however, the award also stemmed from his great dedication to international arbitration. As Roosevelt’s secretary

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., 32-4.  
\textsuperscript{55} DeBenedetti, \textit{The Peace Reform in American History}, 84.
of state, he had negotiated no less than forty arbitration agreements, many between the United States and various Latin American nations.

These “practical peace seekers” were highly committed to developing legal and organizational mechanisms for the maintenance of world order and stability. But they were decidedly not pacifists. For example, after the United States finally intervened in the World War in 1917, the Carnegie Endowment, with Root at the helm, embraced Wilson’s war effort under the slogan “Peace Through Victory.” And as part of their cooperative endeavor, the CEIP forged a working relationship with George Creel’s Committee on Public Information, the U.S. government’s wartime propaganda agency. Some years later, Root himself would famously remark that the Endowment was, during the war, “almost a division of the State Department, working in harmony constantly.”

All the same, in the years after 1914, this prewar establishment was gradually eclipsed by a new internationalist peace movement—one with a decidedly different political orientation. “Emerging from domestic progressivism, leaders of the new movement comprehended peace more in terms of social reform than order,” according to DeBenedetti. “Ideologically and politically, they made up a movement of the left. More than ever, peace was to be known as a literal social re-formation.” In the pages of Origins of the Modern American Peace Movement 1915-1929, especially, the eminent peace historian emphasized the progressive character of the new liberal internationalist enterprise. Theirs was “a systematic effort to institutionalize managerial controls over the fragile interdependence of modern industrial civilization” he wrote—an effort predicated

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on “social scientific inquiry, an expert planning elite, and enlightened statesmen speaking on behalf of informed electorates.” Cooperative relations “under expert direction in the rational management of change,” they thought, were the keys to a peaceful world order.58

DeBenedetti’s characterization was true enough, as far as it went. Still, the new liberal internationalists were much like their conservative predecessors of a generation before in being very urbanized and cosmopolitan, “predominantly white, Anglo-Saxon, East Coast, and male.”59 And in other ways, too, the distinction between the two movements was perhaps not quite so clear cut as DeBenedetti suggested. In fact, some of the ideals formulated by conservative prewar activists became important in liberal internationalist circles—and even grew in influence—over the course of the twentieth century, as we shall see in the chapters that follow.

The aforementioned League to Enforce Peace, the group before which President Wilson outlined elements of his developing vision in May of 1916, was something of a transitional organization that linked these differing internationalist approaches by emphasizing the potential of international law and arbitration to maintain world peace—a point accepted by conservative and liberal internationalists alike.60 The League, as frequently pointed out in its public literature, was organized at a conference held at Independence Hall in Philadelphia on Bunker Hill Day, June 17, 1915, with no less a personage than former president William Howard Taft as its chief executive. And to publicize its formation and explain its origins and purpose, the League published a short pamphlet, the front page of which featured a fascinating illustration. It depicts a virile, heroic male figure perhaps intended to suggest Hermes—the mythological Greek god

60 DeBenedetti, The Peace Reform in American History, 92; Perlmutter, 33.
charged by his father, Zeus, with responsibility for “the making of treaties, the promotion of commerce, and the maintenance of free rights of way for travelers on any road in the world,” among other duties. In any case, the hero figure is shown descending from Independence Hall, which the artist has creatively depicted as being perched high atop the summit of a lofty mountain, much like Zeus’s temple on Olympus. In one hand, he clutches a scroll labeled “League to Enforce Peace” and in the other a sword upon which are emblazoned the words “power” and “justice.”

Subsidized by Carnegie’s World Peace Foundation, the LEP took as its overriding aim the promotion of “law and order among the nations” through what Taft personally described as a “League of Peace,” a global body which would use its “entire power” to require any member country “to submit the issue upon which that member desires to go to war to a machinery for its peaceful settlement before it does go to war.” As specified in the articles adopted at the Philadelphia conference, such “machinery” would necessarily include a “judicial tribunal” to address those issues that were “justiciable,” or amenable to resolution on principles of law, and a “council of conciliation” to take up any issues that, for one reason or another, were not. In the event a member nation flouted the prescribed peace-keeping procedures, this prospective world league could then, according to the LEP’s proposal, levy sanctions ranging from “diplomatic and economic pressure” to joint military action against the aggressor by other league members—a decidedly more muscular approach to maintaining peace than the one Wilson himself would ultimately

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endorse.\textsuperscript{64} “The chief instrument by which peaceful relations are promoted between individuals is law, interpreted by the courts and enforced, when necessary, by police and military power,” according to Taft, who was then teaching constitutional law at his old alma mater, Yale University. “No better way exists for promoting peaceful relations between the nations than the extension of this method to the international sphere.”\textsuperscript{65}

The League to Enforce Peace was instrumental in prompting President Wilson to publicly endorse the idea of an international association of nations as early as 1916,\textsuperscript{66} although it appears that he had already been privately considering such a proposal for at least a year or more.\textsuperscript{67} In fact, according to Arthur S. Link, the president had since youth considered a “parliament of man,” an international federation based on the American model, to be highly desirable.\textsuperscript{68} And his Secretary of War, Newton D. Baker, was likewise an early League proponent. Although he never held a leadership position in the LEP, Baker actually sat on the resolutions committee in Philadelphia that drew up the organization’s first official platform.\textsuperscript{69}

Nevertheless, if the administration was, by necessity, very much interested by events transpiring in Europe after 1914, the LEP, at least initially, was not. “The League does not concern itself in any way with the war now in progress,” Taft flatly stated.\textsuperscript{70}

Indeed, the League to Enforce Peace made it clear early and often that it was not a “stop-

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{64} League to Enforce Peace: Proposals, n.d., LEP MSS, Box 1. \\
\textsuperscript{65} William Howard Taft, League to Enforce Peace American Branch, “Its Proposals and What They Mean,” 3, LEP MSS, Box 1. \\
\textsuperscript{66} DeBenedetti, The Peace Reform in American History, 93. \\
\textsuperscript{69} Ruhl J. Bartlett, The League to Enforce Peace (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1944), 39. \\
\textsuperscript{70} William Howard Taft, League to Enforce Peace American Branch, “Its Proposals and What They Mean,” 1, LEP MSS, Box 1.
\end{flushright}
the-war movement” at all, but a body dedicated very specifically to the task of reshaping the postwar world. Pacifism was not part of its creed. Instead, the League’s own proposals certainly indicate that the organization was not opposed in principle to the use of military force, at least under certain circumstances. And this position was reflected in the public pronouncements of its leadership. “I respect the views of Pacifists and those who advocate the doctrine of non-resistance as the only Christian doctrine,” Taft told a meeting of the National Educational Association in July of 1916:

Still, it seems to me that in the necessity of preserving our civilization and saving our country’s freedom and individual liberty maintained now for 125 years, we have no right to assume that we have passed beyond the period in history when nations are affected by the same frailties and the same temptations to cupidity, cruelty and injustice as men… The time has not come when we can afford to give up the threat of the police and the use of force to back up and sustain the obligation of moral duty.  

In fact, as early as mid-September of the previous year, only three months after its founding, the LEP’s executive committee had passed a resolution expressing the opinion that “efficient preparation for adequate national defense is in no way inconsistent with the purpose of the League, but, on the contrary, is essential thereto.”

As the apparent likelihood of the nation’s entry into the war increased in early 1917, the LEP responded by increasingly throwing its support behind Wilson’s policies. And in the months following the declaration of war in April, the organization proceeded to make good on the sweeping offer of “unstinted support” it extended to the administration “in all measures for the victory over the military power of the Kaiser.”

In a report submitted to the National Committee of Patriotic Societies, the League described

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72 Resolutions Adopted by the Executive Committee League to Enforce Peace, n.d., LEP MSS, Box 1.
73 Platform Adopted by League to Enforce Peace at the “Win the War for Permanent Peace” Convention, Philadelphia, May 17, 1918, LEP MSS, Box 1.
its wartime duty as: (1) emphasizing for the public the “high purpose” of the war; (2) actively promoting “Win-The-War Activities”; (3) opposing any “premature” or German-sponsored peace efforts; and (4) advocating, as it always had, for a postwar league of nations. In the summer of 1917 alone, the organization reported having distributed almost 300,000 pieces of pro-war literature. By its own account, it had also sponsored, through its own National Speakers Bureau, a nation-wide program of popular lectures attended by over 3.8 million people during those months. Moreover, both the League’s national offices and its various state branches also participated in the government’s Liberty Loan campaigns, helping to raise money for the war effort.\textsuperscript{74}

Not surprisingly, Taft himself was one of the most prominent public speakers associated with the LEP, traveling widely to promote both the war and the organization’s wartime aims. In Montreal on September 26, 1917, for instance, he echoed Wilson’s warnings about the grave dangers to peace and democracy posed by a Prussian war machine animated by “a dream of Germanizing the world.”\textsuperscript{75} Despite the terrible costs that the ongoing conflict inevitably entailed, the temptation to make an early peace with the government in Berlin must be resisted, the former president warned—especially if such an arrangement would allow the “Prussian military caste” to survive in power.\textsuperscript{76} The League subsequently published and distributed 125,000 copies of the speech.\textsuperscript{77} But soon enough, Taft was contributing more than just words to the war effort. In fact, Wilson

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{74} Report of the League to Enforce Peace to the National Committee of Patriotic Societies, n.d., 1-2, LEP MSS, Box 1.
\item \textsuperscript{75} “The Menace of a Premature Peace,” An Address by William Howard Taft, Former President of the United States, Delivered at Montreal, Canada, September 26\textsuperscript{th}, 1917, League to Enforce Peace pamphlet, 6-8, LEP MSS, Box 1.
\item \textsuperscript{76} Ibid., 3-4.
\item \textsuperscript{77} Report of the League to Enforce Peace to the National Committee of Patriotic Societies, n.d., 2-3, LEP MSS, Box 1.
\end{itemize}
appointed Taft to co-chair the National War Labor Board in 1918, giving the LEP’s president a direct role in the U.S. government’s prosecution of the conflict.

While the League to Enforce Peace grew enormously in size and influence during the war, progressives nevertheless considered that the organization’s favored approach did have some deficiencies. One such progressive, Paul U. Kellogg, editor of the social work journal *Survey*, lamented that it was apparently “concerned more with the machinery of international control than with the democratic principles which should encompass it.” And in the months after the Congress declared war against Germany, some internationalist-minded progressives like Kellogg would begin organizing to press their particular concerns—even if it came at the expense of a unified antiwar movement.

The American Union Against Militarism (AUAM), an “anti-preparedness” peace group in which Kellogg was heavily involved, actually splintered over the issue of U.S. involvement in the hostilities after war was declared. By September of 1917, Kellogg and Lillian D. Wald, along with other pro-intervention AUAM leaders, had broken with the Union entirely and begun laying the groundwork for a new organization of like-minded liberal internationalists, which they initially dubbed, curiously, the “Committee on Nothing At All.”

At the behest of Kellogg, this new concern, which shortly adopted the more appropriate and descriptive title “The Committee on American Policy in International Relations,” began meeting in earnest in New York City during the spring of 1918 to “discuss the fabric of a peace worthwhile,” as he would later put it. Among those present at the first conference, which took place on April 23rd, were Charles A. Beard and

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philosophy professor Will Durant, both recently of Columbia University, and Herbert Croley, editor of *The New Republic*. But joining the group in subsequent gatherings, in addition to Wald, were Harvard international law professor Manley O. Hudson and H. E. W. Folsbroke, dean of the General Theological Seminary, as well as historian James T. Shotwell, a close friend of Beard’s, philosopher John Dewey, and public law professor Joseph P. Chamberlain—the latter three all affiliated with Columbia.\(^7^9\) It was an impressive collection of progressive-minded activists and prominent intellectuals, all gathered in dedicated support of the President’s vision for a new world order.

At least during the war, however, their support for the president only found public expression through other avenues or remained largely behind the scenes. Perhaps not entirely by coincidence, professors Hudson, Shotwell, and others meeting privately in New York with Kellogg’s committee were at the same time involved with the Special Committee of Inquiry, a secretive study group organized by journalist Walter Lippmann and White House foreign affairs advisor Colonel Edward M. House to supply the administration with information and analysis pertaining to the upcoming peace conference and Wilson’s ambitious postwar plans.\(^8^0\) Concurrently, Shotwell, along with colleagues Fredrick Jackson Turner and J. Franklin Jameson, had also created a National Board of Historical Service under the rubric of the Committee on Public Information. With financial support from the Carnegie Endowment, the Board organized and supported historians publicly extolling the war effort—and, in many cases, also privately working in the Inquiry.\(^8^1\)

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\(^7^9\) *Ibid.*, 4, 7-9.
\(^8^0\) DeBenedetti, *The Peace Reform in American History*, 100.
Kellogg’s New York group continued to meet regularly throughout the summer. But they would not adopt an official set of “war aims” until October 10, 1918—almost exactly one month before the fighting came to an end. And it was late November, some sixteen days after Germany signed the armistice, before the committee, now rechristened the League of Free Nations Association (LFNA), belatedly disseminated those “war aims” in the form of a public statement of principles—a statement that included a call to “all liberal-minded men” to take up President Wilson’s vision of a new postwar international order.  

Among the 129 “liberal-minded men” whose names were affixed to the document was Hamilton Holt, an activist affiliated with the New York Peace Society and, since 1897, editor of The Independent, a weekly Congregationalist journal dating back to the mid-nineteenth century. Holt, interestingly enough, was also a founding member and vice-chairman of the executive committee of the League to Enforce Peace, where he had pushed the idea of the United States being a neutral mediator in the war prior to 1917. In fact, it was at Holt’s suggestion that William Howard Taft had been brought into the LEP. And he was a trustee of the Church Peace Union (CPU), an interdenominational organization founded by Andrew Carnegie in February 1914 to promote peace activism through the nation’s churches.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, liberal Christianity “spread widely through the mainline Protestant denominations—including the Methodist, Presbyterian, American Baptist, Congregational, Episcopal, and Lutheran churches—to

which the United States’ social, intellectual, and economic elites have generally belonged,” according to Walter Russell Mead—a development he ties to the decline of Biblical literalism in the face of Darwinian and modern literary criticism. Practicing a strand of Protestantism that finds “the core of Christianity in its ethical teachings rather than in its classical doctrines,” liberal Christians “have often seen the fight to establish the kingdom of God as a call to support progressive political causes at home and abroad”—including world peace and international organization, according to Mead. And they have often reached out across denominational boundaries and even to non-Christians in their efforts along these lines.\(^84\) The Church Peace Union was entirely representative of this increasingly dominant strand of Christianity in early twentieth century America.

So, too, was another organization with which the CPU enjoyed a very close relationship: the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America (FCCCCA). The FCCCA had been established back in October 1911 for the purpose of promoting “the teaching and spirit of Jesus” in foreign relations, in the words of Reverend Frederick Lynch, the Council’s first secretary and member of the League to Enforce Peace. In fact, according to Charles DeBenedetti, the creation of the Church Peace Union was, at least in part, the result of efforts by Lynch and the Reverend Charles S. Macfarland to “energize the toddling Federal Council.”\(^85\) For a period of several years after the founding of the CPU, Reverend Lynch actually served as secretary for both organizations, effectively allowing the Union to greatly expand its efforts to generate support for the arbitration of


international disputes among FCCCA member churches. And these organizations, “[s]trongly flavored with Congregationalist and Presbyterian leaders,” according to DeBenedetti, “each enjoyed unprecedented success during the First World War, as American Protestantism reached the apogee of its influence in modern America,” at least in its liberal incarnation.

How did these liberal Christian peace organizations respond to the outbreak of hostilities in Europe? Wide differences of opinion initially marked the membership of the Church Peace Union, Rev. Macfarland later recalled, with substantive agreement on little else besides “the need of a new world-order which would lead to the abolition of war and to some kind of league of nations.” For its part, the Federal Council, like many members of the CPU, supported President Wilson’s initial policy of neutrality while simultaneously opposing all measures aimed at enhancing the country’s military preparedness. In due course, however, both organizations would come to embrace both Wilson’s liberal internationalism and the American war effort quite enthusiastically.

“A world order built up by secular education and dependent on force has collapsed,” read an open letter to Christian churches published by Hamilton Holt and the other Church Peace Union trustees in February of 1915. “Christianity has not failed; but nations have failed to be Christian… The time has come to insist that the law of the jungle should be replaced by the law of humanity” in order to establish “international righteousness.” But how might that be accomplished exactly? The answer to that

88 Macfarland, Pioneers for Peace Through Religion, 48-51.
question was subsequently addressed at a series of conferences in New York City beginning in December 1916 and sponsored by the CPU, the Commission on International Justice and Goodwill of the FCCCA, and the interfaith World Alliance for Promoting International Friendship through the Churches. And the declaration that resulted, dated January 22, 1917 and signed by seven hundred church officials and interested laypersons, was unmistakably Wilsonian in its call for the establishment of a league of nations, arms limitation, and an “adjustment of territory and compensation” on the basis of “righteousness alone.”  

Less than three months after that document was issued, the United States officially entered the war, and whatever divisions there were in the CPU and the FCCCA over the merits of the conflict vanished from public view at once. A special conference held by the Council in early May to consider what role the organization might play in the war effort produced a statement declaring that, as both American citizens and Christians, “we are here to pledge both support and allegiance in unstinted measure” to the president. And in the long months that followed, the Federal Council undertook a multitude of war-related tasks, including building “liberty churches” to service the needs of workers in new war industries, sponsoring pro-war speaking tours, and supporting war relief efforts in France and Belgium. Meanwhile, the Union did its part by contributing much needed financial support to the liberal internationalist cause, helping to fund the war time activities of both the League to Enforce Peace and the Federal Council.

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90 Report of the Secretary to the Trustees of The Church Peace Union For the Year 1916, n.d., 62-3, CRIA MSS, Box 1.
92 Hutchinson, 175, 186-7.
More importantly, perhaps, the Church Peace Union, the FCCCA’s Commission on International Justice and Goodwill, and the LEP, working jointly under the rubric of the National Committee on the Churches and the Moral Aims of the War, bestowed upon both the American war effort and Wilson’s postwar agenda a measure of moral legitimacy they would not have had otherwise. As Reverend Lynch put it, the president’s war aims were “a new departure in the history of the world. They are not only moral in character, they are Christian… The President of the United States is demanding of the nations the same standards of conduct as that which prevails among Christian gentlemen.”

In retrospect, it is clear that Woodrow Wilson received the political benefit of the activities of all these various organizations insofar as they aided in both prosecuting the war and popularizing the aims for which it was being fought. Nevertheless, Wilson did not go out of his way to cultivate their support and build upon it—a point that features prominently in Thomas J. Knocks’ treatment of the subject. Rather, he seems to have assumed that the ideals that comprised his vision were so obviously right and true that they would simply sell themselves. Wilson was, moreover, enough of a partisan to remain ever distrustful of Republican internationalists, such as those who populated the League to Enforce Peace. And that goes especially for William Howard Taft. “Wilson had never treated his immediate predecessor with the consideration he deserved,” Knock observed. In fairness to Wilson, though, it should be pointed out that Taft sometimes gave Wilson ample reason to be distrustful. Most significantly, during the run-up to the

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95 Knock, ix-x, 153.
1918 mid-term elections, the former president publicly denounced the Fourteen Points and campaigned hard for the Republican Party as the true party of a postwar League—a remarkable turn of events that was almost certainly driven by Taft’s own ill-considered partisan calculations, as well as some deep personal misunderstandings between the LEP chief and the nation’s chief executive.  

Still, the larger picture is that of a very broad range of internationalist organizations comprising the peace movement—conservative and progressive, secular and religious—falling in line behind the administration and the war effort in order to promote political agendas of their own—agendas that, on the whole, clearly complemented Wilson’s. These internationalists believed, as the president did, that American intervention in the conflict could set the stage for an enlightened peace founded on a new postwar world order—a world order based on voluntary cooperation through international organization, world trade, and democratic processes. And in Wilson himself, they found a powerful champion for their cause, a statesman who spoke to and shared both their concerns and their ambitions.

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**Progress and Disappointment in the Immediate Postwar Years**

“The armistice was signed this morning,” President Wilson announced to a grateful nation on November 11, 1918. “Everything for which America has fought for has been accomplished. It will now be our fortunate duty to assist by example, by sober, friendly counsel, and by material aid in the establishment of just democracy throughout

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97 Knock, 176–7, 188.
the world.” The sense of triumph expressed by the president in this message is certainly understandable—and by no means unjustified. The American Expeditionary Force in France really had contributed decisively to the Allied war effort against Imperial Germany. And Wilson himself could feel confident that he was, at that moment, at the very peak of his prestige and power. Yet, in important respects, his curious statement that the country had achieved “everything” it had fought for was grossly premature. Wilson would have to struggle mightily at the Paris peace conference of January-June 1919 to craft a League of Nations Covenant that the other major powers would endorse—making compromises along the way that would become controversial back home in the months and years that followed. Indeed, building the domestic political support he needed to realize his postwar plans proved to be an even bigger challenge—even among some of the internationalists who had rallied to his cause during the war.

That struggle actually began auspiciously enough with a belated announcement of full support from the new League of Free Nations Association within weeks of the cessation of hostilities. Indeed, all of the familiar themes of liberal Wilsonian internationalism were clearly in evidence in the LFNA’s inaugural statement of principles, first published on November 27, 1918. For instance, the document echoed at least some of Wilson’s concerns regarding the defects of the old international system as regards to the maintenance of peace and security: “Under any system in which adequate defense rests upon individual preponderance of power, the security of one must involve the insecurity of another,” it declared. And that, in turn, inevitably leads to “covert or overt competitions for power and territory dangerous to peace and destructive to justice.” The point was relevant because, as the statement’s authors contended, the “individual

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98 Ferrell, 134.
preponderance of power” was the very cornerstone upon which the existing international order had been built. A new and more peaceful world order, on the other hand, would have to be grounded on a fundamentally different principle—that of collective security, as embodied in Wilson’s proposed League of Nations.

Equality of economic opportunity was another consistent theme running through the LFNA’s early agenda. In fact, the organization held up the creation of such equality among all countries as being one of the principle goals towards which a post-war League should strive. According to the association’s founders, it was “in the interest of the entire world that every nation should attain its maximum economic development.” And attaining that objective would necessarily require “a gradually increasing freedom of mutual exchange with its resulting economic interdependence.” To that end, they recommended that the proposed League of Nations take action after the war to end exclusive privileges and preferential economic policies among its member states, establishing instead equal access for all the world’s peoples, including those that had been colonized, to both natural resources and markets for finished goods.

Interestingly, the LFNA was also very much concerned in 1918 that a future League of Nations should not “develop into an immense bureaucratic union of governments instead of a democratic union of peoples”—a concern that foreshadows criticisms leveled against the League’s successor organization even in the early twenty-first century. To help prevent that from happening, the LFNA’s founders echoed Wilson’s call for an end to secret diplomacy as it had been practiced during the war just concluded. But beyond that, they put forward an additional proposal going far beyond

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99 League of Free Nations Association: Statement of Principles, 3, LFNA MSS.
100 Ibid., 3-4.
anything Wilson himself had contemplated—a suggestion that some kind of direct 
popular representation be incorporated. This, they thought, would ensure that “all the 
great parties and groups in the various states” would have a voice. It was a remarkable—
and, in retrospect, an exceedingly unlikely and impractical—arrangement, of course, one 
that could almost certainly never have been implemented let alone maintained. But it 
was, at the very least, a good faith proposal to “democratize” the prospective League, 
thus guaranteeing that the rights of minorities within each member state would be 
effectively safeguarded, according to its proponents.101

This call for democratic reform serves as a good example of how Wilson’s sense 
of high moral purpose was mirrored in the LFNA’s proposals. But nowhere is that sense 
conveyed more strongly than in the explicit appeals that the association made to 
American exceptionalism:

In search of freedom, our forefathers turned their faces to the West, set out across 
the Atlantic, and laid the foundations of an American commonwealth. Even in the 
free spaces of the New World they could not attain independence, unity, and 
democracy, in such measure as we now possess them, without struggle. It has 
remained for our generation, with these things not wholly achieved, to turn our faces 
toward the East and set out overseas across the Atlantic to aid the peoples from whom 
we sprang to achieve those things in the midst of the more rigid social fabric of the 
Old World, and against the forces of despotism, autocracy, imperialism, privilege, 
and militarism, which found their supreme embodiment in the Prussian scheme of 
world domination.

The principles of a “universal association of nations” would be “merely an extension of 
the principles that have been woven into the fabric of our own national life,” they 
declared, parroting the sentiments that Wilson had expressed before the U.S. Senate in 
January of 1917. The foundational documents of the country had “contributed to the 

101 Ibid., 6.
organized freedom of mankind, and in President Wilson’s state papers we have the elements of a new charter,” they solemnly declared. 102

With the war now ended, the League to Enforce Peace also began preparing for the upcoming political battles that would shape the postwar world. Four days before the League of Free Nations Association released the statement of principles outlined above, the Executive Committee of the LEP had adopted a new platform of its own—a “Victory Program” advocating a “League of Free Nations.” At least initially, the membership of this proposed League would have consisted of those countries that had belonged to the military alliance that had just won the war. But the long-term goal of the organization would be the promotion of the “liberty, progress, and fair economic opportunity of all nations, and the orderly development of the world” [original emphasis]. It would act to resolve international disputes by “peaceable means,” of course. Should that alternative fail, however, the LEP envisioned a global body uniting “the potential force of all the members as a standing menace against any nation that seeks to upset the peace of the world.”103 On the whole, the “Victory Program” was a fine distillation of the philosophy of “enforced peace” that the LEP had always championed. And the proposal was even subsequently adopted by the LFNA, if only half-heartedly.104

Otherwise, the leadership of the League to Enforce Peace did what it could to aid Wilson’s postwar endeavors. William Howard Taft and other senior members spoke out in favor the League ideal at a series of LEP-organized “regional congresses” held across the country in February of 1919. Meanwhile, a pair of prominent LEP leaders—Hamilton Holt and Oscar S. Straus, a former secretary of commerce under Theodore Roosevelt and,

102 Ibid., 7-8.
later, Taft’s ambassador to Turkey—actually traveled to the Paris peace talks to represent the group there and assist the president in the negotiations where possible.\textsuperscript{105} In due course, the organization officially endorsed the adoption of the League Covenant without qualification. Unfortunately, the LEP’s efforts to support Wilson were eventually undermined by internal divisions regarding a series of so-called “reservations” to the League Covenant proposed by Wilson’s nemesis, Henry Cabot Lodge, and his followers in the United States Senate.

For its part, the League of Free Nations Association, too, did what it could on behalf of the president by quickly moving to endorse Senate ratification of the Covenant. Paul U. Kellogg would later boast that the LFNA was “one of the few civic bodies in America which by cable, letter and interview threw its weight in the direction of liberalization at every stage while the covenant and treaty were pending.”\textsuperscript{106} In truth, however, the organization was “profoundly disappointed” with the agreements that had come out of the Paris talks. The terms that had been forced on Germany were terribly punitive. And because of various compromises Wilson had been compelled to make in the negotiations, there was a “considerable gulf,” according to later LFNA literature, between the League of Nations organization laid out in the Covenant and the “League of Free Nations” concept the association had originally envisioned—a harsh reality that they were “obliged to recognize with chagrin.”\textsuperscript{107}

As was the case with the League to Enforce Peace, this gulf led to much controversy within the ranks of the LFNA’s leadership over the ultimate desirability of the document. John Dewey, for one, balked at the prospect of supporting the president’s

\textsuperscript{105} Bartlett, 114-16.
\textsuperscript{106} Paul U. Kellogg, “Ten Years of the F.P.A.,” 11, FPA MSS, Box 1.
\textsuperscript{107} League of Free Nations Association, pamphlet, October, 1920, 2, LFNA MSS.
efforts to win ratification. Raymond B. Fosdick, a War Department official and civilian aide to General John J. Pershing at the Paris Conference who had known Wilson personally since 1903, having been a student of his at Princeton University, agreed that “there can be no hope of permanent peace” under the treaty.108 And a resolution adopted by the LFNA on July 8, 1919 echoed something of Fosdick’s assessment of the situation. Nevertheless, that resolution went on to urge Senate ratification of the Covenant without reservation. Desirable changes to the League’s organization and procedures could always be affected at some point in the future, they reasoned. The overriding task at hand was to get the organization up and running—period. The covenant, while far from perfect, represented “a beginning of such promise that its rejection cannot be held warranted under any circumstances,” the LFNA publicly argued. Officially, its position was that such a rejection would “turn the world toward universal anarchy.”109

Joining in the campaign for Wilson’s League also were the Church Peace Union and the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America. In May of 1919, the trustees of the CPU—William Howard Taft now among them—adopted a resolution endorsing the League covenant as “the first attempt to establish the principles of the Kingdom of God among nations,” and they urged “the ministers and churches of the nation” to work towards favorably influencing the Senate on the issue.110 The Federal Council similarly extolled the League as representing a “truly Christian international order,” and it, too, pressed hard for American membership.111

110 Letter from Linley Gordon to Professor William I. Hull, May 24, 1919, attachment, CRIA MSS, Box 1.
111 Hutchinson, 194-5.
Of course, in the end, all of their efforts came to naught as the Senate ultimately rejected the Covenant. It should be noted that Senator Henry Cabot Lodge and other prominent Republican treaty opponents—Elihu Root among them—were by no means isolationists. In fact, back on May 27, 1916, immediately before the president delivered the speech to the League to Enforce Peace in which he committed himself publicly to the ideal of an international league, Lodge had addressed the same gathering and endorsed the LEP’s basic proposals—with Wilson and William Howard Taft both looking on.112 And Root, for his part, while maintaining that the nation was well within its rights to refuse League membership, later came to lament the “[i]nsensate prejudice,” the “hateful and contentious spirit” of those who denounced the League and publicly expressed pleasure at the prospect of its failure, according to Council on Foreign Relations executive director Hamilton Fish Armstrong.113 Nevertheless, these men were “limited internationalists,” as Arthur Link once put it—men who saw a role for the United States as a world power, but who were also skeptical of force as an adjunct of international law and wary of approving an open-ended commitment to any system of collective security such as that provided for in the League Covenant.114 Beyond that, however, rank partisanship and an intense personal dislike for Wilson were also certainly factors in the opposition of both Root and Lodge to the treaty.

As it happened, League advocates found other ways to contribute to the construction of a new postwar order in the short term. Some actually devoted a measure of direct personal service to the fledgling international organization itself, for example.

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112 Bartlett, 50-1.
114 Link, Wilson the Diplomatist, 135-6; Steigerwald, 40.
Raymond B. Fosdick not only helped to organize the Secretariat of the League of Nations, he served as the League’s Undersecretary General in 1919-20. Manley O. Hudson spent some time working in the legal section of the League Secretariat. And James T. Shotwell, who attended the Paris Peace Conference as the official historian of the American delegation, also assisted the Labor Committee in creating the International Labor Organization.115

That committee, incidentally, was chaired by the influential head of the American Federation of Labor (AFL), Samuel Gompers. Gompers professed to believe that since “the whole evolution of law and government” was tending towards some form of “larger federation of the nations,” the “laboring men” of the world had an obligation to participate in the process to safeguard “democratic principles”—and he had told the first annual national meeting of the League to Enforce Peace in Washington D.C. exactly that back in 1916. 116 But other motivations were almost certainly at work as well. In the assessment of Charles DeBenedetti, the entire rationale behind Gompers’ support of Wilson’s war effort distilled down to proving “the patriotic respectability of organized labor” and promoting “its interests through direct cooperation with government and business.”117 No doubt enhancing the power and influence of organized labor in this newly emerging world order was an important part of his thinking—particularly where the AFL itself was concerned.

117 DeBenedetti, Origins of the Modern American Peace Movement, 84
But League of Nations membership for the United States appeared to be a lost cause after the treaty fight. And the results of the presidential election of 1920 only served to reduce even further the possibility of the nation ever joining the organization. Wilson sought unsuccessfully to make that election into a national referendum on League membership—only to see Republican Warren G. Harding elevated to the White House by a landslide over Democrat pro-League standard-bearer James M. Cox. Years before his death in 1924, Woodrow Wilson’s personal influence on American international relations had effectively been brought to an end—or so it appeared at the time.

Yet even that huge setback was not the last word on the subject of prospective U.S. involvement in multilateral institutions and the global issues they were created to address—not for many internationalists. In fact, in the years following Wilson’s departure from public life, a renewed political movement actually coalesced around the pursuit of such issues. In part, this movement drew upon the efforts of already-existing internationalist organizations. The Church Peace Union, for example, in increasing coordination with the World Alliance for International Friendship through the Churches and the FCCCA, had by the fall of 1922 initiated a new campaign to promote the idea of U.S. participation in both the League and the Permanent Court of International Justice—the World Court—among churchgoing Protestants.118

At the same time, this renewed movement also spawned a number of entirely new internationalist organizations. The American Association for International Cooperation (AAIC) was created in June of 1922 by a group of Republican internationalists including George W. Wickersham, a former attorney general from the Taft administration who had served on Wilson’s War Trade Board. The AAIC billed itself as a non-partisan

118 Ibid., 102-4.
organization seeking to “cultivate American public opinion” in favor of active U.S. involvement with the World Court and “International Commissions dealing with social and economic questions.”119 And a number of former leaders of the League to Enforce Peace migrated to the new organization, among them Wickersham, Oscar S. Straus, and A. Lawrence Lowell, the president of Harvard University. Indeed, Charles DeBenedetti deemed the AAIC a “lineal descendant” of the LEP, which had officially closed its doors several months before the new organization was created.120 Even so, those taking senior leadership positions in the association were often a varied lot. Among them were Reverend Charles S. Macfarland of the Church Peace Union, AFL head Samuel Gompers, and a New York City lawyer named John Foster Dulles. Dulles, a nephew of Wilson secretary of state Robert Lansing, had served on the War Industries Board in 1918 and subsequently attended the negotiations at Paris in the capacity of an adviser to the president on reparations policy.

Then, in the autumn of that same year, 1922, yet another new organization started coming together under the leadership of recently retired Supreme Court Justice John H. Clarke—a Wilson appointee—to begin again the work of building public support for American membership in the League. This group, dubbed the League of Nations Non-Partisan Committee, attracted many rank-and-file AAIC members, as well as prominent liberal internationalists like Hamilton Holt. Indeed, both organizations quickly came to the conclusion that “a division of forces working for more complete cooperation between

the United States and foreign nations would be most unfortunate." Talk between the two internationalist bodies aimed at forging some kind of working coalition began in early October, and by December the decision had been taken to merge both organizations into a unified League of Nations Non-Partisan Association (LNNPA), with Justice Clarke as president and Wickersham presiding over a newly created executive council. Within weeks, the new organization would claim a total membership of some 20,000 people.

The association was formally inaugurated on January 10, 1923 at a formal dinner held at the Hotel Biltmore in New York City. On that occasion, Justice Clarke delivered an address in which he emphasized, just as Wilson had during the war, the need for a new order in international affairs—as well as the necessity of American leadership in bringing it about. Unless the world’s affairs were “placed under some other and better control than they have been in the past, clearly another world war is inevitable,” he warned:

The inexorable march of events has thus brought our generation face to face with the fateful necessity of deciding whether the advance in science and learning, which we thought would make gods of men, shall prove the destruction of our social order with all its promises for the welfare of mankind, or whether with this advance we have also developed a wisdom and self-restraint and courage capable of achieving a corresponding advance in international government which will substitute justice and reason and cooperation for the brute force of war.

Interestingly, though, Clarke pitched his appeal to American exceptionalism in much more explicitly religious terms than Wilson did in his wartime pronouncements. In achieving the advances that were necessary in the field of foreign relations, Americans, being “a moral and religious people” accepting of “the teachings of Him who is called

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121 Letter from George W. Wickersham, Charles S. Macfarland, and Charles H. Levermore to Professor William I. Hull, December 28, 1922, LNA MSS, Box 1.
‘The Prince of Peace,’” rightfully belonged in “the van of the nations,” he said.124 And a “Statement of Principle and Purposes” for the new organization, published the following day, echoed those overtly religious sentiments.125

Beyond the fulfillment of the nation’s special destiny, Justice Clarke saw other reasons to support participation in the League. For example, it made sense from the perspective of “cold calculating business,” he thought. The reinvigoration of European markets so that they could once again take in sizeable amounts of American exports was, in and of itself, a rationale upon which League membership could be predicated, Clarke believed. Just as would happen after another great war several decades later, the economic well-being of Europe became a vital concern for American politicians and businessmen generally in the early nineteen twenties. The country produced surpluses of many goods, and the export of those surpluses would be impossible, as Clarke put it, without “an enduring international peace.”126

Although the appeal outlined above was pretty clearly couched in terms of national economic self-interest, Justice Clarke also had a very Wilsonian sense of how broad issues of world peace, international cooperation, and material prosperity were fundamentally interrelated. In that same address inaugurating the League of Nations Non-Partisan Association in January 1923, he expressed the opinion that the modern “state of dependence of the nations each upon the other” in terms of economic development would make a collective boycott by League members against any would-be aggressor a most

124 Ibid., 8.
effective substitute for what he termed the “savagery of war.” This was altogether necessary and desirable in any case, as a pamphlet later published by the LNNPA argued, since militarism was precisely what the League was created to eliminate—a point Wilson himself also took some pains to emphasize. A “Peace League bristling with bayonets would hardly inspire confidence.”

In truth, Justice Clarke viewed arms limitation as being absolutely indispensable if another great war was to be prevented. And it was precisely for that reason that he highlighted the stipulations of Article VIII of the League Covenant in making his case for U.S. membership in the League of Nations. That article, in language lifted almost directly from Wilson’s Fourteen Points speech, directed the new world body to plan for the “reduction of national armaments to the lowest point consistent with the national safety and the enforcement by common action of international obligations.” For Clarke, no other provision in the document “could contribute more toward securing the permanent peace of the world.”

By this time, however, the first groundbreaking steps toward international arms control had already been taken—and not under League of Nations auspices, interestingly enough, but through the leadership of the U.S. government. Even so, American liberal internationalists from the peace movement played an important role in making it happen. In the wake of the defeat of the League of Nations Covenant in March of 1920, the League of Free Nations Association had decided to make arms control a high priority in

\[127\] Ibid., 5.
its policy advocacy. In particular, the organization adopted a revised “program for immediate action” that December, the first plank of which staked out the association’s opposition to a newly proposed building program for the U.S. Navy. Rather than expanding the fleet, the LFNA championed as an alternative “measures leading to a joint understanding between Japan, Great Britain, and the United States for a naval holiday”—agreed upon multilateral limitations on the construction of new warships. And in April of 1921, a committee on armament reduction was formed to urge President Harding to pursue just such an accord. Among the members of that committee were future League of Nations Non-Partisan Association luminaries George W. Wickersham and Oscar S. Straus.130

An official call for a “naval holiday” was issued to Harding on June 1, 1921 by the LFNA, which had by this time actually changed its name again to the Foreign Policy Association (FPA), the name the organization still bears today.131 And at the same time, overtly religious peace groups also started bringing pressure to bear on the administration regarding naval arms limitation. Even as the FPA was appealing to Harding, The Federal Council of Churches was organizing a public campaign of its own to promote the idea of a disarmament conference. Indeed, the Council followed up on the Foreign Policy Association’s plea by designating the following Sunday, June 5, “Disarmament Sunday.” Meanwhile, the Church Peace Union was mounting a petition drive of its own, ultimately delivering to Harding the signatures of twenty thousand five hundred ministers appended to a resolution that also called for an international disarmament conference.132

130 “Foreign Policy Association: For A Liberal and Constructive American Foreign Policy,” pamphlet, March 1922, 5, FPA MSS, Box I.
131 Twenty Years of the Foreign Policy Association, booklet, March 1939, 5, FPA MSS, Box I.
132 Hutchinson, 196; Macfarland, Pioneers for Peace Through Religion, 84.
To its credit, the administration responded favorably to the suggestion. With the prospects of a naval arms race in the Pacific, virtual civil war in China, and rising Japanese-American tensions all apparently threatening the policy of the Open Door at that juncture, Harding had good reason to call for such a meeting. No doubt, the possibility of economizing on military expenditures was also a powerful inducement. And so an International Conference on Naval Limitation, more commonly known as the Washington Conference, was convened in Washington D.C. on November 12th and remained in session through early February of 1922, generating over that time a number of notable political milestones. Most significantly, the conference produced the first-ever peacetime arms control treaty—an agreement in which the governments of the United States, Great Britain, Japan, France, and Italy set limits on the tonnage of individual capital ships being built for their respective navies, as well as a fixed ratio determining the total number of hulls each nation would be permitted in the future. But there were a series of other weapons-related accords reached at the conference, as well, including a ban on the use of poison gasses in warfare and a freeze on the construction of new military fortifications in the Pacific basin.

Those achievements were substantial in and of themselves, but more was to come. Although it began as an arms control conference, the agenda for the meeting was soon expanded to cover broader issues of policy in the Far East, and several diplomatic agreements were also subsequently negotiated as well. The Four-Power treaty, a pact between the United States, Britain, Japan, and France, committed each nation to respect the territorial holdings of the other signatories in the Pacific region. Equally significant was what became known as the Nine Power Treaty—a treaty that, at least on paper,

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133 Ninkovich, 86.
guaranteed the territorial integrity of China and the policy of the Open Door in trade relations. Indeed, it was in this treaty that the Open Door was codified in international law for the very first time.\textsuperscript{134}

In the meantime, liberal internationalists also made at least some meager progress in confronting the issue of ongoing American imperialism in Latin America—an issue of long-standing concern in the peace movement for which Wilson himself must bear a substantial burden of responsibility. As Paul U. Kellogg would later put it, the United States was “no longer a new, weak country… but itself a great power, needing the restraints of an aroused citizenship lest we go the way of the old empires and exact our foreign will on the new and on the weak.” And so, with the prospect of another U.S. intervention in Mexico looming in the immediate wake of the First World War, a Committee on Mexican Relations put together by the League of Free Nations Association worked with the U.S. State Department to defuse, at least temporarily, a diplomatic standoff with Mexican president Alvaro Obregon.\textsuperscript{135} Then, just a few years later, in the wake of the U.S. intervention in Nicaragua in 1926, pacifists and liberal internationalists worked together to represent an “aroused citizenship” in the councils of government, successfully pressuring the Coolidge Administration to adopt a more conciliatory diplomatic posture towards both Nicaragua and Mexico.\textsuperscript{136}

Given the general political climate that prevailed in postwar America, especially, liberal internationalist successes during the period were hardly insignificant. The cause of international arms control had been successfully moved forward early on. And beyond that, a “globalization of the Open Door policy” took place during the decade of the

\textsuperscript{134} Ibid., 88.
\textsuperscript{135} Paul U. Kellogg, “Ten Years of the F.P.A.,” 12, FPA MSS, Box 1.
\textsuperscript{136} DeBenedetti, The Peace Reform in American History, 118.
nineteen twenties, coupled with an increasing acceptance of the ideal that an open world economic system should be a guiding principle in formulating U.S. policy, according to Frank Ninkovich. 137

Internationalists could point to few other successes, however, in bringing to fruition their enormously ambitious agenda. American membership in the League remained an ever-elusive goal, as did participation in the World Court. A follow-up to the Washington Conference held in Geneva in 1927 failed to make any further advances in negotiated arms limitation. And while a broad-based “outlawry of war” movement, including internationalists like James T. Shotwell, played an integral role in the evolution of what would become the 1928 Pact of Paris, or Kellogg-Briand Pact, subsequent events would amply demonstrate that the measure was at best only a token victory. With Warren G. Harding’s election-winning promise of a return to “normalcy” setting the tone, foreign policy in the years immediately after the war largely reverted to the older Republican “dollar diplomacy” of the prewar era. “It is difficult in these days to recall the atmosphere of spiritual defeat which characterized the early ‘20s,” Raymond B. Fosdick told an audience at a dinner in his honor given by the Woodrow Wilson Foundation some forty years later. “I remember once receiving an invitation to speak at a dinner of a well-known national organization—‘on any topic you choose,’ said the invitation. But there was a postscript to the letter, ‘Please do not talk about the League of Nations.’” 138
**Conclusion**

And so came to a close a remarkable period in American foreign relations. During Wilson’s comparatively brief moment of power and influence on the international stage, he had articulated a vision of a new world order that would make him the pivotal figure in twentieth century U.S. foreign policy. But the legacy he left behind endured in no small part due to liberal internationalists in the peace movement and the efforts they directed towards realizing the grand aspirations they had shared with Wilson—both during his presidency and in the years that immediately followed. These internationalists remained remarkably unified politically, joining with Wilson to highlight the grave dangers that threatened the modern world and the liberal ideals that would remedy that danger: democracy and national self-determination, collective security, an integrated world economic system, and an America committed to lead the world in the pursuit of those ideals. They kept Wilson’s core ideas vibrant and relevant in the years after the war—at least as far as it was possible to do so in the prevailing circumstances. And they worked steadily to promote them both in the halls of government and in the court of public opinion.

At the same time, however, it is clear that, from the very beginning, all of the essential precepts that comprise the Wilsonian credo were subject to differing interpretations by the various parties that comprised the “big tent” of the Wilsonian movement. As united as internationalists were on basic issues of public policy during and immediately after the war, there already existed, even in their earliest formulations of Wilsonianism, the seeds of future conflict over the precise definition of a liberal
international order. Such conflict was perhaps an inevitable product of the very diversity of the movement itself in its early days—although the ambiguity to be found in Wilson’s own words and deeds also contributed to this state of affairs. And it was from this essential ambiguity that later, conflicting conservative and progressive strains of Wilsonianism would eventually emerge during and after World War II.

What was, for example, the ultimate source of the transcendent crisis that threatened the modern world at the beginning of the 20th century? Wilson himself pointed to illiberal, autocratic political systems as the major threat—a point echoed during the war by William Howard Taft, who was then head of the relatively conservative League to Enforce Peace. On the other hand, more social reform-minded internationalists like Justice John H. Clarke of the League of Nations Non-Partisan Association emphasized the increasing destructiveness of modern war itself as a central issue. And as we saw early on, this was a point that had also been of some concern to Wilson.

How should the principle of national democratic self-determination be defined and by what means should it be advanced? Wilson was vitally concerned with the spread of liberal democracy around the world. His entire vision of a new postwar international order hinged upon it, in fact. But, unfortunately, as a practical matter, even in areas of the world subject to overt American hegemony, democratic governance often failed to take root during Wilson’s term in office, or even much later. Indeed, Wilson’s ideas in this field were actually rather conservative in a number of respects, at least in retrospect. He wholeheartedly embraced nationalism as a central organizing principle for communities across the globe—just as other progressive thinkers, Jane Addams, in particular, were already beginning to develop a more transnational, cosmopolitan perspective. And he was
also an early proponent of anticommunism, as well; anticommunism is a subject we will return to and explore in some depth in chapter three. On the other hand, Wilson was also quite progressive in his thinking, as you might expect. Authoritarian governments like that of Imperial Germany came to be anathema to him. His pronouncements against colonialism in the context of documents like his famous Fourteen Points speech endeared him to millions around the world—even if, in actual practice, he preached white racial superiority and intervened repeatedly in the affairs of Latin American nations. Indeed, liberal internationalists like those in the League of Free Nations Association, concerned as they were with equitably and consistently applying the principle of national self-determination, increasingly opposed the imperialism that Wilson and his successors exercised so freely, particularly in Latin America, during the nineteen twenties.

On the question of collective security, too, there were a number of contending schools of thought. In his public pronouncements, the president emphasized the ideal of an organized community of nations predicated on political consensus-building and the rule of law. It was a vision that quite purposefully deemphasized the role of military force in the maintenance of world order, as well. And that basic approach was heavily promoted by organizations like the League of Nations Non-Partisan Association, the League of Free Nations Association, the Church Peace Union, and the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America.

But others among Wilson’s supporters took a somewhat different view. William Howard Taft and The League to Enforce Peace were by no means set against world organization and the rule of law by any means—far from it. But they were obviously notable for advocating the possibility of organizing military force in the context of such
collective security arrangements. Indeed, as a practical matter Wilson himself did not shy away from employing such force in the service of a better world, as he did in taking the United States into World War I. And there was, arguably, at least the suggestion of just such an arrangement in Article X of the League Covenant—an article that called upon League members to “respect and preserve” each other’s integrity and independence in the case of “external aggression” [my emphasis]. Still, the LEP’s perspective on the utility of international “police action” was a decidedly minority point of view—at least in Wilson’s day. That situation would change, though, under the even more challenging circumstances of the nineteen forties.

How should the global economy be organized? There was certainly a consensus among Wilsonians regarding the desirability of a liberal world economic system based on free markets and free trade. But as the development of the postwar League of Nations and the affiliated International Labor Organization indicates, there were, at the same time, advocates of progressive reform, like Samuel Gompers, James T. Shotwell, and the leadership of the League of Free Nations Association, who diagnosed the need for some form of regulatory and oversight apparatus superimposed upon this system. Wilson himself had become an advocate of precisely this kind of mixed economic order at the national level during his presidency. And while his postwar plans focused primarily on access to markets, he also spoke highly of the ILO as well in campaigning for the League of Nations. In subsequent years, the important long-term issue for liberal internationalists would be identifying the most desirable or efficacious mix of regulatory and market mechanisms. Where, precisely, should the balance be struck between the competitive market and the regulatory state?
Perhaps only on the subject of American exceptionalism was there not an immediate substantive conflict among Wilsonian thinkers on how to proceed. Traditionally, this doctrine held the United States to be a moral exemplar for the world—a “City upon a Hill.” It is an enormously powerful notion that continues to influence the country’s politics even today. In Wilson’s time, however, a new form of American Exceptionalism was emerging, centered on the idea that America can and should be an agent of reform across the world, actively promoting the spread of those liberal democratic values that are the embodiment of the American political tradition. As a product of the Progressive era, Wilsonianism embraced the cause of reform, envisioning as it did a new liberal democratic world order, created for the benefit of all humankind yet firmly rooted in unmistakably American ideals.

But notice the extent to which the concept of America as moral exemplar was presumed by those who sought to transform the nation into an agent of reform. For many, like Wilson himself, American ideals and values were, by their very nature, of universal application. Meanwhile, some of Wilson’s supporters, like Justice Clarke and the Revered Frederick Lynch, for example, linked Wilson’s program with the advancement of universal Christian values which they believed America to represent. Either way, fundamental disagreements that were to take place in the decades to come among Wilsonian thinkers and activists would center on what particular reforms to champion—not on the larger question of whether America should be a champion of global reform.
Notes on Peace Historiography

Historiographically, the period of time covered in this chapter—basically the first three decades of the twentieth century—has been covered thoroughly by both peace scholars, on the one hand, and foreign policy historians writing on the subject of Wilsonianism, on the other. That this is the case is not too terribly surprising given that this particular time period, taking in as it does the First World War and its aftermath, is precisely the era in which both Wilsonianism and the modern American peace movement were created. Yet even here, the two distinct bodies of work evince limitations that may be remedied by bringing them into closer correspondence with one another.

Focusing as they generally have on the pacifist core of the movement, peace historians have not given the liberal internationalists of the period as much attention as they otherwise might. Charles Howlett and Robbie Lieberman, in their recent book *A History of the American Peace Movement from Colonial Times to the Present*, virtually excluded them from their narrative altogether—and they did so by definition. In 1914, “peace proponents in America were forced to reveal their true colors,” they write. “Those internationalists who were not pacifists supported the call to arms and left the peace movement.”139 The implication is clear—non-pacifists are not true peace seekers. And their account of the period in question reflects this very narrow perspective.

A few decades earlier, Charles DeBenedetti gave liberal internationalists a good deal more credit for their efforts. In his monograph *Origins of the Modern American Peace Movement, 1915-1929*, DeBenedetti offered an account of the origins of a number of peace organizations that would play important roles in the early development of

Wilsonianism, including the League to Enforce Peace, the League of Free Nations Association, the League of Nations Non-Partisan Committee, the Church Peace Union, and the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America. And he even devoted some attention to the activities that they pursued in connection with the 1919 Paris Peace Conference and the formation of the League of Nations, as well as the Washington Conference and other endeavors besides. But even for DeBenedetti, liberal internationalists were not his primary focus; somewhat less than a quarter of the full text of the book is devoted to them.

Moreover, as is typical of the work of peace historians, DeBenedetti’s work privileged the perspective of the Progressive–Revisionist framework. In his words, the modern peace movement that came out of the era of the First World War “conceived of peace as a process that progressed through the deliberate application of social scientific knowledge and adherence to nonviolent values.” And he counted among the movement’s successes resistance to militarization and “right-wing radicalism” in America, as well as the recognition that “integral nationalism” and “interdependent industrialism” had come together as an “explosive admixture” that only served to break down international cooperation and foster conflict in the modern world.¹⁴⁰ That last point, in particular, might have been common wisdom among the “social progressives” that dominated the movement, according to DeBenedetti. But it obviously runs counter to liberal internationalist thinking and the basic precepts of Wilsonianism.

The utilization of a Progressive interpretive framework shaped the narrative that DeBenedetti produced in other ways, too. His account, for example, treated conservatives, liberal internationalists, and church groups as discreet entities that were

frequently in conflict with one another. Indeed, he placed a good deal of stress on the
divide between “conservative legalists” and liberal internationalists, especially.\textsuperscript{141} By
shifting the emphasis from progressive pacifism to Wilsonian liberal internationalism, on
the other hand, the present study shows the relationships between these various groups in
a new light—one in which the cooperative efforts that they engaged in become much
more important in shaping political events across the country and around the world.

\textsuperscript{141} \textit{Ibid.}, 240-2
Chapter Two

Reinventing Wilson—the Rooseveltian Formulation

By the early nineteen-thirties, public opinion regarding America’s participation in the First World War had turned decidedly unfavorable. As he led the country into that conflict, Woodrow Wilson had proclaimed to the American people that it would be a “war to end all wars,” a war to make the world “safe for democracy.” But in time, it became quite apparent that it had done neither of these things. As a result, there was a profound popular disillusionment with World War I—unhappiness with the apparently hollow victory that had been won, and the terrible price that had been paid for it. Revisionist historical studies, such as Harry Elmer Barnes’ Genesis of the World War, as well as important literary works by authors like John Dos Passos and Ernest Hemingway, reflected this growing disillusionment. And it was against this backdrop that Helmouth Engelbrecht and Frank Hanighen’s Merchants of Death and George Seldes’ Iron Blood and Profits took the nation by storm in 1934, helping to establish the widespread belief that nefarious munitions manufacturers were to blame for diverting the country into what many now regarded as an unjustifiable and irredeemable bloodbath. Pacifist Republican Senator Gerald P. Nye’s subsequent Congressional investigation of wartime profiteering, inspired in large measure by those books, marked the nadir of Woodrow Wilson’s influence on American international relations.

Yet, in a remarkable turn of events, Franklin D. Roosevelt would succeed in resurrecting Wilson’s legacy and radically reshaping the political landscape by 1945. As historian James MacGregor Burns put it so well in the second volume of his landmark
biographical study, *Roosevelt: The Soldier of Freedom*, FDR, in the long, dark shadow of the Second World War, “picked up Woodrow Wilson’s fallen banner, fashioned new symbols and programs to revitalize old ideals of peace and democracy, overcame his enemies with sword and pen, and died in a final exhausting effort to build a world citadel of freedom.”1 If Wilson is the single most important figure defining the history of modern American foreign policy, no small amount of the credit for it must be given to Franklin Roosevelt for his role in revitalizing the fundamental principles of Wilsonianism and reintroducing them into the country’s foreign policy in the nineteen thirties and forties.

As was the case with Wilson, however, Roosevelt’s accomplishments were hardly won single handedly. In his labors, FDR would ultimately have the support and assistance of liberal internationalists from the American peace movement, even as other elements of that movement remained steadfast in their opposition to U.S. involvement in the Second World War. Indeed, both the split in the peace movement and the alliance subsequently struck between internationalists and the Roosevelt administration during this era mirrored, at least in broad outline, the political situation in which Wilson had found himself in 1917-18.

As a result of the Great Depression and, especially, American involvement in World War II, the principles of Wilsonian internationalism were effectively reestablished as the guiding ideology of American foreign policy not only for the latter years of Roosevelt’s own administration, but for at least the next half-century and beyond. Still, the Wilsonian program that FDR and his liberal internationalist allies created scarcely more than twenty years after the publication of the Fourteen Points was different in a

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number of respects from the one Wilson himself had championed. The transformation was more extensive than Burns’ characterization would suggest, in any case.

The new Rooseveltian Wilsonianism remained decidedly progressive in form. In several respects, it was even more progressive in that it placed more of an emphasis than Wilson had on: (1) war as the existential threat hanging over the international community; and (2) the regulatory state as a means of organizing the world economy.

In other respects, however, it was more ambiguous. As regarding collective security, the new iteration of Wilsonian internationalism retained the same essential approach that Wilson himself had advocated decades earlier in terms of its emphasis on world organization and the rule of law. At the same time, however, a stronger, much more explicit element of peace enforcement was introduced into those arrangements. That very important innovation, in conjunction with the experience of World War II itself, would have some far-reaching implications as Wilsonianism continued to evolve in the second half of the twentieth century. Meanwhile, the pursuit of national democratic self-determination continued as well, although here, too, there were shifts in emphasis as the promotion of democracy was sometimes deemphasized by Roosevelt for practical reasons—even as liberal internationalists outside the government were having increasing doubts about nationalism as a desirable value.

**Setting the Stage: Roosevelt and the Twin Disasters of the 1930s**

Two interrelated global disasters set the stage for the rise of Franklin D. Roosevelt to the presidency and the seemingly unlikely rehabilitation of Wilsonian internationalism.
that followed. The first of these was the disintegration of the world economic system with
the Great Depression of the nineteen thirties; the other was the parallel disintegration of
the post-World War I international political system during those same years—a process
that eventually culminated in a global war more terrible than even that of 1914-18. It was
in the course of his struggle to overcome the enormous challenges posed by these great
disasters that Roosevelt would cement his position as one of the most consequential
presidents in the entire history of the United States. And one of the principal means by
which he sought to overcome these challenges was through his promotion of a revitalized
and reconfigured Wilsonian internationalism.

As a young progressive Democratic state senator from New York, FDR had been
a great personal admirer of Woodrow Wilson, whose 1912 presidential campaign he
supported. Indeed, FDR wound up serving in both Wilson administrations as the assistant
secretary of the navy—by no coincidence the same office his distant cousin, Theodore
Roosevelt, had utilized some twenty years earlier in first establishing himself as a
national political figure. From that office, FDR campaigned early on for an enlarged U.S.
Navy that would safeguard both American commerce and political interests. Even at that
juncture, he was committed to the notion that American involvement in world affairs
would actually be mutually beneficial for both the United States and the peoples of other,
less-developed countries. But then, once the First World War began in 1914, Roosevelt
began campaigning also for stronger measures to ensure military preparedness in case the
country was drawn into the hostilities. In fact, by the fall of 1916, he had become an
advocate within the administration for taking the U.S. into the conflict. Still, it was only
on the return voyage from Paris that Roosevelt was first converted to the cause of the
League of Nations by an enthusiastic Wilson, who told him that “the United States must go in or it will break the heart of the world.”\(^2\)

Embracing Wilson’s vision wholeheartedly, FDR launched himself into a personal crusade for American entry into the League in March of 1919; and he carried that crusade forward into the presidential election season that followed. As the Democratic Party’s candidate for vice-president in 1920, Roosevelt campaigned vigorously as a Wilsonian standard-bearer—despite the realization that public support for such an internationalist foreign policy was already fading fast. Indeed, Republican candidate Warren G. Harding cruised to a landslide victory that year, as we have already noted. But as Robert Dallek pointed out in his landmark study, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy*, FDR carried on in the hopeful expectation that “Americans would ultimately return to their progressive faith and that when they did, he would be in a strong position to command their support.”\(^3\) Roosevelt was already looking to his political future.

In the end, he was right—popular support for a Wilsonian foreign policy would eventually come around. Ironically, though, Roosevelt’s own election to the presidency in 1932 did not herald such a shift—quite the contrary. With the nation sinking deeper and deeper into an unprecedented economic crisis that seemed to threaten the entire social and political order, domestic concerns were paramount during that election season. Under the circumstances, therefore, FDR ran a conservative campaign that for the most part avoided or otherwise deemphasized the subject of foreign relations. Even on issues of major importance to Wilsonians like himself, candidate Roosevelt sometimes had to

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\(^3\) Ibid., 12.
make pragmatic compromises. For example, newspaper mogul William Randolph Hearst was able to extract from FDR an explicit assurance that he would not seek American membership in the League of Nations as president. The fact that Roosevelt felt compelled to offer such an assurance may itself be taken as an indication of the mood of the country at that juncture—as well as the Democratic nominee’s ability to adapt under the circumstances.⁴ Such was his elusiveness on the question, in fact, that many out-and-out Wilsonians in the Democratic Party had first backed former Wilson Secretary of War Newton D. Baker for the party’s presidential nod that year.⁵

Roosevelt’s handling of tariff and international trade issues in the early nineteen thirties illustrates both his Wilsonian policy inclinations and the huge practical political limitations he initially faced in implementing them. There is no consensus toady among economists and economic historians regarding the precise causal relationships involved, but the onset of the Depression was clearly correlated with a complete collapse of global trade and investment. And that collapse, in turn, was preceded by a years-long trend towards “economic nationalism,” an embrace of protectionist politics in all the major trading nations of the world. “By the late twenties, each country was seeking to advance its own interests, even if in the process it worsened the positions of others,” Professor Robert S. McElvaine wrote in his history of the Depression era. “In a delicate, interdependent world economy, these ‘beggar thy neighbor’ tactics were suicidal.”⁶

McElvaine quite rightly holds up FDR’s 1932 campaign opponent, incumbent President Herbert Hoover as representative of such thinking on economic issues, being,

⁴ Ibid., 19-20.
as he was, “a dynamo in promoting both foreign sales and foreign investment” by American companies while favoring higher tariffs at home. Indeed, the draconian Smoot-Hawley Tariff that Hoover signed in June 1930, in conjunction with the inevitable foreign retaliation it provoked, did much to bring about the breakdown of the global economic system. At least one economist, Jude Wanniski, has argued quite plausibly that it was the Smoot-Hawley bill’s imminent passage by the U.S. Senate, along with Hoover’s promised signature, that actually triggered the infamous stock market crash of October 1929. Although he does not support Wanniski’s conclusion on this particular point, McElvaine agrees that the tariff enacted that year cannot be considered “anything other than a disaster.”

To his credit, Roosevelt spoke out against the Smoot-Hawley tariff in rather unequivocal terms while campaigning for the presidency, characterizing its enactment for an audience in Seattle in late September 1932 as “the road to ruin, if we keep on it!” Rather than going further down that road, he told the assembled gathering that he much preferred taking down such “unjust tariff walls” through bilateral negotiation in order to affect “a new deal in the restoration of foreign trade.” At the same time, though, he knew full well that the election would not turn on the tariff question. While speaking out in favor of reciprocal tariff agreements, FDR, in the interests of political expediency, increasingly drew back from making trade a major issue as the campaign wore on.

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7 Ibid, 35.
9 McElvaine, 33.
11 Dallek, 19-20.
Being the accomplished politician that he was, Roosevelt was adept at such maneuvering. Moreover, he was savvy enough to realize that the strong emphasis on domestic issues that characterized the 1932 election would have to carry over into the first years of his presidency—and, by and large, that his how he proceeded. The man FDR selected to be his Secretary of State, Senator Cordell Hull of Tennessee, had spent decades on Capitol Hill pushing tariff reform as a tool for promoting both global economic development and world peace. But the sweeping multilateral approach to trade negotiation he favored was rejected by the administration for reasons of political expediency. Instead, Roosevelt chose to pursue bilateral trade talks with selected governments. At least on that comparatively limited basis, though, Roosevelt pressed forward with trade liberalization as much as he could under the circumstances, knowing how important it was to the country’s future prosperity. And internationalists warmly welcomed the Reciprocal Trade Act of 1934 as a liberalizing counterbalance to the otherwise decidedly nationalistic orientation of the New Deal.\(^{12}\)

Nine weeks into his first term, Franklin Roosevelt told the nation in the second of his famous “fireside chats” that renewed American economic strength would “not be permanent unless we get a return to prosperity all over the world.”\(^ {13}\) At that very moment, meanwhile, a year-old disarmament conference in Geneva was just then on the brink of collapse, and so the president also addressed himself that evening to the need for a “general reduction of armaments” and their commensurate costs.\(^ {14}\) For Roosevelt, these two issues—international trade and disarmament—were very much interrelated, as he

\(^{12}\) Steigerwald, 123.


\(^{14}\) *Ibid.*
made quite clear in an editorial note that appears in the second volume of his collected public papers:

Already in 1933 there existed, as there still exists today, an amazing failure on the part of Governments to recognize that increase of armaments and increase of trade barriers go hand in hand with prevention of peace and economic rehabilitation. Armaments cannot be reduced unless trade barriers are reduced; and reciprocal trade increases cannot bring world stability without reduction in the vast amounts of money and labor tied up in the production of arms.15

In the introduction to a subsequent volume of his collected papers, written just six months before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the president again identified the arms race and rising trade barriers as the “two great obstacles to world peace in modern times.”16

Despite FDR’s best efforts under the circumstances, a worldwide disarmament pact was never a real possibility in the early nineteen thirties. Only a month and five days before FDR’s inaugural, a critical event had taken place in Germany that would prove to have fearful ramifications for the future of the whole international system—the swearing in of Adolf Hitler as Chancellor of that country. Meanwhile, in Japan, the onset of the Depression had helped clear the way for an aggressive clique of politically-minded military officers who systematically terrorized and then displaced that nation’s civilian political leadership. Their grand ambition was for a greatly enlarged Japanese colonial empire, divorced economically from the rest of the world and rationalized as an anti-Western “Greater East-Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.”

The drive to create this new, expanded empire was set in motion as early as September of 1931 when renegade junior officers of the Japanese garrison stationed in

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Manchuria staged a terrorist “incident” and used it as a pretext for seizing the entire territory from the Chinese. Confronted with this Japanese imperialism and riven with internal political divisions of its own, China appealed repeatedly to the League of Nations and the international community for assistance in the matter. But that effort was unavailing. For Akira Iriye, the “Manchurian Incident” quickly achieved “in the political arena what the depression accomplished in the economic”—the discrediting of internationalism, “particularly the kind that had prevailed during the 1920s.”

By March 1933, as Franklin Roosevelt was assuming the presidency, Japan, with its armies even then threatening Beijing, had already withdrawn from the increasingly irrelevant League.

In the realm of Latin American relations, at least, Roosevelt, Hull, and assistant secretary of state Sumner Welles did succeed early on in at least laying the groundwork for some future diplomatic advances. In his first inaugural, the president had explicitly pledged that “in the field of world policy, I would dedicate this Nation to the policy of the good neighbor,” and in the following years the expression “good neighbor policy” came to denote the administration’s approach towards the countries of Central and South America, especially. In practical terms, the policy represented an important and highly successful application of the Wilsonian notion of respect for national self-determination, even if the Latin American governments of the period were not always very democratic. Like Wilson before him, Roosevelt was inclined to believe that “in every country the people themselves are more peaceably and liberally inclined than their governments.”

Yet, like Wilson, he also had a healthy appreciation for the power of nationalism in

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global politics.\textsuperscript{19} While promoting democracy was important to his foreign policy, FDR attached a higher priority to opposing great-power interventions and spheres of influence in those instances where democracy was not a viable alternative in the near term. In this respect, his approach to promoting democracy was more selective and incremental than Wilson’s had been. It was an approach “leavened with a healthy dose of realism,” according to Tony Smith. It was also, as Smith points out, an approach “which in practice put Washington’s blessing on authoritarian governments”—the shape of things to come, regrettably.\textsuperscript{20}

Despite the success of the “good neighbor policy,” the overall political situation confronting the Roosevelt administration both at home and abroad in the early nineteen thirties looked increasingly bleak. “Can the American, English and French democracies learn self-discipline, maintain order and increasingly provide social justice?” asked Hamilton Fish Armstrong in 1934. “Can they meanwhile resist the glitter of dictatorship? Can they restrain the military menace of those nations which have succumbed to it, without allowing their own fears to lead them into provocative acts?” In answer to these questions, Armstrong, director of the Council on Foreign Relations and editor of its influential magazine, \textit{Foreign Affairs}, was at that juncture already looking forward to a revitalized future liberal international world order. “If so,” Fish noted hopefully, the democracies of the Western world “will again have the opportunity to begin building a system of collective security, and, corollary to that, a system of progressive disarmament.”\textsuperscript{21}


\textsuperscript{20} \textit{Ibid.}, 118-9, 121-22, 182.

The Peace Movement in an Era of World Crisis

As Roosevelt’s administration struggled to respond to the various crises enveloping the world, so too, in their own way, did the disparate elements of the American peace movement. Liberal internationalists, for their part, pressed on in their efforts to promote differing variations of a Wilsonian agenda. In the years after the First World War, they were even able to make common cause with outright pacifists in doing so, establishing a relatively stable and cooperative relationship that would endure into at least the first half of the nineteen thirties. For example, support for American entry into the League of Nations and the World Court was nearly universal among peace reformers of all stripes. Under such circumstances, then, it was not unusual to find the League of Nations Association (formerly the League of Nations Non-Partisan Association) lending its financial support to several pro-League “peace caravans” sponsored by the Peace Section of the American Friends Service Committee in 1934.\footnote{Lawrence S. Wittner, \textit{Rebels Against War: The American Peace Movement, 1933-1983} (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984), 26-7.} Nor was it out of place for the internationalist Woodrow Wilson Foundation, created in the early nineteen twenties by friends and admirers of the former president, to issue cash grants to both the AFSC and the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom during this period.\footnote{The Woodrow Wilson Foundation, \textit{Two Year Report & Forty Years in Retrospect: Report for the Years 1961-1963} (New York: The Woodrow Wilson Foundation, 1963), 68.}

However, intractable ideological differences remained, and the collaborative partnership between internationalists and pacifists would become increasingly strained as the prospect of a new world war began to emerge in the second half of the decade.\footnote{Wittner, 19.} In response to the steady advance of fascism and Nazism across Europe, increasingly left-
leaning pacifist peace organizations in the United States promoted American neutrality, particularly the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom and the National Council for the Prevention of War, an umbrella group for pacifist and like-minded organizations from outside the movement founded back in 1921. Generally subscribing to the belief that the impending war was an imperial conflict and that there were no meaningful distinctions to be made between the contending European powers, pacifist leaders strongly supported the Neutrality Act of 1935, the central provision of which was a strict prohibition of American weapons exports to any country engaged in armed conflict, regardless of whether or not that country was an aggressor. Later in the decade, these same leaders would even go so far as to establish an often awkward and uncomfortable alliance of convenience with isolationists on the political right in an ultimately unsuccessful attempt to forestall the possibility of American intervention.

The advocates of pacifism and neutrality could, in the years before America’s entry into the war, also draw on the sympathy of individuals like progressive historian Charles A. Beard, who had, in the previous decade, critically reevaluated his original support of American participation in the First World War. An open advocate of intervention as early as the Lusitania disaster in 1915, Beard had been active in the earliest undertakings of the pro-war League of Free Nations Association. After the war, however, Beard had second thoughts about his earlier activism and grew increasingly critical of the dominant interpretation of the war’s origins, which emphasized German and Austrian responsibility for the conflagration. Then, during the late nineteen thirties, as FDR increasingly moved to establish closer ties with Great Britain and otherwise

prepare for the European conflict he knew was coming, Beard launched into an outspoken and increasingly quixotic public opposition to the administration’s foreign policy—an opposition to which he would devote the last few years of his life, albeit at great personal and professional cost.

Prominent organizations that had wholeheartedly supported Wilson’s war effort in 1917-18 also shared in the popular disillusionment that followed—especially religious organizations. Perhaps not surprisingly, the postwar soul-searching was especially pronounced amongst the clergy, where pacifism was becoming an increasingly influential force. And it was perhaps for that reason, at least in part, that the Church Peace Union had taken the decision in 1926 to deemphasize direct political action in favor of educational endeavors—“evidently for the purpose of distinguishing the union from agencies of propaganda,” the Reverend Charles Macfarland would later write.26 Even in January of 1940, with the European war officially inaugurated and the question of America’s role in it a dominant issue in domestic political discourse, the organization’s annual report could still note that its efforts remained “almost completely within the educational field.” Admittedly, the group dealt in “some propaganda,” according to the study, but only “in the sense that the trustees are seeking to propagate the gospel of good will,” they explained.27 As this last observation subtly suggests, the Church Peace Union had not really given up on political advocacy and activism—not entirely, at any rate, as we shall see.

In the meantime, the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America was by no means immune to the same trend; its program during the nineteen twenties and thirties was, in no small part, “simply an expression of the widely felt disgust at the blood and dirt and futility and evil of war” that took hold of the country after 1918, as John A. Hutchinson would later note in his history of the organization.\(^{28}\) It was clearly this sentiment that suffused a resolution adopted by the Council in 1929 proclaiming that “the churches should condemn resort to the war system as sin and should henceforth refuse… to sanction it or to be used as agencies in its support.”\(^{29}\) And even after the onset of full-scale hostilities in Europe ten years later, the leadership of the Federal Council remained faithful to the judgment expressed in that resolution.\(^{30}\) Virtually on the eve of America’s entry into the Second World War, in fact, Hutchinson could still describe the FCCCA as being increasingly divided between its internationalist and pacifist elements, between the impetus to promote “American responsibility for some sort of world order,” on the one hand, and the heartfelt desire for world “peace, goodwill, or love,” on the other.\(^{31}\)

But nowhere was the divide between pacifism and liberal internationalism more clearly drawn than in the reaction of Clark M. Eichelberger, the new director of the League of Nations Association, to the organization of a pacifist-oriented Emergency Peace Council within the larger National Peace Conference in December of 1935. “I have been particularly embarrassed because I have been friendly with Ray Newton, Nevin Sayre and other leaders of the Emergency Council,” Eichelberger wrote in a letter to the LNA secretary dated March 4, 1936. But he also made it very clear that insofar as the

\(^{29}\) Wittner, 5.
\(^{30}\) Ibid., 22.
\(^{31}\) Hutchinson., 75, 193-4, 205.
three-point platform of the Emergency Peace Council was concerned—(1) support of the “existing peace machinery,” (2) peaceful change, and (3) pacifism—the League could only support points one and two.\textsuperscript{32}

As it would happen, “probably after 1935, and certainly after 1937 the pacifist impulse began to ebb,” according to Lawrence S. Wittner, “its strength declining in direct proportion to the rise of European fascism.”\textsuperscript{33} Not so the liberal internationalist impulse, however, which, if anything gathered strength as the outbreak of war drew ever nearer. Early on, they, too, had embraced the neutrality laws as a means of keeping the country out of war.\textsuperscript{34} But Wilsonians also believed, more than ever now, that the growing crisis required a new dedication to the systematic principles of world order that they had been campaigning for since Wilson’s day. And the crisis required, as well, they thought, a new dedication to the international institutions that had been founded in the wake of the First World War in accordance with those principles—especially the embattled League of Nations.

The Church Peace Union repeatedly pressed the White House during the late nineteen twenties and early thirties for some public statement of terms upon which it might find League of Nations membership politically acceptable—without result.\textsuperscript{35} And the organization remained devoted to the long-range goal of building public confidence and faith in “the possibilities of an organized world” through all of the turbulent years that followed. As Henry A. Atkinson wrote in mid-1939 to fellow Union trustee

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\textsuperscript{32} Letter from Clark M. Eichelberger to Secretary, March 4, 1936, League of Nations Association Manuscripts, Swarthmore College Peace Collection, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania, Box 3 (Hereafter cited as LNA MSS).
\textsuperscript{33} Wittner, 15.
\textsuperscript{35} Macfarland, 128.
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Professor William I. Hull of Swarthmore College, “Absolute pacifism as a way out of the present situation is not adequate if we stop with that.” The peace efforts of the churches, he told Hull, would be for naught if there was “nothing of a constructive nature that can be done to build up an adequate world community” with the “necessary agencies” to ensure security.\footnote{36 The Church Peace Union: Reports for 1939, CRIA MSS, Box 3.}

The League of Nations Association was, at this juncture, also totally committed to an organized world, of course. Certainly, American membership in the League of Nations itself remained a vital goal. Indeed, Columbia historian and newly-installed LNA president James T. Shotwell, who had served as chief of the historical division of the Inquiry in 1917-18 and, unlike his old friend Beard, never evinced any regret over his war-related work,\footnote{37 George T. Blakely, Historians on the Homefront: American Propagandists for the Great War (Lexington, Ky.: University Press of Kentucky, 1970), 144.} was convinced that some kind of American affiliation with the League was all but inevitable. The country “will not continue forever in a position which so manifestly violates its aspirations, mocks its ideals, and checks the return of that confidence upon which prosperity depends,” he wrote in 1936. “It is inconceivable that this comedy should go on.” Instead, Shotwell’s main worry was that the League might not endure long enough for the United States to “rectify its relations” with the organization.\footnote{38 James T. Shotwell, On the Rim of the Abyss (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1936), 323.} For this very reason, the League of Nations Association in the mid-nineteen thirties advocated what it called a “wise neutrality policy”—one that would minimize the chances of the U.S. being drawn into another war, but only as long as said policy did not also prejudice cooperative action with the League of Nations.\footnote{39 “The League of Nations Association,” pamphlet, 1935, LNA MSS, Box 3.}
Even at mid-decade, the League of Nations Association still clung to the hope that the international forum Woodrow Wilson had labored so hard to create would actually be able to keep the world at peace. Nevertheless, in a statement released by Clark Eichelberger in response to Italian dictator Benito Mussolini’s threats against Ethiopia in 1935, there is a palpable sense of frustration:

The world for four years has been steadily going downward in its sense of international obligations, moral and economic standards and capacity for democracy… An Italian-Ethiopian war may well sweep away the world’s last remaining dykes now holding against the increasing forces of moral disaster. For three years the Kellogg Pact and the League of Nations Covenant have been gradually weakened by the assaults on them of a few great powers, the failure of others to fulfill their obligations and the refusal of the United States to participate even to the extent of joining the World Court. War in Ethiopia might weaken them so as to produce a return to war breeding alliances and balance of power…

The United States is involved both in the causes and in the results of the moral catastrophe. The disease affecting the world is an international disease and the cure must be international. 40

Italy’s aggression against Ethiopia would not, in fact, single-handedly “sweep away” the last dykes holding “moral disaster” at bay, as Eichelberger feared. Yet the direction of world events was unmistakable. The League of Nation’s response to the crisis was wholly ineffective, and by May 9, 1936, Mussolini had officially annexed Ethiopia—a nation that had previously managed to maintain its independence even through the infamous European “scramble for Africa” of the late nineteenth century. Just as in the case of the subjugation of Manchuria by the Japanese some four years before, the Italian dictator’s victory was another clear indication that the entire League project was in very serious trouble.

To their credit, liberal internationalists recognized that their beloved global forum required, at the very least, some kind of overhaul. “[W]e believe that never before has its

40 Statement by Clark M. Eichelberger, August 21, 1935, 1-2, LNA MSS, Box 3.
fundamental principle of collective security been so needed in the world,” Eichelberger wrote of the League in a letter to Dorothy Detzer, National Executive Secretary of the U.S. branch of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, in the wake of the Ethiopia fiasco. “For only through cooperation with the existing international machinery for peace, only through remedying the defects in that machinery, is there any hope of avoiding the horror that is war and of maintaining peace and prosperity.”

Shotwell had reached a similar conclusion in the meantime, arguing in an internal League of Nations Association memo that the “lesson of the League’s failures” was that “a broader and stronger base must be laid for the structure of international relations.” Two days after Il Duce proclaimed Italy’s King Victor Emmanuel III emperor of Ethiopia, the Association issued a general statement calling for a reorganization of the League in keeping with the principles of collective security, the Kellogg-Briand Pact, and “the advancement of social and economic justice.”

In time, the Church Peace Union would begin calling on the Roosevelt administration directly to lead some kind of international effort to salvage the existing framework.

As the crisis built, Wilsonians also stepped up their calls for an integrated international economic system, as well—and those calls took a number of different forms. The reference to “social and economic justice” quoted above is worth noting in and of itself in connection with the issue as such concerns had been widely embraced by liberal internationalists by the nineteen thirties. “For years and years The Church Peace

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41 Letter from Clark M. Eichelberger to Miss Dorothy Detzer, May 12, 1936, LNA MSS, Box 3.
42 To the Officers of the National, Regional, and State Units of the League of Nations Association: Memo from James T. Shotwell, n.d., 1, LNA MSS, Box 3.
43 Statement on Reorganization of the League of Nations by The League of Nations Association of the United States, May 11, 1936, LNA MSS, Box 3.
44 Macfarland, 189-90.
Union, supported by economists, had proclaimed that tariff walls, trade discrimination and the unequal distribution of raw material were not only barriers to peace but breeders of war,” according to Reverend Macfarland.\textsuperscript{45} And by the mid-thirties, the League of Nations Association had also come to see “the economic causes of war” \textsuperscript{46} as especially significant: “the political work of the League for the prevention of war must be supplemented by positive steps for the improvement of world economic conditions and better distribution of raw materials.” \textsuperscript{46}

Elaborating on this theme, Clark Eichelberger, in a nationwide radio broadcast on New Year’s Day, 1937, characterized the emerging crisis as a “problem of world social justice,” a conflict between “have” and “have not” nations in which “Germans, Italians, and Japanese feel themselves cut off from the colonies and raw materials which are available to the Americans, British, French, and Russians.” Not that this in any way justified their expansionism, in his view. On the contrary, Eichelberger felt that the dictatorial regimes in Berlin, Rome, and Tokyo each bore at least some responsibility for their own nation’s economic plight and that they were all guilty of twisting their very real difficulties into illegitimate rationalizations for military aggression. Still, this “social justice” perspective was useful in bringing into clearer focus what he took to be the immediate task at hand: “Fundamentally, the problem is an internationalization of the economic life of the world so that all nations large or small will have access to its raw materials and its markets.” \textsuperscript{47} And Roosevelt agreed. At the behest of undersecretary of state Sumner Welles, one of the most prominent Wilsonians in the administration, FDR

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., 120.
\textsuperscript{46} “The League of Nations Association,” pamphlet, 1935, LNA MSS, Box 3.
\textsuperscript{47} Clark M. Eichelberger, “Peace or War in 1937,” January 1, 1937, pamphlet, 5, LNA MSS, Box 3; Statement by Clark M. Eichelberger, August 21, 1935, 3, LNA MSS, Box 3.
was, in fact, fully prepared in the late nineteen thirties to convene a world economic conference for the purposes of guaranteeing just such access to the “have not” powers.⁴⁸

While the idea of pursuing “social justice” through equal access for all to global resources and trade was apparently catching on, proposals for promoting it via a greatly expanded regulatory state also became popular in some quarters. In true progressive fashion, the leadership of the League of Nations Association certainly believed that the economic causes of war should be addressed, at least in part, through what Eichelberger termed “intelligent social control” via world economic planning and cooperation.⁴⁹ In fact, both he and Shotwell held up the International Labor Organization, the body Shotwell had personally assisted in creating at Paris in April of 1919, as an institutional model for the organization of such efforts. The LNA’s Program for 1937 called for the use of American membership in that body to promote social justice around the globe.

But beyond that, Shotwell also personally advocated the creation of a companion “International Economic Organization,” patterned after the ILO, which would effectively bring together the League’s other trade and finance-related activities. And he thought, as well, that a strengthened Organization for Intellectual Cooperation “adequate to the great task of international planning in science and the humanities” would also be beneficial.⁵⁰ Those much more ambitious proposals were never officially adopted by the association, however.

Otherwise, the leaders of the League of Nations Association and the Church Peace Union both decried rising international trade barriers generally, just as Roosevelt had done during his first presidential campaign. Indeed, the LNA campaigned for years

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⁴⁸ Ninkovich, 123.
⁴⁹ Clark M. Eichelberger, “Peace or War in 1937,” January 1, 1937, pamphlet, 3-6, LNA MSS, Box 3.
⁵⁰ Memo from James T. Shotwell, n.d., 2, LNA MSS, Box 3.
during the nineteen thirties for what Clark Eichelberger called a worldwide “armistice in the war of currencies and tariffs” that had been brought about by the Depression.\textsuperscript{51} And in the pursuit of such an armistice, the League of Nations Association director frequently extolled the thinking of secretary of state Cordell Hull.

As indicated earlier, Hull was a great champion of international trade as a means of promoting both global economic development and world peace. And that was never more evident than on the occasion of his being presented with the Medal of the Woodrow Wilson Foundation in New York on April 5, 1937 for his lifelong dedication to removing “economic barriers to peace.” In his acceptance speech, Hull declared that the “drastic upward revision” that took place in tariffs and other barriers to trade in the United States and around the world after 1928 amounted to nothing less than a “war after the war”—a literal resumption of the late World War by the world’s major powers through economic means. In his view, this renewed conflict could only result in “disaster, either in the form of military explosion or of an economic collapse.” And the only long-term solution that he saw was for all the nations of the world to “rebuild international political and economic relationships upon a basis of… friendliness, fairness, equality, and the maximum practicable degree of freedom in international economic relations.” This, the secretary of state declared, was the “type of economic peace that Woodrow Wilson urged upon the world.”\textsuperscript{52}

The Woodrow Wilson Foundation that feted Hull on that April evening in 1937 had been created some fifteen years before as both a means of honoring the late president

\textsuperscript{51} Statement by Eichelberger, August 21, 1935, 3, LNA MSS, Box 3.
\textsuperscript{52} Economic Barriers to Peace: Addresses on the occasion of the presentation of the Woodrow Wilson Medal to the Honorable Cordell Hull, New York, April 5, 1937, booklet, n.d., 10, 13-14, Woodrow Wilson Foundation Manuscripts, Swarthmore College Peace Collection, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania, Box 1 (Hereafter cited as WWF MSS).
and perpetuating his “ideals of democracy and human freedom,” according to an early statement by the Foundation’s National Committee. That Committee, interestingly enough, had been chaired in its earliest days by none other than Franklin D. Roosevelt. And a host of notable figures, some of whom are already familiar at this point, populated the new organization alongside FDR during its formative period. Hamilton Holt, for example, served as Executive Director early on, while long-time Roosevelt friend and future treasury secretary Henry Morganthau served on the board alongside Wilson aide Colonel Edward M. House and the Church Peace Union’s Reverend Frederick Lynch, among others.  

Also affiliating himself with the Woodrow Wilson Foundation was Hamilton Fish Armstrong, who became a trustee in 1925 and subsequently served twice as the organization’s president. In the latter capacity, Armstrong was present for the April 1937 medal ceremony for Hull. And on that occasion, he echoed Secretary Hull’s sentiments regarding the freedom of international commerce, declaring that any international political solution to the problem of war must include “some method of reversing the desperate measures by which nations have been trying to isolate themselves economically.”  

Like League of Nations Association director Eichelberger, Armstrong decried the strident economic nationalism of the time and spoke approvingly of Hull’s efforts on behalf of the administration to negotiate reciprocal trade agreements with numerous countries around the world—agreements that could only serve to move the world away from a “system that fosters political nationalism and war,” as he put it.  

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54 Economic Barriers To Peace, booklet, n.d., 5, WWF MSS, Box 1.  
The avoidance of war was still a paramount consideration for liberal internationalists in the peace movement even in the late nineteen thirties. And so, while they were very much inclined to promote international cooperation on questions of diplomacy and economic relations, military preparedness was another matter. The Church Peace Union’s program for 1938 held up “[u]nalterable opposition to war and preparation for war as a guarantee of national security,” along with arms reduction “down to the level of a police force,” as among the organization’s bedrock principles.56 And there were doubts within the League of Nations Association, as well.

“There has been proposed in some quarters a military alliance,” the Latin American Committee of the LNA noted in advance of the Eighth International Conference of American States slated to meet in Lima, Peru, in early December of 1938—an observation made in reference to the Roosevelt Administration’s efforts during that year to boost U.S. military planning for “hemispheric defense.” In truth, Roosevelt and Secretary of State Hull were intending to elicit from the participants of the Lima Conference a binding commitment to mutual self-defense in the event of an attack by “any non-American country”—a thinly veiled reference to Nazi Germany.57

But such a commitment the League of Nations Association was not prepared to endorse in 1938. Not that some kind of international military arrangement was completely out of the question. Just two years before, Shotwell had actually written approvingly of “regional agreements for cooperative defense as “an essential part of war prevention”—as long as the alliances were “not secret or bilateral alliances directed against third parties.” In particular, he had held up the Locarno Treaties signed by various

56 Macfarland, 94.
57 Dallek, 176.
European countries in the mid-nineteen twenties as an example that could be fruitfully emulated elsewhere.\textsuperscript{58} In contrast, what FDR and Hull were proposing did not quite fit that mold. In the judgment of the League committee, the Administration’s proposed military alliance “would be a move toward war and not a peace measure”:

Steps along that line might mean the bringing to the American Continent of the evils which threaten to destroy democracy in other parts of the world. Safety in this continent from destructive outside forces lies along the road of building stronger economic and political institutions and enlarging the social rights of the underprivileged. Thus we may have a strong, self-directing, contented people within every nation who would enthusiastically back international programs for Inter-American solidarity and world peace.

At the time, the League of Nations Association was concerned that overzealous defense preparations could create Latin American military machines “which some fascist group would in the future find ready for capture and for use against the very liberal forces that created it.”\textsuperscript{59} And that fear was by no means unfounded. In the history of the region, military establishments have all too frequently inserted themselves into the political life of the nations they were created to safeguard. The Depression-era nineteen thirties, in fact, had been a particularly active period of intervention by various Latin American militaries into the realm of national politics. Despite their regard for the fate of Latin America’s masses at the hands of would-be fascists, however, world peace through collective security was the organization’s paramount concern. And the League of Nations Association circa 1938 still defined collective security very much in terms of cooperative action through global institutions and the “lawful settlement of disputes”—not alliances and military preparedness.\textsuperscript{60}

\textsuperscript{58} Shotwell, \textit{On the Rim of the Abyss}, 350.
\textsuperscript{59} The Lima Conference and World Peace: Statement by the Latin American Committee of the League of Nations Association, n.d., 16, LNA MSS, Box 3.
\textsuperscript{60} \textit{Ibid.}, 4.
All the same, another great world war was coming. Aggression now “stands before us in all its ugliness,” the Church Peace Union’s 1939 annual report declared ominously. “The essential basis of cooperation and the ethical considerations without which there can be no enduring peace seem to have disappeared. We are living in a period of world-wide anarchy.”

Was the lack of political engagement in world affairs on the part of the United States responsible for this state of affairs, at least in part? If the collected pronouncements made by officials of the League of Nations Association and the Church Peace Union quoted above suggest an affirmative answer, Allen W. Dulles and Hamilton Fish Armstrong were more direct. The younger brother of future secretary of state John Foster Dulles, Allen Dulles was a veteran of the American diplomatic corps himself, having attended the Versailles peace negotiations in 1919. He had also been a member of the Council on Foreign Relations since 1926, where he and fellow Princeton University alumnus Armstrong became good friends. And in the pages of Can America Stay Neutral?, published in the immediate wake of the German invasion of Poland, their joint assessment of American culpability was damning:

Americans do not seem to us to be in a moral position to blame the present chaos in the world on everybody but themselves. Those who fought every specific course of action which aimed to establish a new world order, arguing that the United States should play no part, carry their share of the blame. Overlooking our country’s influence and power, they were unwilling to take the slightest risks for peace. Today the greater part of the world is at war again, and it would be a brave man who said we were not more entangled than ever.\(^{62}\)

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\(^{61}\) The Church Peace Union: Reports for 1939, 7, CRIA MSS, Box 3.

For liberal internationalists, the lesson was clear: American engagement in world affairs was absolutely essential, and in the years to come they would continue to strive towards that goal in one form or another.

*The Looming War and the Reemergence of Wilsonianism in US Foreign Policy*

“When peace has been broken anywhere, the peace of all countries everywhere is in danger,” Franklin Roosevelt warned the nation in a fireside chat on the evening of September 3, 1939. At that dark hour, with the German *Wehrmacht* making its first advances eastward across the Polish frontier, the president declared that “the influence of America should be consistent in seeking for humanity a final peace which will eliminate, as far as it is possible to do so, the continued use of force between nations.” Having long been devoted to Woodrow Wilson’s ideals, this had always been Roosevelt’s ambition. But it was only with the approach of the Second World War that FDR would find a real opportunity to start pursuing it. Pursue it he did, though; the opportunity was not wasted. In the lead-up to America’s formal entry into the war, he slowly began reintroducing a systematic Wilsonian approach to the formulation and conduct of U.S. foreign policy—albeit one that, in a number of important respects, departed from that which had been advocated by Wilson himself.

Along the way, Roosevelt would have the support, and even the active assistance, of many liberal internationalists within the peace movement. These internationalists, ensconced in the Woodrow Wilson Foundation, the Church Peace Union, and the League

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of Nations Association up until this point, had remained committed to the long-term goal of a Wilsonian world order all through the interwar period, as we have already seen. And in the shadow of the war, they also began thinking anew about a grand postwar reordering of the international system. Indeed, the concepts they created during this period of intellectual ferment would eventually have a deep influence on the future evolution of Wilsonian ideas. But more than that, they also began working with the administration to achieve even more immediate practical political goals—securing the modification, and later the repeal, of the neutrality laws, as well as the promotion of both direct military aid to Great Britain and measures to increase U.S. military preparedness in anticipation of the upcoming conflict.

As was the case during the First World War, the Wilsonian vision of a new world order that started coming together in the shadow of the Second World War was rooted in an apocalyptic analysis of the dangers endemic to the existing one. And at least through much of the nineteen thirties, the dangers that FDR initially highlighted were war and armaments. We have already taken note of how he had hoped to use his position as president to promote disarmament as far back as March 1933. Offensive arms, in particular, he thought had to be done away with because of the danger they posed even then as a result of advances in technology: “Modern weapons of offense are vastly stronger than modern weapons of defense. Frontier forts, trenches, wire entanglements, coast defenses—in a word, fixed fortifications—are no longer impregnable to the attack of war planes, heavy mobile artillery, land battleships called tanks, and poison gas.”

And as the shadow of war began looming ever larger late in the decade, he painted the

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threat of war itself in ever starker terms. As FDR would recollect just months before the
Pearl Harbor attack:

In October 1937, I suggested, in a speech in Chicago, that something be done about the then existing “reign of terror” and “international lawlessness” which had begun a few years before. I pointed out that the recent systematic violation of treaties, the indiscriminate bombing of civilians, the waging of undeclared warfare, were wiping away the very landmarks of law, order, and justice which had characterized our civilization. I warned that “if those things come to pass in other parts of the world, let no one imagine that America will escape, that America may expect mercy...”65

In discussing the failures of arms control and the deteriorating international situation more generally, Roosevelt, during the same period of time, generally attributed the trouble to a “small minority” of unnamed governments that refused to cooperate with the “ninety per cent of all the people of the earth” who truly wished to live in peace.66 But once outright war was inaugurated across Europe, as well as East Asia, an important shift in the president’s thinking became increasingly apparent. Earlier than many of his contemporaries in America, Roosevelt recognized the dangers that the Axis nations would pose to the security and well-being of the United States should their expansionist plans succeed. And so, as the prospect of American involvement in the world war drew ever nearer, the practical, pragmatic Roosevelt increasingly shifted the focus of his rhetoric from the evils of war to the evils of the Axis.

In announcing an “unlimited national emergency” in late May of 1941, the president expounded at length upon the material threat, painting a grim portrait of what kind of economic future the country would face were Hitler and his associates able to gain control of the Eastern hemisphere. Such a takeover, Roosevelt told the nation, would

65 Franklin D. Roosevelt, introduction to The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt, 1939 Volume, xxviii.
66 Ibid., xxv.
place Hitler in a position to dictate terms of trade for which Washington would have no
effective response, with utterly ruinous consequences for American laborers and farmers:

Tariff walls—Chinese walls of isolation—would be futile. Freedom to trade is
essential to our economic life. We do not eat all the food we can produce; and we do
not burn all the oil we can pump; we do not use all the goods we can manufacture. It
would not be an American wall to keep Nazi goods out; it would be a Nazi wall to
keep us in.

The whole fabric of working life as we know it—business and manufacturing,
mining and agriculture—all would be mangled and crippled under such a system. Yet
to maintain even that crippled independence would require permanent conscription of
our manpower; …we should be permanently pouring our resources into armaments;
and, year in and year out, standing day and night watch against the destruction of our
cities.67

Perhaps not coincidentally, the Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies, a
private, pro-Allied military preparedness group, was utilizing much the same argument
during this period in its appeals for increased U.S. military aid to Great Britain.68

At the same time, however, Roosevelt realized that the immediate threat to the
nation transcended such narrowly material considerations. The Nazis’ “program of world
domination,” he wrote two months after the emergency declaration, “was not to be
merely a domination of military might but a domination of ideas, in which the whole
world was to be bent to the Nazi philosophy of force, of slavery, of anti-religion.”69

Warnings such as this from Roosevelt were by no means new. He had sounded much the
same theme a year earlier in a radio address to the Democratic National Convention in
Chicago, which, at that point, had just nominated him for an unprecedented third term as

67 “We Choose Human Freedom”—A Radio Address Announcing the Proclamation of an Unlimited
National Emergency. May 27, 1941, The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt, 1941
Volume: The Call to Battle Stations, ed. Samuel I. Rosenman (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers,
1950), 184.
68 “Ten Billion Dollars is Not Enough: ‘Guns—Not Sons,’” pamphlet, n.d., Committee to Defend America
by Aiding the Allies Manuscripts, Swarthmore College Peace Collection, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania,
(Hereafter cited as CDA MSS)
69 Franklin D. Roosevelt, introduction to The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt, 1939
vol., xxxix.
president. The “armed aggression” sweeping the world, he had told the assembled
delegates in 1940, was “aimed at the form of Government, the kind of society that we in
the United States have chosen and established for ourselves.” It was an aggression pitting
“the continuance of civilization as we know it versus the ultimate destruction of all that
we have held dear—religion against godlessness; the ideal of justice against the practice
of force; moral decency versus the firing squad; courage to speak out, and to act, versus
the false lullaby of appeasement.” And the President had sounded the theme of
“American civilization” in mortal peril at the hands of the Axis yet again in his fireside
chat of December 29, 1940, when he famously called upon the nation to become “the
great arsenal of democracy” in the global struggle against fascism, and on many other
occasions besides throughout 1940 and 1941.

Under the circumstances of impending war, liberal internationalists in the peace
movement also embraced this apocalyptic vision. That such is the case is strongly
suggested by Clark Eichelberger’s warnings about the gathering forces of “moral
disaster” in connection with the Italian conquest of Ethiopia in 1935, as well as the
Church Peace Union’s lamentation of “world-wide anarchy” after the outbreak of
hostilities in Europe four years later. And it is clearly evident in the Message and
Program adopted in early November of 1941 by the Church Peace Union-affiliated
American Council of the World Alliance for International Friendship through the
Churches:

> The present war is not only a conflict of ideologies, but a concerted attack on
democracy and free institutions throughout the world. Democracy as a way of life has

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70 The President Accepts the Nomination for a Third Term. Radio Address to the Democratic National
Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt, 1940 Volume: War—and Aid to the Democracies, ed.
not only been abandoned by the aggressor nations but is condemned as an outworn system. By the use of tanks and airplanes and machine guns, millions of people have become enslaved and the rest of the world is asked to compare the greater efficiency of this totalitarian attack on civilization with the decadence and weakness in democratic lands. The new forces which attack democracy recognize no law but their own will, and have announced or clearly evidenced that racial discrimination, wholesale regimentation, economic slavery, political impotency, brutal intolerance, and exploitation are all part of their program.

With the nation threatened by such dire circumstances, the American Council program declared, “there is no place for neutrality.”

Indeed, the United States would in due course abandon its professed neutrality and become the “arsenal of democracy” called for by FDR. And internationalists from the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, the Church Peace Union, and the League of Nations Association, among other organizations, took an active role in setting the stage for that political transformation. James T. Shotwell, Clark Eichelberger, and others from the League of Nations Association contributed to the shift by creating several specialized activist organizations to support the president’s policy goals—the Committee for Concerted Peace Efforts and the Non-Partisan Committee for Peace through Revision of the Neutrality Act. In 1938, the former supported Roosevelt in his successful efforts to thwart the enactment by the House of the Ludlow amendment, a proposed constitutional amendment which would have required a national referendum on any declaration of war. And in November of 1939, the latter helped the president win a significant dilution of the terms of the Neutrality Act, replacing the all-embracing arms embargo with a new provision allowing combatant nations to purchase arms on a “cash-and-carry” basis.

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71 The Church Peace Union: Report of The General Secretary and the Auditors for the year 1941, February 1942, 24, CRIA MSS, Box 3.
73 DeBenedetti, 134-5.
For his part, Eichelberger had spoken critically of American “neutrality” at least as early as 1937, calling it an “impartiality in the face of… grave moral issues which is neither constructive nor worthy of our people.” And almost three years later, he endorsed the administration’s pessimistic assessment that the law had “consistently aided aggression because the aggressor is always better prepared and has less need of imported arms.” In his view, both the Neutrality Act and the prospective Ludlow amendment had been nothing more than “an attempt to find an escape from facing our responsibility of cooperating with other nations to prevent war.” And other internationalists, like Henry A. Atkinson of the Church Peace Union had reached a similar conclusion. In 1939 the trustees of that organization spoke out publicly in favor of a neutrality law specifically targeting aggressor nations. The original policy, they charged, had for all practical purposes officially sanctioned “American participation in Japan’s aggression against China”—an act they deemed to be the “negation of true international friendship.” Instead, the real long-term solution, these liberal internationalists continued to insist, was a peace rooted in international collective security and world organization.

By the time “cash-and-carry” became law, the war in Europe had already begun in earnest. And as one European country after another fell before seemingly unstoppable German armies, Eichelberger and his allies in the League of Nations Association began promoting American material assistance to the Allied nations of Europe as a practical countermeasure—a countermeasure that became especially urgent after the fall of France.

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74 Clark M. Eichelberger, “Peace or War in 1937,” January 1, 1937, pamphlet, 7, LNA MSS, Box 3; Letter from Clark M. Eichelberger to League of Nations Association membership, September 29, 1939, LNA MSS, Box 3.
75 Letter from Clark M. Eichelberger to League of Nations Association membership, January 7, 1938, LNA MSS, Box 3.
76 Macfarland, 92-3.
in June of 1940. It was that disaster, in fact, that spurred Eichelberger to join with an old friend of his, William Allen White, a well-known Republican Kansas newspaper publisher, former pacifist, and Woodrow Wilson Foundation trustee, in creating the Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies (CDA) for the purpose of winning public support for such assistance. Utilizing LNA chapters in over 300 cities across the country as an initial popular base, the organization expanded to some 675 chapters and a membership of fully 10,000 people in short order, all rallying around the slogan “guns—not sons” and the notion that arming the enemies of the Axis would “keep war away from America,” as an early Committee pamphlet put it.\textsuperscript{77}

White’s Committee attracted a wide-ranging membership, including journalist Walter Lippmann, theologian Reinhold Neibuhr, current and former League of Nations Association leaders like James T. Shotwell and former Supreme Court Justice John H. Clarke, Church Peace Union officials Henry A. Atkinson and Hamilton Holt, and prolific Columbia University historian Henry Steele Commager. Nicholas Murray Butler, the president of both Columbia University and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, was also a founding member. So, too, were a number of former government officials who would, in the very near future, be returning to public service—Dean Acheson, a Washington D.C. attorney who had briefly served as Undersecretary of the Treasury in 1933, and who would soon join Roosevelt’s State department; and conservative Republican internationalist Henry L. Stimson, another D.C. lawyer with a long and varied career in government service, including terms as Secretary of War and Secretary of State in the Taft and Hoover administrations. In 1940, he became FDR’s

\textsuperscript{77} DeBenedetti, 136; Wittner, 22; “Ten Billion Dollars is Not Enough: ‘Guns—Not Sons,’” pamphlet, n.d., CDA MSS.
Secretary of War as well—a post he would hold throughout the long world war that was soon to break out. Stimson, incidentally, was a close friend of William Allen White. Meanwhile, future Illinois governor and two-time Democratic presidential candidate Adlai Stevenson chaired the organization’s influential Chicago chapter.

In the year and a half leading up to Pearl Harbor, the Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies became a center of pro-Allied political sentiment in the United States. And given its lineage, it is not surprising that the organization came to be influenced strongly by Wilsonian internationalist ideals. “Nations which are still free must again proclaim their faith in the ability of democracy to organize the world for justice and security,” read the Committee’s Official Statement of Policy dated November 26, 1940. “It is time for democracy to be militant against the Axis theory that life can only be organized if it is regimented by dictatorship.” The committee explicitly billed itself as an internationalist organization. And in 1940, White used his extensive political connections to coordinate CDA policy closely with Roosevelt administration officials, including Stimson, Hull, Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox, and Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau—a fact that White himself publicly acknowledged as a means of building the organization’s influence.

Nevertheless, the CDA as originally constituted was a very big tent that took in anti-fascist leftists, Anglophiles, American nationalists, and practical isolationists as well as liberal internationalists. That being the case, it was perhaps inevitable that a fissure would open up at some point. And it did—between the cautious Midwestern chapters led

78 Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies: Official Statement of Policy Issued November 26, 1940, CDA MSS.
by White, a one-time pacifist, and the more interventionist, eastern “Century Club
group. “80 Under the influence of the latter, especially, the policies advocated by the
Committee began turning increasingly militant. By September of 1941, they were
actually calling for a break-off in diplomatic relations with Germany in token of the fact
that “economically, industrially, financially and in the use of our diplomatic and naval
power we are already in the war.”81 The administration was not prepared to go that far as
of yet, even if the Committee’s assessment of the situation was essentially correct. White
was apparently not willing to go that far, either—he ultimately left the organization. And
as a result, its extensive coordination with the Roosevelt administration waned—at least
temporarily.82 But American military aid did start flowing to Great Britain.

Such material aid was vitally important, for obvious reasons. Yet Roosevelt also
understood that if the struggle against global fascism then taking shape were to be
brought to a successful conclusion, the war of ideals would also have to be fought—and
won. And accomplishing that would take more than vague condemnations of Nazi
“slavery” and “anti-religion” on his part. An alternative vision of a new world order was
required for the task—one that would legitimize the struggle against Nazism and lend
moral significance to the great sacrifices that it would inevitably entail. The necessity of
formulating such a vision was great; it would become much greater still once America
formally entered the war. “When we resort to force, as now we must, we are determined
that this force shall be directed toward ultimate good as well as against immediate evil,”
the president announced to the country in a “fireside chat” just two days after the Pearl

80 Steigerwald, 134-5.
81 Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies: Statement of Policy Issued September 16, 1941,
  CDA MSS.
82 Namikas.
Harbor disaster. “We Americans are not destroyers—we are builders.”\(^{83}\) But what was FDR proposing to build?

The vision Roosevelt ultimately crafted—the “antithesis of the so-called new order of tyranny,”\(^{84}\) as he described it—was a novel reincarnation of Wilsonian liberal internationalism. The new Wilsonianism did not come together all at once, of course. In a sense, its crafting had already been a work-in-progress for years, although the participants in that unfolding process—the process we have been examining in this chapter thus far—were not consciously aware of it at the time. The president himself only began setting down his own first, very preliminary systematic formulations in the year 1941. And the new Wilsonianism would remain a work-in-progress for much of the last few years of Roosevelt’s life; in fact, much of its formal institutionalization would not come until after his death. Moreover, before the process was finished many other liberal internationalists will have had a hand in shaping it to one extent or another. Still, the present author has dubbed this new, innovative variant Rooseveltian Wilsonianism in token of the man most responsible for pulling it together and setting it into motion in U.S. foreign policy.

At the heart of Roosevelt’s Wilsonianism was the same familiar ideal of American exceptionalism that had animated so much of Wilson’s thinking. Just as his old mentor did decades before, FDR expressed in his writings and public utterances an unmistakable sense of America as an inspiring model of freedom and democracy for the world, as well as a sense of traditional American political ideals as being universally applicable across time and across cultures. On no occasion did he make the point more

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83 “We Are Going to Win the War and We Are Going to Win the Peace That Follows”—Fireside Chat to the Nation Following the Declaration of War with Japan. December 9, 1941, *The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt*, 1941 vol., 530.

explicitly than on the 150th anniversary of the ratification of the Bill of Rights on December 15, 1941, when he warned that Axis aggression was aimed at overthrowing “the great upsurge of human liberty of which the American Bill of Rights is the fundamental document.”85 But that is hardly the only instance one can point to. In a similar vein, the president had announced in his third inaugural address eleven months earlier that the preservation of the “democratic aspiration,” the development of which constituted the central theme of human history, was nothing less than the “destiny of America.” Indeed, FDR concluded his speech that day with an invocation of George Washington’s 1789 inaugural address, warning that any failure to defend the “sacred fire of liberty” with which the country had been entrusted since its birth would constitute nothing less than a rejection of “the destiny which Washington strove so valiantly and so triumphantly to establish.”86

The idea that American political values could be universally valid was certainly implicit in the president’s celebrated “Four Freedoms,” which he outlined in the closing passages of an address before the Congress on the sixth of January, 1941. In this pronouncement, which represents Roosevelt’s first rough outline of a progressive liberal alternative to global Nazi tyranny, FDR envisioned “a world founded upon four essential human freedoms”—(1) freedom of speech and expression, (2) freedom of every person to worship God in his own way, (3) freedom from want, and (4) freedom from fear—all to be enshrined, as he repeatedly emphasized, “everywhere in the world.” The fourth

86 The Third Inaugural Address—“In the Face of Great Perils Never Before Encountered, Our Strong Purpose Is to Protect and to Perpetuate the Integrity of Democracy,” January 20, 1941, The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt, 1941 vol., 5-6.
freedom, the “freedom from fear,” in particular, was the one most immediately relevant to the practice of international relations. That freedom, “translated into world terms,” FDR explained to the assembled legislators, “means a world-wide reduction of armaments to such a point and in such a thorough fashion that no nation will be in a position to commit an act of physical aggression against any neighbor—anywhere in the world.” It is a dramatic and sweeping pronouncement that would not have been at all out of place among Wilson’s Fourteen Points.

Then, in August 1941, a much more comprehensive formulation of Roosevelt’s Wilsonianism emerged in the form of the Atlantic Charter, a joint declaration issued by FDR and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill after a series of face-to-face meetings held on board warships of the British and American navies off the coast of Argentia, Newfoundland. The Charter, “intended to publicize to the world the kind of peace for which the opponents of Nazism were fighting,” was not a formal treaty, as Roosevelt special counsel Samuel I. Rosenman later explained. Nevertheless, the eight “common principles” enunciated in the declaration—principles upon which America and Britain would “base their hopes for a better future for the world”—are revealing when viewed from a Wilsonian perspective.

The precept of national self-determination, for example, finds clear expression in the first three principles, which explain that the two nations, the United States and Great Britain: (1) sought no territorial aggrandizement for themselves; (2) desired “no territorial

87 The Annual Message to the Congress. January 6, 1941. The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt, 1940 vol., 672.
changes that do not accord with the freely expressed wishes of the people concerned”; and (3) respected “the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they shall live.” The third principle, in particular, also committed the two allied governments to seeking the restoration of “sovereign rights and self government” to “those who have been forcibly deprived of them” by the Axis countries. Interestingly, the word “democracy” does not appear in the text explicating these points—a reflection again of FDR’s pragmatic realism in addressing the issues involved.90 Still, the implicitly democratic tenor of the document is clear enough, even if it has not been overly emphasized.

Later on, much of this same language, including explicit uses of term “democratic” and even a direct reference to the Atlantic Charter, would find its way into the joint statement issued by Roosevelt, Churchill, and Soviet premier Joseph Stalin in the wake of the Yalta Conference in February, 1945. In that document, the “Big Three,” as they came to be known, pledged to assist liberated peoples all across Nazi-dominated Europe in resolving “by democratic means their pressing political and economic problems” after the war. And in the case of Poland in particular, they agreed that that country’s reining provisional government—established by the Soviets in total disregard of the extant Polish government-in-exile in London—should be “reorganized on a broader democratic basis” and “pledged to the holding of free and unfettered elections as soon as possible.”91

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90 Smith, 118-19.
In the meantime, the Wilsonian notion of an interdependent world economic order also found expression in the Atlantic Charter—and in a number of different forms. The fourth principle, as formulated in the document’s final draft, committed the American and British governments to “further the enjoyment by all the states, great or small, victor or vanquished, of access, on equal terms, to the trade and to the raw materials of the world which are needed for their economic prosperity.” This particular point was especially important to FDR personally, and the final form of the statement in the document was not as strongly worded as Roosevelt had originally wanted. That was largely due to friction with Churchill over the issue of Great Britain’s preferential trading relationships with its overseas colonies. But it did serve to highlight the importance both governments attached to the promotion of international trade. The seventh principle outlined in the Charter may also be understood in this context, being a restatement of the old, traditional American ideal of freedom of the seas.

The fifth principle, on the other hand, expressing a “desire to bring about the fullest collaboration between all Nations in the economic field with the object of securing, for all, improved labor standards, economic advancement, and social security,” introduces into the equation the unambiguous guiding hand of the regulatory state as an integral component of international economic affairs. It is a guiding hand that had long been present in Roosevelt’s domestic economic policy, of course, in the form of the New Deal. In fact, over the course of the previous decade, government intervention into and regulation of economic activities had expanded significantly in many countries across the world. The fifth principle of the Atlantic Charter was very much in keeping with this contemporary trend.
And then, in an echo of FDR’s four freedoms, the document’s sixth principle gave voice to the laudable, if somewhat vaguely worded “hope” that a future peace “will afford to all Nations the means of dwelling in safety within their own boundaries… in freedom from fear and want.” How might such a state of affairs be realized? The answer is at least hinted at by the eighth and concluding principle, another point authored largely by Roosevelt. In it, both he and Churchill explicitly affirmed that “all of the Nations of the world, for realistic as well as spiritual reasons, must come to the abandonment of the use of force”:

   Since no further peace can be maintained if land, sea, or air armaments continue to be employed by Nations which threaten, or may threaten, aggression outside of their frontiers, they believe, pending the establishment of a wider and permanent system of general security, that the disarmament of such Nations is essential. They will likewise aid and encourage all other practicable measures which will lighten for peace-loving peoples the crushing burden of armaments.

This statement, although still very general, represented an important acknowledgement of the fundamental ideal of collective security—another cornerstone of Wilsonian internationalism, obviously.

   But the question remained: beyond the pursuit of disarmament as a long-term goal, what would a “permanent system of general security” look like exactly? Roosevelt clearly did not have a specific proposal to publicly endorse at this point. As for liberal internationalists in the peace movement, they were essentially agreed that the history of the League of Nations and its associated agencies, while essentially representing a failed initial experiment in world organization, at least provided some important practical lessons to help guide future efforts. And, as we have seen, by the late nineteen thirties, the League of Nations Association was already proffering some suggestions on how the League might be restructured.
To focus renewed attention on the problem, the leadership of the League of Nations Association, with the support of the Church Peace Union, even brought a number of like-minded liberal internationalists together in November of 1939 in a new LNA-affiliated body called the Commission to Study the Organization of Peace (CSOP). This commission, with James T. Shotwell as its chairman and Clark Eichelberger as director, also included in its early years such luminaries as Owen Lattimore, director of the Page School of International Relations at Johns Hopkins University, and prolific journalist and educator Max Lerner, as well as William Allen White and John Foster Dulles. And its productions were apparently quite influential in official circles during the war years. “The State Department,” according to Shotwell biographer Harold Josephson, “carefully studied the Commission’s reports and made use of them in their own peace-planning work.”

In the years to come, the Commission to Study the Organization of Peace would set out proposals for a substantially-revised League of Nations-type system. Right about the same time, though, other advocates began evolving plans that were much more ambitious still—plans inspired by a new variation on a very old idea with a long history in the literature of the peace movement: world government. Back in 1939, a New York Times correspondent named Clarence Streit had published a popular book entitled Union Now. Streit was an admirer of Wilson who, as a soldier in the U.S. Army, had actually served as a security guard at the Versailles conference. And in the pages of his book, he argued that the world’s leading democracies should join in a loose federation based on the model of the early American republic of the late 18th century. It was an immediate

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best-seller, subsequently selling over 300,000 copies. It even spawned something of a
political movement. In January of 1941, Streit and a small cohort of like-minded
enthusiasts founded The Federal Union, Inc. to promote the idea of a world federation. In
fact, during the war world federalists found a very receptive audience for their message,
as indicated by the absolutely unparalleled success of former Republican presidential
candidate Wendell Willkie’s travelogue *One World*, which was published in 1943 and
eventually sold over two million copies.  

The concept of a formal world government is not strictly Wilsonian; at the very
least, there would be questions as to how such an institution could be reconciled with the
national, democratic self-determination of peoples. But as I indicated in the previous
chapter, Wilson himself had at least flirted with the idea of an international federation
based on the American model, a “parliament of man.”  

And there is no doubt, too, that
world government held a certain fascination for liberal internationalists in the peace
movement in the nineteen thirties and forties.

The leadership of the Church Peace Union, for example, was looking to the future
and thinking along lines somewhat similar to those of Streit and his followers during this
period. In their own way, they, too, were envisioning “one world” as an ultimate solution
for the problems of the day. In January of 1941, the same month that the Federal Union,
Inc. came into being, the trustees of the CPU appointed a three-man committee of their
own to study the issue of “constructive measures” that might be taken after the war to
establish “a new world order based on justice.” The draft of “Peace Aims” subsequently
adopted by the CPU in June of that year began, not surprisingly, on a deeply religious

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93 DeBenedetti, 137, 141-2; Wittner, 134-6.
94 Arthur S. Link, *Wilson the Diplomatist: A Look at His Major Foreign Policies* (Chicago: Quadrangle
note: “All men are brothers because they are children of God.” And proceeding from that foundational premise, the authors sketched out what they saw as the dangers of “mistaken ideologies” being used to justify a run-away statism:

The fundamental social aim of religious groups, therefore, is to help establish those conditions in national and international life which favor the growth of personality and of brotherhood, so that men everywhere may become more worthy of their relationship to God. We recognize that the present conflict arises in large part out of mistaken ideologies, such as the exaltation of the state as the supreme object of man’s worship, and the subordination of the individual to the demands of the state and the degradation of that worth of the individual which is essential to any form of prophetic religion.

The “mistaken ideologies” being referred to here were obviously fascism and Nazism.

And in opposition to the totalitarian creed of the Axis nations, the Church Peace Union’s trustees advocated as a long term goal the development of a “supranational, supraracial and supra-class community of faith” transcending all sectarian divisions.95

It was not simply a religious community that they called for, however. The “Peace Aims” draft proposal noted that this community, this “just world order,” had to have a basis in international law, too, for without it there could be no justice, and, hence, no peace. Indeed, the document echoed world federalist proposals in explicitly calling for the establishment of a democratically-organized “supranational authority or authorities” based upon popular consent. Remarkably, the union leadership envisioned a fully-realized polity, including “a bill of rights, a Court of Justice, Legislative and Executive bodies,” and “an international police force which will enforce the law not only upon the constituent nations as such, but, transcending national boundaries, upon the peoples of these nations”—a true transnational world government in all but name. The trustees fully

95 “Peace Aims: A Program for the Churches and Other Religious Organizations Based on Justice, World Organization and the Machinery Adequate for Security,” June 1941, Church Peace Union booklet, 3, 7, CRIIA MSS, Box 3.
recognized, of course, that such an arrangement would necessarily restrict the sovereignty of individual nation-states very significantly. But such a restriction, they argued, was “requisite to a just world order.”

It is clear from the text of the “Peace Aims” document that the leadership of the Church Peace Union had come to see nationalism and national sovereignty as barriers to be overcome in the construction of world democracy. In truth, critical voices had been raising questions on this point even in Wilson’s time. Back in 1915, for example, Nicholas Murray Butler had advocated a “League of Peace” for the express purpose of reigning in “the anarchy of sovereign nationalities” and providing a “first rallying point for world citizenship.” And by the nineteen thirties, liberal internationalist intellectuals and activists more generally were, in many instances, turning increasingly hostile to abstract notions of national sovereignty in the light of experience gained since the end of the First World War.

James T. Shotwell, for instance, had concluded in his 1936 book, On the Rim of the Abyss, that nationalism, “deep-rooted in the prejudices that spring from the soil of ancient wars and antagonisms,” was the principle reactionary force that was working against “the force of community interests” seeking to create an “ordered world.” In another book published some eight years later, he would even go so far as to identify the “absolute doctrine” of the sovereignty of nations, as expressed in Woodrow Wilson’s plans for the League of Nations, as being a fatal flaw in that system: “Under these

96 Ibid., 4-5, 7.
conditions the League of Nations never came to final grips with its fundamental problem, that of dividing up the responsibility of its membership for emergency action to meet the threat of war.” While the League was a global organization in theory, in actual practice its members had never looked beyond the inherently “local” perspective of purely national interests.99

That now had to change, many liberal internationalists had come to believe. At least in the near term, however, the established practical reality of national sovereignty had to be acknowledged and dealt with accordingly. On the official level, Franklin Roosevelt, as we have already noted, did exactly that, just as Woodrow Wilson had done before him. Such is the lot of the statesman who actually shoulders the duties and responsibilities of leadership. And because of those very same pragmatic considerations, liberal internationalist activists had to chart a similarly realistic course, at least in the short term. The national democratic self-determination of peoples necessarily remained a cornerstone of the Church Peace Union’s agenda, for example. This is clearly indicated by the trustees’ call in June 1941 for a postwar “international commission to govern colonies for the welfare of the colonials themselves and to prepare them to assume the full and equal responsibilities of self-government at the earliest possible moment.” 100 And Roosevelt would regard those rights very sympathetically.

Still, we are left with the question of what a “permanent system of general security” would look like exactly. In its details, what “pattern for peace” might be established after the war was not yet clear by any means, although Roosevelt had rendered the picture in a few broad strokes while liberal internationalists in the peace

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99 Ibid., 97-8.
100 “Peace Aims,” June 1941, Church Peace Union booklet, 3-4, 6-7.
movement mulled over some of the possibilities. There was no doubt in anyone’s mind, however, that the United States had a critical role to play. The nation, “by its position, wealth and strength, is directly involved in the present war; as well as in the peace that will follow,” the Church Peace Union’s trustees concluded in the “Peace Aims” document. And they envisioned a critical role for themselves, as well: “The church must keep to its task by helping to create an informed public opinion that will prevent our country withdrawing from its responsibilities to itself and to the rest of the world” after the final victory had been won.\textsuperscript{101}

This final point is one that FDR certainly appreciated. Remembering how controversial the question of American membership in the League of Nations had been after the First World War, Roosevelt was reluctant in the latter half of 1941 to publicly endorse another international body—yet. This is precisely the reason why the wording of the Atlantic Charter was so vague on the subject. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that the creation of some successor organization to the now moribund League was one of the president’s most important, long-standing policy goals. In truth, he very much looked forward to the establishment of a “universal organization” for peace that would “spell the end of the system of unilateral action, the balances of power, and all other expedients that have been tried for centuries—and have always failed.”\textsuperscript{102} Nor is there any doubt that FDR considered such an arrangement a means through which the United States could be permanently drawn into active participation in global affairs after the war.\textsuperscript{103} As long as he was in a position to prevent it, the country would not return to the kind of political

\textsuperscript{101} Ibid., 7.
\textsuperscript{102} “We Cannot Fail Them Again, and Expect the World Again to Survive”—Address to the Congress Reporting on the Yalta Conference. March 1, 1945, The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt, 1944-45 vol., 586.
\textsuperscript{103} Dallek, 536.
“isolationism” that had derailed Wilson’s ambitious agenda in the years 1919-20 and, arguably, helped bring on a second global conflict.

Wartime Efforts towards Building the New Rooseveltian Wilsonian Order

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 finally brought the nation into the war as a full-fledged combatant, raising both immediate and longer-term issues which the nation had to address. The immediate problem was, of course, winning the war, and in support of this endeavor the liberal internationalist wing of the peace movement rallied behind the administration and the war effort—just as it had in 1917. But internationalists both inside and outside the government were also very concerned about the longer term question of how the postwar world should be ordered. And so, out of necessity, attention was increasingly devoted to that issue as the war progressed. In the Atlantic Charter, the “Four Freedoms,” and in many other public pronouncements besides, Roosevelt had sketched out some of the basic elements of a new Wilsonian vision to guide the postwar world; in the years of hard fighting that followed Pearl Harbor, however, the challenge would be to refine those concepts and lay the groundwork for workable international institutions to translate those ideas into actual practice. Liberal internationalists from the peace movement worked side-by-side with administration officials in formulating both the government’s postwar agenda and its intellectual underpinnings, even if the former did not always see eye-to-eye with the latter. And internationalist peace organizations subsequently played an important part in building public support for that agenda as well.
Almost from the very moment the attack on Pearl Harbor began, liberal internationalists and the organizations they populated sought out ways of not only supporting the war effort, but actively contributing to it where they could. The very next day after the Japanese attack, the Carnegie Endowment elected to make all of its facilities available to the government for war-related work—an offer which numerous government agencies would, in due course, avail themselves.\(^{104}\) The clergy, including the leadership of the Federal Council of Churches, also fell into line and, by and large, supported the war effort, although, “in general,” they “waxed far less belligerent during World War II than during World War I,” as Lawrence Wittner has pointed out.\(^{105}\) For his part, Henry A. Atkinson, in his annual report to the Church Peace Union’s board of trustees in January 1942, even attempted, in a rather disingenuous fashion, to downplay the extent to which the churches had become “martial-minded” in 1917-18, claiming that it was “incorrect” that “they spent most of their energies in blessing the war and paying no attention to what was to follow.”\(^{106}\) Of course, it would certainly be wrong to fault the churches for not having paid any attention to the fate of the world after the cessation of hostilities in 1918. In fact, it was precisely their postwar liberal internationalist agenda that led them to “bless” the war as they did.

As attenuated as their belligerence may have become, religious-minded men did get behind the new war effort. “The Trustees of the Church Peace Union join with the overwhelming opinion of their countrymen in support of our government in winning this war,” Atkinson continued. “The war must be won for there can be no peace until

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\(^{104}\) Wittner, 52.
\(^{105}\) Ibid., 43.
\(^{106}\) The Church Peace Union: Report of The General Secretary and the Auditors for the year 1941, February 1942, 5, CRIA MSS, Box 3.
aggression is stopped and it will not be stopped except on the battlefield and by the might of armed forces. Therefore we must support the war.” In further elaborating on the theme of supporting America’s war effort, the CPU general secretary emphasized citizenship, civic responsibility, and the institutional role of the church as an integral part of the community. “The home, the school, the church—each is involved in the winning of this war and in the winning of the peace… Each must make its contribution in its own sphere,” Atkinson explained, setting a tone that, in all fairness, did contrast sharply with the war time pronouncements of a generation before. As to the contribution that churches, in particular, would make to the war effort, he noted dryly that “they will do it more intelligently and with less fanfare than in the last war.”

As for Atkinson himself, he would make his own personal contribution to winning the war and winning the peace as a member of both the Church Peace Union and the Commission to Study the Organization of Peace.

The Foreign Policy Association (FPA), meanwhile, lent assistance to the war effort in its own distinctive fashion—the notable changes that had taken place in the organization since the treaty fight in 1919-20 notwithstanding. As it had never been a mass organization, the FPA and its antecedents were always heavily committed to the goal of public education and the dispassionate, expert analysis of world events. Back in 1922, the organization’s board of directors had decided to restrict the Association exclusively to these educational and research-related endeavors—a stance that was subsequently enshrined in a constitution adopted on April 1, 1923.  

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107 Ibid., 7-9.
108 Twenty Years of the Foreign Policy Association, booklet, March 1939, 6, Foreign Policy Association Manuscripts, Swarthmore College Peace Collection, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania, Box 1 (Hereafter cited as FPA MSS).
leadership of James G. McDonald, “the FPA became one of the most regular sources of
Wilsonian propaganda over the next decade,” according to David Steigerwald.109

It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that under the circumstances of the war, the
Foreign Policy Association would come to champion the cause of liberal internationalism
quite aggressively. While “affirming” the organization’s commitment to public education
during the “war emergency,” the association nevertheless saw its way clear to making “a
consistent and important contribution” to the wartime work of various government
agencies—presumably by continuing to act as an “independent source” of information
and analysis on international issues. That presumed independence, however, did not
cause the association to shrink from proudly trumpeting its cooperation with the war
effort in a twenty-fifth anniversary FPA retrospective published in late 1943. But even
more telling, in the same booklet, the organization pointed with equal pride to its role in
having brought about an advance in American public opinion from “a stage of limited
comprehension” of world affairs in 1918 to “the present stage where knowledge and
experience can permit the United States to share with other great nations the opportunity
of moulding (sic) the postwar world.” Its recent apolitical protestations notwithstanding,
the Association’s internationalist aspirations for an America actively engaged in the
world were still very much in evidence.110

In a number of instances, multiple organizations pooled their resources in order to
stage public war-related activities, such as the “Win the War—Win the Peace” institutes
convened in cities all across the country beginning in early 1942. Sponsored primarily by
the Church Peace Union in conjunction with a wide range of non-governmental

109 Steigerwald, 93.
110 Twenty-Five Years of the Foreign Policy Association, 1918-1943, booklet, October 1943, 3-5, FPA
MSS, Box I.
organizations, including the Commission to Study the Organization of Peace, the League of Nations Association, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, and the Foreign Policy Association, these conferences brought together civic leaders throughout the nation for lectures and discussions on the aims of the war and the shape of the postwar world. “As far as possible, the peace settlement should be planned now and ready for instantaneous application when the United Nations have won the victory,” LNA director Clark Eichelberger told one such conference held in Pittsburgh in late November of 1942. “While we are fighting for the complete victory that we are determined to win, we have a right to lift our eyes to the goal of a better world we want to build for ourselves and future generations.” The sentiment was widely shared by the conferees, and many of the addresses given at the Pittsburgh institute emphasized this very same point.\textsuperscript{111}

As it would turn out, a great deal of planning did go into a postwar settlement aimed at building a “better world” while the fighting was still going on—an organized world. For the liberal internationalists who aligned themselves with the administration no less than those within the administration itself, up to and including Roosevelt, a “better world” was by definition an organized world. And the world organization that would succeed the League of Nations was, by no accident, given the same name frequently used during the war to denote the multinational anti-Axis alliance that eventually won—the United Nations.

In truth, the new association was even more a direct descendant of a victorious wartime alliance than the old League had been in its day. And that lineage would decisively shape both the postwar mission of the United Nations and how it would be

\textsuperscript{111} Win the War, Win the Peace: Conference for Victory and a Free World: The Story of the Pittsburgh Institute, Church Peace Union/ World Alliance for International Friendship booklet, n.d., 4, 21, CRIA MSS, Box 3; Macfarland, 199.
organized to fulfill that mission. Roosevelt had proposed to British and Russian officials as early as mid-1942 that the major powers arrayed against Berlin, Rome, and Tokyo should go on to act as the world’s “policemen” after the war was over. “Britain, Russia, China, and the United States and their allies represent more than three-quarters of the total population of the earth,” FDR told the country in a fireside chat on Christmas Eve, 1943. “As long as these four nations with great military power stick together in determination to keep the peace there will be no possibility of an aggressor Nation arising to start another world war.”

It was at a meeting of representatives from those four countries in the fall of 1944 at Dumbarton Oaks, an estate in the Georgetown area of Washington D.C., that the basic institutional framework for the United Nations was initially established. Moreover, at American insistence participation in the formal UN organizing conference held at San Francisco the following spring would be limited to nations that had declared war on the Axis no later than March 1, 1945.

“If we are willing to fight for peace now, is it not good logic that we should use force if necessary, in the future, to keep the peace?” Roosevelt asked on Christmas Eve 1943. FDR clearly thought so—and liberal internationalists were coming around to agree with him. A report issued by the Commission to Study the Organization of Peace ten months earlier had reached much the same conclusion: “Force is inescapable in human affairs. It cannot merely be abandoned; it must be controlled and used.” It was a remarkable departure from the mainstream Wilsonianism of a quarter of a century earlier.

113 Ibid., 560.
In the shadow of the First World War, Woodrow Wilson had envisioned the League of Nations as an alternative to “militarism.” The new United Nations organization, on the other hand, would at least in a sense harness it to serve the interests of international law and the maintenance of world peace.

The idea of united “police action” that Roosevelt invoked gained greatly in influence as a basis of collective security in the years immediately before and during the war. Clark Eichelberger, for one, had endorsed the concept as early as 1937:

There are those who say we must not use the methods of war in the name of peace. These individuals are blind to the difference between individual force and police action. Gangsters use individual violence. But the appointed policeman wears the badge of society and acts in the name of all of us. To compare police action with the individual acts of the gangster is to deny the development of community life.

Action on the part of one nation is war. But if the society of nations acting through established peace machinery authorizes united action to stop a law violator, it is police force, not war.115

Five years later, the leadership of the League of Nations Association would adjudge the fact that the now defunct League “never had any power of its own” [original emphasis] to be one of the principle reasons for its failure. “In planning for the future many believe that any new system must have the power to enforce its decisions, or those of its World Court, through an international police force,” the organization boldly announced in a pamphlet dated November of 1942. Such a measure, by placing real force behind international law, would, they thought, be the surest way of preventing future wars.116

The Church Peace Union, too, had endorsed the idea of an international police force in its mid-1941 “Peace Aims” program, and general secretary Henry A. Atkinson returned to the idea in his annual report to the board of trustees in February of 1943: “

115 World Cooperation is the Only Alternative to War: Radio Address by Clark M. Eichelberger, Director, League of Nations Association, November 29, 1937, 3, LNA MSS, Box 3.
peaceful world must be an organized world, a policed world, a world where the despoilers and the rapacious will be held in check and accountable for their crimes.” The document clearly indicated Atkinson’s endorsement of the idea that the United Nations then fighting the war against the Axis needed to be organized at once “to become the nucleus of a universal society of nations,” and that this “universal society” should “become the agency to undertake the policing of the world” after the war.117

James T. Shotwell agreed. The provision of armed force was very much an integral part of the solution, he thought—again, provided that such a force was organized and placed in the service of some universal world body. “There is no security in the maintenance of a peace which is only an armistice between armed and uneasy partners,” he warned in The Great Decision, published in 1944: “This kind of international anarchy tempered by alliance breeds war from the poison of suspicion.” By way of an alternative, the Columbia historian actually went so far as to envision the establishment of an independent “international air police force” which would deter any potential aggressor nation from threatening world peace. This, in conjunction with “substantial disarmament” measures, as Wilson had originally described in the Fourteen Points, would, Shotwell believed, go a long way toward ensuring a lasting peace.118 Not coincidentally, a November 1943 report by the Commission to Study the Organization of Peace also contained a pitch for a postwar international air force under UN control.119

The new “universal society” envisioned by liberal internationalists in the early nineteen forties was by no means entirely about policing, of course. “The President was

117 The Church Peace Union: Report of The General Secretary and the Auditors for the year 1942, February 1943, 7, 13, 15, CRIA MSS, Box 3.
firm in his conviction that the future peace and welfare of the world depended on a cooperative system in which all Nations of the world were participants,” Samuel Rosenman would write some years after Roosevelt’s death.¹²⁰ And the United Nations organization, as a whole, was intended to function as just such a “cooperative system”—promoting the peaceful settlement of disputes, safeguarding basic human rights and freedoms, and improving economic and social conditions around the world. “No human society—city or nation—relies mainly on coercion to keep the peace,” according to an educational pamphlet on the United Nations Charter published by the Woodrow Wilson Foundation in July of 1945 in connection with its sizeable wartime effort to promote Wilsonian ideals to the public. “A policeman must be in the background, but he cannot operate any society and make it function satisfactorily.”¹²¹ Just like Wilson’s conception before it, the model of collective security that defined Rooseveltian Wilsonianism was also one defined primarily by world community and the rule of law.

James T. Shotwell defined the problem of collective security in similar terms in The Great Decision. The lesson he drew from the world wars was that no one country, no matter how powerful, would ever again be strong enough to ensure its security all by itself in the modern world. What was necessary, therefore, was a twofold arrangement “designed first to avert the danger and if that fails, to meet it with equal or greater force.” Political and judicial means of mediation and arbitration, including the Permanent Court of International Justice, were the first line of defense for Shotwell. “There must be provision for peaceful change as well as for maintaining existing rights,” he wrote. Only

in this way could a global “quarantine against aggression by cooperative agreement between peace-loving nations” be made truly effective.122

The general picture of a just world order based on international law was nicely summed up in *Pattern for Peace*, a manifesto drawn up by representatives of the Church Peace Union, in conjunction with the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, the National Catholic Welfare Conference, and the Synagogue Council of America. Published in mid-1943, this genuinely interfaith peace declaration—the first of its kind developed jointly by Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish interests—called for “international institutions,” rooted in international law, that would “assure collective security by drastic limitation and continuing control of armaments, compulsory arbitration and adjudication of controversies, and the use when necessary of adequate sanctions to enforce the law.”123

From the very beginning, however, the Security Council and the “police power” it was supposed to wield was the real linchpin of the new United Nations collective security system. As it would happen, no truly independent international police force was provided for in the United Nations Charter—the concept was far too ambitious to ever be really practical. But the Council and its five permanent members—the United States, Great Britain, the Soviet Union, France, and China—constituted, in essence, an adaptation of Roosevelt’s earlier global “policemen” concept. “The Security Council is to the United Nations what the Police Commission is to a city,” Reverend Macfarland of the Church Peace Union would note approvingly after the war.124 The analogy may not have been entirely apt, but the arrangement, for all practical purposes, did institutionalize the

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123 Macfarland, 226-30.
124 Ibid., 238.
wartime military alliance and charge it with the ultimate responsibility of safeguarding the post-war world by acting in concert, if necessary, against any future would-be aggressor. “The [UN] Charter puts armed force behind the keeping of the peace much more strongly than the [League of Nations] Covenant was able to do,” the Woodrow Wilson Foundation noted with approval. 125

Notice that neither Franklin Roosevelt nor any of the liberal internationalists who rallied to his cause ever defined the foreseeable threat to world peace after the war as arising from any specific, identifiable nation-state, ideology, or socio-economic or political system. Although Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan would define the archetype for years to come as a result of World War II, the danger that the United Nations was created to address was that posed by future, unknown “aggressor Nations,” as FDR referred to them—whoever they may be. In an important sense, aggression—war itself—had once again become the enemy of world peace, now that fascism, Nazism, and Japanese militarism had been so thoroughly smashed. And so this emphasis on war as an existential threat, no less than a concerted global response to it, necessarily became a defining characteristic of Rooseveltian-style Wilsonianism.

With such an emphasis on concerted action by the world community to keep the peace, however, was there a place for regional arrangements? At Paris in 1919, Woodrow Wilson had won explicit recognition of the Monroe Doctrine in Article 21 of the League Covenant for the purpose of heading off possible political objections to the document back in the United States. And twenty-six years later, Franklin Roosevelt expected that collective security under the auspices of the United Nations would actually incorporate a

good deal more of what has been termed “regionalism.” That is, while the permanent members of the Security Council would police the world collectively, each would exercise special prerogatives in geographical areas of particular concern to them. For FDR, no less than liberal internationalists like Sumner Welles, James T. Shotwell, and Clark Eichelberger, all of whom wrote about the issue in the early nineteen forties, regionalism was merely an acknowledgement of the reality of great power dominance in the international system—at least in the near term. But all were equally insistent that such regionalism must be harnessed to the larger cause of global harmony. The Commission to Study the Organization of Peace had, in broad outline, endorsed just such a provision in its Fourth Report in November 1943. And in due course, the ideal was subsequently enshrined in Articles 51 and 52 of the United Nations Charter itself:

Nothing in the present Charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defense if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations…

Nothing in the present Charter precludes the existence of regional arrangements or agencies for dealing with such matters relating to the maintenance of international peace and security as are appropriate for regional action provided that such arrangements or agencies and their activities are consistent with the Purposes and Principles of the United Nations.

Guarantees of the “inherent right of individual... self-defense” notwithstanding, the collective security arrangements described above still raise important issues of national sovereignty, of course. Among many liberal internationalists, that particular consideration had continued to lose ground during the war years. As the Commission to Study the Organization of Peace put it in a relevant study released in February 1943, the

126 Steigerwald, 140-41.
“absoluteness of national sovereignty” must be challenged “if human progress is to continue.”¹²⁹

And the United Nations Charter that came into force in 1945 did challenge it. While not establishing a genuine world government, the provisions of the document did, for example, at least seek to severely restrict the degree of force that could be legally exercised by nation-states in the international arena. Question number 48 posed by the Woodrow Wilson Foundation in its informational pamphlet on the San Francisco Charter was, “Do the members of the United Nations yield any of their sovereignty?” The foundation’s answer: “They do… The most deadly of all sovereign rights, the right to make war, is abandoned. While the Charter stands, no member can enforce its will upon another by force of arms.”¹³⁰ As written, the relevant passages of the Charter—Chapter I, Article 2—did not provide for any prohibitions against force as sweeping as that spelled out in the Kellogg-Briand Pact of 1928. Still, the intention was clear—in the new postwar world order, only the “police power” of the UN Security Council was to be accorded any true legitimacy.

Beyond the realm of collective security, the principle of sovereignty also arose inevitably in connection with the postwar fate of the world’s great colonial empires. In discussions that took place during the war over responsibilities to be delegated to the new international organization, Roosevelt had pushed for an end to colonial empires around the world and a trusteeship system that would aid former colonies in preparing for independence. The president had years earlier determined that the United States itself

¹³⁰ “How will The United Nations Work?” The Woodrow Wilson Foundation, July 1945, 12, WWF MSS, Box 1.
should set an example along these lines in the Philippines, and the Tydings-McDuffie Act he signed in 1934 provided for complete Filipino independence after a ten-year long period of self-governance as an American commonwealth. In a similar fashion, he thought that the United Nations could take on much the same role on behalf of the other colonized peoples of the world. At the very least, FDR believed that such an arrangement could help forestall the possibility of armed independence struggles suddenly flaring up after the world war had ended.

Unfortunately, it was a thorny issue—Roosevelt had to give some ground in the face of British and French concerns over the future of their overseas empires. Still, the President did at least win approval for a United Nations Trusteeship Council that would oversee former League of Nations mandates and territories previously controlled by the defeated Axis.131 The Woodrow Wilson Foundation, in turn, put the best possible gloss on the situation in its literature, noting that “[t]he Charter requires every member of the United Nations to recognize that the interests of the native peoples are paramount and to accept ‘as a sacred trust’ the promotion of their well being”—even if it was more of a moral rather than a strictly legal obligation.132

Institutional arrangements to ensure social justice and postwar economic cooperation, recovery, and development all around the world were obviously important to the promotion of well-being, and they were considered vitally important by liberal internationalists both inside and outside the administration. “The welfare of a nation cannot be fully realized by economic isolation any more than its security can be fully

realized by political isolation,” James T. Shotwell wrote late in the war.133 And the manifest failures of economic policy in the nineteen twenties and thirties weighed heavily on the considerations of postwar planners. “Economic nationalism has proven insufficient,” the Third Report of the Commission to Study the Organization of Peace concluded in early 1943. A new world economic system, defined by free trade, economic growth, and “national and international measures to combat booms and depressions and unemployment,” would provide the solution.134 It was generally acknowledged as well that the United States had a special obligation for bringing about this solution.

“Recognition of American economic strength gave rise to a feeling of American responsibility to contribute actively toward the better function of the international economy in the long-term interest not only of the United States but of all friendly countries,” a study group sponsored by the Woodrow Wilson Foundation and the National Planning Association would later recall of this critical period.135

To help achieve these goals, Chapter X of the United Nations charter provided for a 54-member Economic and Social Council to study “international economic, social, cultural, educational, health, and related matters” and make recommendations regarding the same. Meanwhile, the orphaned International Labor Organization, which had fled Switzerland for Canada during the war, became a UN specialized agency in 1946 alongside a newly established Food and Agriculture Organization. The work of these specialized agencies was to be coordinated by the Economic and Social Council.

133 Shotwell, The Great Decision, 153.
Much more significant for the future development of the world economy, however, were the various arrangements that ultimately came out of the United Nations Monetary and Financial Conference, which was convened at Bretton Woods, New Hampshire in July of 1944 at Roosevelt’s behest. This conference produced a number of remarkable institutional innovations to specifically address international money issues. And these innovations, devised in large measure by the famed British economist John Maynard Keynes and U.S. undersecretary of the treasury Harry Dexter White, would form the basis of what soon came to be known as the “Bretton Woods” system.

The elements of that system, taken together, comprised one of the most far-reaching reforms of the international economic order ever undertaken. An International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, otherwise known as the World Bank, would make loans and loan guarantees available to member nations in order to finance economic development projects. Meanwhile, an International Monetary Fund (IMF) would act to stabilize world currencies, make loans to assist nations with balance-of-payments difficulties, and, in general, promote international trade. A proposal for a de facto global gold standard also came out of Bretton Woods, with the world’s major currencies pegged to the U.S. dollar at a fixed rate of exchange and the dollar, in turn, made convertible into gold on demand at a fixed price of $35 per ounce. Along with these other ideas, an International Trade Organization was also suggested; but that proposal failed when a political consensus supporting it ultimately failed to materialize in the United States. The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), which followed in lieu of the ITO in 1948, however, fulfilled at least some of the same functions. In fact, it set the stage for a regular series of multilateral negotiations over the course of the next
five decades—negotiations aimed at minimizing quotas, tariffs, preferential practices, and other barriers to international trade.

In urging the adoption of the Bretton Woods proposals in early February of 1945, FDR spoke eloquently on the benefits of free international trade:

Almost no one in the modern world produces what he eats and wears and lives in. It is only by the division of labor among people and among geographic areas with all their varied resources, and by the increased all-around production which specialization makes possible, that any modern country can sustain its present population. It is through exchange and trade that efficient production in large units becomes possible. To expand the trading circle, to make it richer, more competitive, more varied, is a fundamental contribution to everybody’s wealth and welfare.

It is time for the United States to take the lead in establishing the principle of economic cooperation as the foundation for expanded world trade.

In Roosevelt’s view, the decision taken by the Congress on whether or not to approve the new monetary and financial system could spell the difference “between a world caught again in the maelstrom of panic and economic warfare culminating in war—as in the 1930s—or a world in which the members strive for a better life through mutual trust, cooperation, and assistance.” The world, he believed, would either unite or devolve into hostile economic blocs after the war, and he warned the nation’s lawmakers of just such a possibility in the years to come if they did not act. And Capitol Hill responded, both houses of Congress passing legislation authorizing U.S. participation in most of these new arrangements by huge margins only months after the president’s sudden passing in mid-April—only weeks, it would turn out, before the final surrender of Japan.¹³⁶

The United Nations was now a reality. And throughout the long process by which the official plans for the new organization had been formulated and brought to fruition by the administration, liberal internationalists from the peace movement were involved.

¹³⁶ The President Urges Immediate Adoption of the Bretton Woods Agreements. February 12, 1945, The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt, 1944-45 vol., 551-54.
When the State Department established its Advisory Committee on Postwar Foreign Policies, the body which produced the first outlines for the UN under the direction of undersecretary of state Sumner Welles, Clark Eichelberger and James T. Shotwell were both invited to participate in its work. Hamilton Fish Armstrong served on the Committee as well; but not only that, he subsequently worked on the final draft of the United Nations Charter in 1944-45 as a special adviser to Edward R. Stettinius, Roosevelt’s Secretary of State following Cordell Hull’s retirement.

Liberal internationalists were especially well-represented at the San Francisco Conference that finalized the Charter in 1945. Armstrong, again, was present as a senior adviser to the sizable official American delegation. But Stettinius invited forty-two different non-governmental organizations to send representatives to San Francisco to serve as consultants besides—a semi-official group that would be chaired by the Carnegie Endowment’s representative, James T. Shotwell. The Commission to Study the Organization of Peace, the Foreign Policy Association, and the Council on Foreign Relations all sent personnel. And with some pride, Shotwell would later note in his autobiography that it was this advisory body that was “chiefly responsible for the economic and social provisions of the finalized Charter.”

Beyond the policymaking process, liberal internationalists also assisted the administration in its efforts to promote the new world organization to the public and gain political support for ratification of the Charter. At the invitation of Clark Eichelberger—

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and with the tacit approval of the State Department—representatives from forty different organizations met at the Woodrow Wilson Library in New York City in early October 1944 to lay the groundwork for a coordinated United Nations publicity campaign. Eicherlberger himself wrote a pamphlet on the subject of the Dumbarton Oaks proposals that reached 21,000 readers through the various organizations with which he was affiliated. And before it was all over, the Church Peace Union, the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America, and the League of Nations Association, which had in early 1945 changed its name to the American Association for the United Nations, all played an active role in this campaign, both before and after the San Francisco conference.140

Taking an active part, as well, was the Woodrow Wilson Foundation. In an effort that severely taxed its financial resources, the Foundation printed and distributed 600,000 copies of the Dumbarton Oaks proposals before the State Department made its own official text publicly available. And this was just one of numerous services the organization provided during this very busy period, not the least of which was allowing its headquarters to be used also as the headquarters for the American Association for the United Nations and the Commission to Study the Organization of Peace—the latter being a group that regularly received financial support from the Foundation in any case.141 The Commission, in fact, received over 77% of all the grant money disbursed by the Woodrow Wilson Foundation between 1940 and 1945—some $26,250 in all.142

142 The Woodrow Wilson Foundation, Two Year Report & Forty Years in Retrospect, 68.
Conclusion

“As history takes on perspective, Woodrow Wilson and Franklin Delano Roosevelt seem destined to be ever more closely linked,” Woodrow Wilson Foundation president and American Association for the United Nations director Arthur Sweetser commented at the dedication of the new Woodrow Wilson House in New York City on April 17, 1945, just five days after Roosevelt’s death. “Both were elected to the highest office in the gift of the American people. Both led their nation to victory in a World War. Both became mankind’s leading proponents of a world association for peace and justice. Both sacrificed their lives that war may pass from civilized society.”

The comparison Sweetser made that day was perhaps a bit overdrawn. Still, the link that he perceived between the two men was real enough. By 1945, Franklin Roosevelt—in collaboration with the liberal internationalists from the peace movement who rallied to his cause—had succeeded not only in rearticulating and popularizing a new Wilsonian vision of an organized postwar world, but in creating substantial global institutions that embodied that vision. Moreover, the United States, now the world’s overwhelmingly dominant power by any criteria one may wish to choose, was fully committed to a position of active global leadership on behalf of those institutions. The sheer scale of the achievement was certainly greater than anything Wilson had been able to accomplish in his day. The “American Century” had dawned, with all that this entailed in terms of America’s special responsibility for maintaining the new postwar order.

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143 Address by Mr. Arthur Sweetser, April 17, 1945, The Woodrow Wilson Foundation, Annual Report 1944-1945, booklet, 16, WWF MSS Box I.
The new Rooseveltian Wilsonian framework that liberal internationalists had crafted by the mid-nineteen forties was similar in many ways to the dominant one that had emerged during and after the First World War. Yet it was also different in a number of respects, as well. And these differences, in turn, were rooted in a number of alternative interpretations of several essential Wilsonian precepts—alternative interpretations that date back as far as Wilson’s time, and which were subsequently embraced by liberal internationalists as a result of their experience of two great global wars and the international crises that had gripped the world in the interim.

The new Wilsonianism of the Roosevelt era was, like that of Wilson’s own era, a decidedly progressive credo. In a number of ways, it was actually more progressive. To begin, the new Wilsonianism reflected a diagnosis of the existential threat hanging over the international community that placed more of an emphasis than did Wilson himself on war as the enemy. Not that FDR was unaware or insensible to the grave dangers represented by German Nazism, Italian fascism, and Japanese militarism—far from it. As we have seen, he spoke eloquently and at length about the threat that these nation-states and their illiberal political systems posed to American ideals, American values, and American national security. Under the particular circumstances of the war, it was quite necessary for him to speak out as he did about such matters. And liberal internationalists from the peace movement followed suit for the same reason. But in the years before the war, war itself had clearly been the enemy. The emphasis that Roosevelt, for example, placed on disarmament and limiting the arms race going back to the early nineteen thirties attests to that. And both the prewar “Four Freedoms” speech and the Atlantic Charter made it explicitly clear as well that, in the long-term, especially, “aggression”
was the great danger to mankind’s future. Later on, in making the case for the postwar
United Nations, the pronouncements of FDR and other liberal internationalists besides
focused, again, on the threat posed by “aggressor Nations” rather than those of any
specific governmental form or ideological stripe. The overriding concern with this threat
was even formally institutionalized in the United Nations Charter and its provisions for
collective security.

The Wilsonianism of the Roosevelt era was more progressive, too, in its
heightened emphasis on the regulatory state as a means of organizing the world economy.
Not that FDR, or liberal internationalists more generally, had waivered in their devotion
to free international trade—far from it. If anything, the breakdown of the international
trading system that took place in connection with the Great Depression—and the
economic nationalism that had fueled it—greatly alarmed them. They viewed it, quite
correctly, as one of the root causes of the war. Thus, assuring equal access for all the
nations of the world to markets and raw materials continued to be a priority. All the same,
the enormous economic disaster of the nineteen thirties cast a shadow of disrepute over
the entire capitalist market system and, for many, reinforced the desirability of economic
planning and regulation of the economy. That being the case, then, it is not surprising that
the economic arrangements designed during the war, particularly the Bretton Woods
system, were intended to provide both appropriate regulatory oversight for the world
economy and, at least in theory, ensure that the globe would never again break down into
hostile, competing economic blocs.

In other ways, though, the new Rooseveltian Wilsonianism was more ambiguous.
In terms of collective security, the new system retained the essential approach that
Wilson himself had advocated decades earlier, with its emphasis on world organization and the rule of law as the primary means of maintaining global peace. Wilson’s notion of collective security had emphasized the ideal of an organized community of democratic nations that eschewed militarism in favor of political consensus building and legal safeguards against aggression. And in a similar fashion, the United Nations organization that liberal internationalists had brought into being by the mid-nineteen forties was likewise intended to be a worldwide cooperative community of nations that would promote and protect the interests of the group via diplomatic and legal means.

At the same time, however, a much stronger and decidedly more conservative element of peace enforcement was introduced into the collective security arrangements that came out of World War II—a significant departure from the Wilsonianism of an earlier era. Not that it was a totally alien concept now being introduced for the very first time. The First World War-era League to Enforce Peace had, of course, been quite devoted to the concept. But it was only in the years immediately prior to the outbreak of the Second World War that liberal internationalists more generally began warming to the idea of enforcing peace, particularly by military means, as a solution to the manifest weakness of the failed League of Nations system. And the war itself only served to reinforce this trend, as Roosevelt’s embrace of the “policemen” concept and its subsequent codification in the design of the United Nations Security Council clearly demonstrate. The basic idea was to buttress legal authority with UN “police action” where appropriate—an arrangement that actually preserves the system’s emphasis on world organization and the rule of law. Nevertheless, the new Wilsonian creed that had emerged by 1945 was, in an important sense, decidedly more “militaristic” than anything
Wilson himself had ever contemplated. And both this innovation and the experience of World War II more generally would have some far-reaching ramifications as Wilsonianism continued to evolve in the second half of the twentieth century.

The pursuit of national democratic self-determination was altered, too—conceptually, on the one hand, by new trends in internationalist thinking, and in practical terms, on the other, by an infusion of realism into foreign policy decision-making on the part of the Roosevelt administration. In fact, to the extent that there were discernable differences between FDR and his liberal internationalist allies in the peace movement at all, it was on this particular point. And it is not difficult to ascertain the source of the divergence. Being the practical politician that he was, entrusted with the authority and responsibility of leading the nation, the president was, on the whole, more appreciative of the inherent appeal of nationalism as a political force than were the activists. In contrast, those in the peace movement had become decidedly more hostile to nationalism as an organizing force in world affairs during the prewar era, viewing it increasingly as a retrograde element to be overcome in the name of building a true world community. They were much more inclined to view the promotion of democracy as a major consideration, while Roosevelt, in contrast, tended to think more in selective, “realist” terms when translating that principle into concrete action.

In the context of the worldwide war to defeat Nazism, fascism, and Japanese militarism, these differences were not immediately important. Such issues would loom much larger in the postwar era, though. Indeed, the unity of purpose that had been forged among liberal internationalists during the war would not last for a host of different reasons, as we shall see in the pages that follow.
Notes on Historiography

The Second World War was a watershed for both the American peace movement and the evolution of Wilsonian ideals, just as the conflict of 1914-18 had been just a few decades before—and historians of both have hardly neglected the period. Nevertheless, we find again that the bodies of literature produced by the scholars working in these fields do not much benefit from a thorough acquaintance with the other, with the result that both suffer from the same drawbacks described in earlier chapters.

The fundamental drawback to be found in peace history scholarship—the dominance of a few select interpretive frameworks, namely Progressive-Revisionism and antiwar pacifism—find implicit expression in a number of different forms. It is certainly reflected, for example, in the basic narrative that peace historians have crafted for the period leading up to and during World War II. To summarize, that narrative is one of rise and decline. With high hopes, activists in the early nineteen-thirties launched themselves enthusiastically into the task of preventing a new world war, buoyed by the popular disillusionment with World War I that had taken hold in the years following that conflict, as well as and the pacifist leanings that it inspired. The movement reached its ascendancy in the mid-1930s but thereafter became increasingly divided as German Nazism, Italian fascism, and Japanese militarism began to loom ever larger as a threat to world peace. And as the Western world mobilized and ultimately confronted these great evils, the cause of peace was marginalized.

In Rebels Against War: The American Peace Movement, 1933-1983, Lawrence Wittner emphasized that pacifists were entirely opposed to fascism, but in the end they had “no immediate solution to cope with the aggressive world of angry power
relationships it confronted.” Just a few years before, Charles DeBenedetti, in *The Peace Reform in American History*, had similarly noted that pacifists became alert earlier than most to “the unlimited aggressiveness of Hitler’s Third Reich, and they suffered more than others in their anguished realization that the expansion of fascism could not be stopped by anything short of another World War.” And so we are left with what DeBenedetti termed the “irony” of the 1930s:

In no other decade in the century did peace seem so imperative. Yet no other decade found war so necessary. Indeed, by the start of the 1940s, war had for all practical purposes replaced peace as the necessary way toward reform. War alone promised the salvation of those ideals of international organization and liberal humanism that peace seekers hungered most to make real.

By 1941, the peace reform, as necessary as it remained, had become “immediately dispensable… postponable,” DeBenedetti lamented. And so, in the wake of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, “the tottering American peace movement collapsed,” according to Wittner. Thereafter, it appeared destined to carry on during the war years only as a comparatively tiny, besieged cohort of only the most determined war resisters battling for “civil liberties, racial justice, and relief and reconstruction.”

Obviously, this overarching storyline does not leave much space for the incorporation of Wilsonian liberal internationalists. Indeed, given the narrative that peace historians have crafted for the time span covered in the present chapter, it is small wonder that they again treat liberal internationalists working in the movement with comparative neglect. “Early in the thirties, the peace movement molted into an antiwar movement that

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144 Wittner, 33.
145 DeBenedetti, 125.
146 Ibid., 129.
147 Ibid., 137.
148 Wittner, 34.
149 DeBenedetti, 138, 140.
operated behind the leadership of internationalists, pacifists, and radical leftists.”

DeBenedetti wrote. But it was the latter two groups of activists that received most of his attention. The principal focus of Wittner’s narrative, too, is the pacifist element of the peace movement and those who associated with it—Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, Fellowship of Reconciliation, American Friends Service Committee, the historic peace churches, and political radicals. Charles F. Howlett and Robbie Lieberman, in *A History of the American Peace Movement from Colonial Times to the Present*, also champion the wartime pacifism of groups like the War Resisters League:

“In choosing non-violence as their form of dissent, they directly challenged the interventionist position with regard to the best approach to lasting peace.”

That is not to say that liberal internationalists have been completely ignored in these accounts, of course. DeBenedetti, especially, paid at least some attention to James T. Shotwell and Clark Eichelberger, as well as organizations like the League of Nations Association, Commission to Study the Organization of Peace, and Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies, in his account of the pre-World War II peace movement. And he discussed, as well, if only in a limited way, their support for the Roosevelt Administration, the American war effort, and FDR’s postwar plans. Wittner similarly acknowledged briefly the earnest activism of those non-pacifists, “no less sincere” in their desire for peace, “to whom military force represented a dreadful but possible alternative.” But, again, they and the organizations that they populated are very far removed from the primary interests of these modern peace historians.

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150 DeBenedetti, 123.
151 Howlett and Lieberman, 287.
152 Wittner, 33.
In fact, what coverage that is devoted to the liberal internationalists of the period in peace history texts is frequently hostile. Howlett and Lieberman take an especially critical tone, as, for example, in their characterization of the Commission to Study the Organization of Peace. As to the very name of the group, “the title was deceiving,” they write. “It was an organization that supported armed intervention to secure peace; it did not seek to make armed violence or the use of power accountable to the people.” These liberal internationalists, they continued, “were not committed to their reform-minded visions of an earlier era.” Instead, they “were now moderate interventionists until American entrance into the war; at that point, they became confirmed interventionists seeking some form of *Pax Americana.*” More generally, the internationalists of the period were clearly “no longer looking for ways to ensure world peace” at all, in the assessment of Howlett and Lieberman. “[T]hey were seeking ways to insure American involvement in war in order not to lose the second peace.”\(^\text{153}\)

DeBenedetti and Wittner, while not treating liberal internationalists quite so dismissively, sometimes take an explicitly unfavorable view of them and their ideas nonetheless. Both, for instance, write critically of internationalist attempts to promote collective security. “They called it collective security,” DeBenedetti intoned in *The Peace Reform in American History,* “but it smacked more of a determination to compel world order through an intimidating Great Power consensus.”\(^\text{154}\) In a like fashion, Wittner noted approvingly in *Rebels Against War* how “pacifists quickly spotted the flaw in the logic of the collective security advocates… A world war might suffice in the short run, deposing Hitler, Mussolini, and their followers, but in the long run it offered little hope for a new

\(^{153}\) Howlett and Lieberman, 285-6.

\(^{154}\) DeBenedetti, 136.
type of relationship among men.”  

It is a compelling critique—if you implicitly accept as a premise the tenets of progressive pacifism.

The present study, in contrast, in approaching peace history from outside these perspectives and drawing on insights from the scholarship of foreign policy specialists, affords us a very different view regarding the peace movement’s liberal internationalist wing, its grand and noble aspirations, and its appreciable accomplishments. And in the meantime, introducing liberal internationalists from the peace movement as objects of study—something that is not typically done at all by foreign policy historians—allows us to address some of the drawbacks evident in the literature on Wilsonianism: (1) a lack of sufficient awareness that Wilsonian precepts have been given alternative interpretations over time; and (2) a lack of systematic treatment—a focus on only some elements of Wilsonian thinking at the expense of others.

As we saw in the introductory chapter, for instance, Frank Ninkovich’s *The Wilsonian Century* defines Wilsonianism in terms of: (1) a diagnosis of the danger menacing the world, i.e. Wilsonianism as a “crisis internationalism”; and (2) the postulation of a solution to that danger, i.e. Wilsonianism as means of promoting liberal democratic world opinion. This approach, unfortunately, leads Ninkovich to the rather startling and wholly unpersuasive conclusion that Franklin Roosevelt had presided over what became the demise of Wilsonianism by the end of the Second World War:

By 1945, it appeared as if Wilsonian internationalism was history in the sense that Americans commonly understand the term—past, dead and buried, irrelevant to the present. Following FDR’s articulation of a Wilsonian global threat, his wartime diplomacy had dispensed with Wilsonian solutions in the belief that they had not worked and, in any case, were no longer necessary, thanks to great power cooperation.  

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155 Wittner, 33.

156 Ninkovich, 143.
As enthusiastic as Wilsonians were for the new United Nations, it “could not be the vehicle of Wilsonian collective security,” Ninkovich maintains. It was “neither a collective security organization in the Wilsonian tradition nor a great power alliance” insofar as FDR had intended that the world’s postwar “policemen” would police only their own respective neighborhoods and not each other. The crisis was over, and American policy was reverting back to the “sunny, optimistic” pattern of “unforced, natural great power harmony” and cooperation that characterized the pre-World War I era—“normal internationalism.” Even the postwar economic plans that ultimately emerged from Bretton Woods, such as GATT and the new gold standard, Ninkovich describes as examples of his “normal internationalism.”

This interpretation is strained, to say the least. The revisionist attribution to Roosevelt of a postwar “spheres of influence” policy is itself highly problematic at best, and by no means universally accepted. Beyond that, however, it is simply not true that U.S. policy was settling back into some contented prewar “normalcy” as the war was winding down, as Ninkovich would have us believe. In 1945, the crisis of the nineteen thirties and forties was still very fresh in the minds of all who lived through those dark years, and Wilsonian liberal internationalists responded by fashioning a postwar order that they thought would secure the future peace and prosperity of the world from such threats. Amos Perlmutter struck closer to the truth when he wrote that the United Nations was “FDR Wilsonianism with a vengeance.” It was, as this chapter has shown, an

157 Ibid., 140-2.
158 Ibid., 139-40.
160 Ibid., 105.
evolutionary adaptation of the concept of collective security, one that reflected some of
the latest thinking on the subject—a point that Ninkovich misses in his historical account
of the period.
Chapter Three

The Wilsonian Postwar Consensus

The Second World War had provided Franklin D. Roosevelt and liberal internationalists from the American peace movement a unique and invaluable opportunity to construct a new international system based on their own reformulation of archetypal Wilsonian ideals. And the success of their efforts gave heart to millions in the shadow of what had been the most devastating and catastrophic war in all of human history. Newly inaugurated President Harry Truman, who had ascended to the office in the wake of Roosevelt’s death just two weeks before, voiced that profound sense of hope in an address he gave to the United Nations organizing conference at San Francisco on April 26, 1945, describing the charter for the new world body as “a declaration of great faith by the nations of the earth—faith that war is not inevitable, faith that peace can be maintained.” He even concluded his address with a bold and unequivocal declaration of future allied solidarity in support of this great faith: “The forces of reaction and tyranny all over the world will try to keep the United Nations from remaining unified… But I know I speak for every one of you when I say that the United Nations will remain united. They will not be divided by propaganda either before the Japanese surrender or after.”

Behind the scenes, however, the reality of the situation was somewhat different. Only three days before delivering that address, Truman had famously dressed down Soviet foreign minister Vyacheslav Molotov during a private meeting; the outburst had been brought on by concerns over Soviet non-compliance with the understandings negotiated at Yalta regarding Polish self-determination. Nor had the Russians at that
point been given any official word regarding even the existence of a top secret Anglo-American effort to create a working atomic bomb. They knew about it anyway; unbeknownst to the British or American governments at this point, the program had been heavily penetrated by Soviet intelligence despite all the security surrounding it. But the organizers of the United Nations meeting in San Francisco did not know—this, despite the recommendation Truman had received from secretary of war Henry Stimson to the effect that, as historian Richard Rhodes later summarized it, “allowing the [UN] conference to proceed in ignorance of the [atomic] bomb was a sham.” ¹ In retrospect, there were some clear indications even in April of 1945 that Roosevelt’s new world order was already in trouble.

Indeed, the very foundations of that order were quickly undermined as a result of postwar developments. Looking back, Harry Truman’s second secretary of state, Dean Acheson, would describe that order, based as it was on “Wilsonian idealism and a utopian dream,” as appearing “more and more irrelevant” to him as the situation unfolded in the years that immediately followed the war. ² But Wilsonianism would not again fade into relative obscurity as it had after World War I. Instead, yet another variation of that creed quickly evolved in the late nineteen forties and early fifties, ultimately taking the form of a new bipartisan liberal Cold War Consensus in American foreign policy.

How and to what extent did the postwar Consensus Wilsonianism diverge from that of the Rooseveltian variety? There are actually elements of continuity. In its pursuit of an integrated world economy, for example, the Consensus continued to give a heavy emphasis to the development of the regulatory state and its associated international

² Dean Acheson, Present at the Creation: My Years in the State Department (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1969), 726.
institutions alongside expanding trade. In the realm of global economic policy, at least, a crusading sense of progressive reform was retained under the Cold War Consensus. American exceptionalism also continued to be a unifying force among liberal internationalists, as well, of course, although the basis for exceptionalism was by this time shifting away from a sense of historical and religious destiny and more towards a sense of duty owing to America’s preeminent position of power in the world.

At the same time, however, the postwar Consensus was quite different from Rooseveltian Wilsonianism in a number of respects that made it rather more conservative. With regard to the imminent danger hanging over the international system, for instance, the Consensus returned to Wilson’s own focus on the threat posed by illiberal political systems—in this case, those organized under the banner of communism. Indeed, anticommunism was a hallmark of the Consensus, defining not only the nature of the preeminent threat to world order and peace, but also how the principles of national democratic self-determination, collective security, and even free trade would be implemented, as well, in the decades after World War II. Notions of collective security were transformed in an especially dramatic fashion, with the previous emphasis on world organization and the rule of law increasingly supplanted—especially in actual practice—by a far-reaching system of regional and bilateral anticommunist military alliances to which the United States would become a party. And the progressive impulse to reform the world was decidedly muted under the conditions of the Cold War, as well, at least in the political realm; in the pursuit of an anticommunist “free world” system, democratization was often deemphasized for practical reasons, even as ever more grandiose reforms of the global economic system were instituted.
The fundamental differences that existed between the Wilsonianism of the Cold War Consensus and its Rooseveltian predecessor were only magnified by the fact that the latest Wilsonian formulation followed so closely on the heels of the still very new system forged under FDR’s banner. It is not surprising, therefore, although it might be considered ironic, that a notable rift appeared among liberal internationalists regarding the conduct of U.S. foreign policy during this early postwar period. Under the circumstances of the incipient Cold War, some of them enthusiastically embraced the new Consensus. Others, meanwhile, only grudgingly went along, clinging stubbornly to many of the ideals and accomplishments of the Roosevelt period while leveling some tough criticisms of the new approach. But go along they did in the end. None of the readily-available alternatives to the Consensus in the late nineteen forties were able to gain traction. And for that reason, Wilsonianism would remain a proverbial “big tent” for decades to come.

Postwar Crisis and the Emergence of the Consensus

As we have already seen, the origins of the first two incarnations of Wilsonian internationalism were inextricably linked with the great world wars of 1914-18 and 1939-45, respectively. And in its own way, too, the third iteration of Wilsonianism was also very much a “crisis internationalism,” to borrow Frank Ninkovich’s turn of phrase. In fact, the peace that had been established in 1945 was soon overshadowed by a pair of newly emerging dangers to global security and international order—dangers that together threatened to plunge the world into an unimaginable apocalypse.
The first of these was the dawn of the atomic age and the advent of nuclear weapons. The first fission bombs had been developed in the United States during the war and used on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in early August 1945. It was the use of those bombs, more than any other single factor, which actually brought about the final cessation of hostilities. That success, however, came at a terrible cost. The two cities attacked were largely obliterated by the devastating new weaponry. Some 180,000 Japanese were killed immediately; many tens of thousands more died later on from the lingering effects of radiation exposure.

Decades before, Woodrow Wilson had spoken of the destructiveness of modern war as a threat to modern civilization. But at that juncture, his point of view had been “too avant garde and not universally persuasive,” as Ninkovich aptly put it. After Hiroshima and Nagasaki, on the other hand, the concept became a great deal more plausible. Certainly some people realized, even in 1945, that this new technology, employed for destructive purposes, could someday soon threaten humanity’s very existence. Having witnessed the very first atomic explosion in the New Mexico desert that July, lead Manhattan Project scientist J. Robert Oppenheimer famously recalled a passage from an ancient Hindu text, the *Bhagavad Gita*: “I am become death, the destroyer of worlds.” And with the passage of time, the threat of a nuclear apocalypse would become all too real, unfortunately.

Early attempts to introduce international controls on atomic weapons and energy were spurred precisely by the realization that the future of all the peoples of the world might now be at stake. Indeed, had they known about the existence of the bomb, John

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Foster Dulles would later say, the drafters of the UN Charter would have made some provisions for controlling it at the outset. Under the circumstances, however, the problem was left entirely for the postwar world to contend with.

In 1946, a supremely ambitious and well-intentioned plan was formulated by a U.S. government committee co-chaired by Dean Acheson, who was then undersecretary of state, and David Lilienthal, a former chair of the Tennessee Valley Authority. That plan was subsequently presented to the United Nations Atomic Energy Commission—with some revisions—by chief American negotiator Bernard Baruch, a well-known New York City financier who had been a high-level personal advisor to both Woodrow Wilson and Franklin Roosevelt. Under the terms of the proposal, which came to be called the Baruch Plan, a UN-affiliated International Atomic Development Authority would have taken exclusive control of every facet of worldwide atomic weapons and energy-related research and production. In fact, the agency would have been tasked with enforcing a total global ban on the possession of all atomic weapons. And in conjunction with this ban, the Baruch Plan called for the United States to pledge that it would divest itself of what stockpiles of such weapons it had built.

In retrospect, though, it is clear enough that implementing the plan was never a practical possibility. The Soviets objected straightway to U.S. insistence on retaining the bomb until effective international controls were in place. Moreover, the plan’s verification provisions—international inspections—were totally unacceptable to Moscow. But beyond these basic nuts-and-bolts issues, the ambitions of Joseph Stalin represented the real stumbling block. After Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Stalin had become utterly convinced that the USSR should possess its own atomic weapons, and he likely

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could not have been dissuaded from pursuing their development under any circumstances. As David Holloway has convincingly argued, for reasons both symbolic and practical, the Kremlin leader regarded a Soviet bomb as an absolute imperative.\footnote{David Holloway, \textit{Stalin and the Bomb: The Soviet Union and Atomic Energy 1939-1956} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 131-33, 162-66.}

It must be remembered also, although it is frequently forgotten today, that as a practical matter the prospect of a global nuclear Armageddon was still just a future hypothetical scenario in 1945-46—and it would remain so for years to come. Neither the death toll nor the physical devastation wrought by the atomic blasts at Hiroshima and Nagasaki had been all that much greater than that accomplished previously by conventional aerial bombing; the results in those two cases had simply been achieved with vastly greater efficiency. Moreover, there was the fact of America’s monopoly on atomic weapons in the first years of the postwar period. That monopoly was short-lived, as it would turn out—far more short-lived than most at the time expected. But as much of a shock as it was at the time, even the first test detonation of a Soviet atomic bomb in late 1949 brought the potential of global atomic annihilation only one incremental step closer. And so, in the end, the advent of the atomic age was not the dominant factor spurring on the development of a third Wilsonian paradigm beginning in the late nineteen-forties.

Much more important in shaping the evolution of U.S. foreign policy in the years immediately following the conclusion of World War II was the advent of the Cold War—a struggle for global predominance between the United States, the Soviet Union, and their respective allies and client states that would endure for much of the second half of the twentieth century. The Anglo-American alliance with the Soviet Union—the alliance that had won the Second World War—was never anything more than a marriage of
convenience, a purely tactical alignment cemented only by the practical necessity of combating Adolph Hitler’s Nazi empire in Europe. Franklin Roosevelt and other liberal internationalists had entertained high hopes that the experience of mutual cooperation gained during the war would help forge worldwide unity and peace for the postwar era. But that was not to be the case. Once the fighting ended, the American and Soviet governments found themselves at odds over a broad range of issues, the most important of them, at least initially, being the governance of occupied Germany and the fate of Poland and other Eastern Europe countries overrun by the Red Army in the last stages of the war. “From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the continent,” former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill warned in March of 1946, as those territories on the far side of the line increasingly came under the sway of communist regimes loyal to and ultimately dependent upon Moscow. And with the victory of Mao Zedong’s communists in China’s long civil war in October 1949 and the outbreak of the Korean War only eight months after that, Cold War battle lines would, by the end of the decade, become established across eastern Asia as well as in Europe.

In response to the advent of the Cold War, especially, American political leaders forged yet another new interpretation of Wilsonianism in the form of a Cold War Consensus. That is not to say that the early architects of American Cold War policy were all staunch Wilsonians. George F. Kennan, the very man who would first suggest the policy of “containment” as a strategy for dealing with the postwar Soviet Union, was very much a foreign policy “realist” who disdained the “legalistic-moralistic approach” that he identified with Wilsonian internationalism. Instead, he favored the unabashed
pursuit of American national self-interest—a pursuit that he felt would “never fail to be conducive to a better world,” at least as long as U.S. objectives were “decent ones, unsullied by arrogance or hostility toward other peoples or delusions of superiority.”6 In a similar vein, Dean Acheson saw himself as developing a new and improved postwar foreign policy that put “practical objectives, concretely and realistically conceived, ahead of generalizations, even those wearing the garb of idealism.”7 According to Edward C. Luck, Acheson was a skeptic who “had long been wary of Wilsonian idealism and of placing too much emphasis on international institutions.”8

Yet the fact remains that the Wilsonian vision, with all of its variations and nuances, had come to exert a dominating influence over the foreign policy establishment by this time. As Ninkovich points out, Wilsonianism had been thoroughly “internalized by the policy elite” by mid-century: “Once a marginal and controversial creed, it had been naturalized. It had come to be so taken for granted that it was now outside the universe of discussion.”9 Even the “realist” Kennan, in the course of critiquing the “legalistic-moralistic approach” in 1951 in the pages of his classic book, American Diplomacy, had to acknowledge just how deep-seated it had truly become in the American political tradition.10

In general, the decision-makers who created early Cold War-era foreign policy were “dedicated foreign service officers, joined by political figures from the New York financial and legal establishments,” according to Amos Perlmutter. They had been

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7 Acheson, Present at the Creation, 727.
9 Ninkovich, 177.
10 Kennan, 95-6.
educated at elite eastern universities and subsequently served in the Roosevelt Administration during the war. And they were all white Protestant men. Interestingly, liberal Protestantism provides a common thread binding together the Wilsonian enterprise in all of its various guises. As we have already seen, liberal Protestant policymakers and activists played a central role in creating and promoting the earliest formulations of Wilsonianism during the era of the First World War. And as Walter Russell Mead recently pointed out, “Liberal Protestantism dominated the worldview of the U.S. political class during World War II and the Cold War. Leaders such as Franklin Roosevelt, Harry Truman, Dean Acheson, Dwight Eisenhower, and John Foster Dulles were, like most American elites at the time, steeped in this tradition.” In Meade’s view, it was a tradition which emphasized Christian ethics and, quite frequently, progressive political action as a means of putting those ethics into practice. Moreover, it was a tradition with a rather optimistic view of human nature, as well—one that fostered widespread hope regarding both the prospects for world peace and the utility and efficacy of international organization in securing that peace. It is therefore not surprising, then, that liberal Protestantism came to be correlated with Wilsonianism.

Still, the extraordinarily broad-based political consensus upon which U.S. foreign policy was founded in the early years of the Cold War extended far beyond liberal Protestants as an identifiable group. Instead, it was a truly national creed. “Support for it came from all sections of society, including the media, business, labor unions, and the academic community,” as Iwan W. Morgan has pointed out in his historical account of

the phenomenon. “The Cold War consensus embraced all social groups, whether based on class, ethnicity, religion, region, race, or gender.”

Its tenets certainly united both conservatives and liberals within the politically dominant Democratic Party. The leader of that party in the late nineteen forties, Harry Truman, was an old “Bryan-Wilson progressive” who had, in time, become a devoted New Dealer and “vital center” liberal. As president, he “moved within the broad outlines Roosevelt had drawn” in the realm of foreign relations until forced by circumstances to take a different path, according to Alonzo Hamby. True enough, although the diverging path that Truman was ultimately compelled to take would point the way towards a substantial reformation of Roosevelt’s approach in many respects. In any case, Truman openly embraced such time-honored Wilsonian principles as collective security and a strong, religiously-inspired sense of American exceptionalism. And in his own way, he carried these principles forward just as FDR had done before him.

In time, the Consensus also came to dominate the Republican Party as well, especially after the victory in 1952 of its northeastern-internationalist wing, as represented by Dwight D. Eisenhower, over the more skeptical Midwestern and western conservatives led by Ohio Senator Robert A. Taft. Unlike Wilson, Roosevelt, or Truman before him, Ike was no progressive by any stretch of the imagination. But as biographer Stephen E. Ambrose has pointed out, the victorious general of World War II had identified much more closely with Truman’s positions than Taft’s on questions of international affairs going back to the late nineteen forties. He even periodically served

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14 Ibid.
the Truman administration in an advisory capacity, at the president’s request, before being selected to go to Paris as Supreme Allied Commander for the new NATO alliance—a position of high military command very much akin to the one he had held during the war. In these various military capacities, Ike had, in fact, been an active participant in carrying out the foreign policies of both Franklin Roosevelt and Harry Truman in the decade preceding his own ascension to the Oval Office.\textsuperscript{16} And despite the inevitable partisan bickering and politically-motivated calls for the aggressive “rolling back” of communism that filled the 1952 election campaign, as president he generally embraced the Cold War foreign polices originally devised by Truman’s administration and carried them forward through the balance of the decade.

Both Eisenhower and the man he selected to be his secretary of state, John Foster Dulles, often spoke in Wilsonian terms, and, according to Tony Smith, this was not an accident by any means:

Both men were the sons of Presbyterian ministers, and Dulles had been Wilson’s student in a course on political ethics at Princeton. Dulles’s uncle, Robert Lansing, was Wilson’s secretary of state; and Dulles had accompanied Wilson to the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, after World War I. Both men were described by their contemporaries as rigid, Old Testament characters, believers in a stern God and certain that the United States had a mission of the highest moral importance in international affairs.\textsuperscript{17}

At least in the abstract, Dulles was an unflinching advocate of international law, if not always international institutions, although his faith in both would ultimately be shaken by the Cold War confrontation with the Soviets.\textsuperscript{18} A one-time “one-worlder,” he had assisted in drafting the Preamble of the United Nations Charter. And he subsequently attended the

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\textsuperscript{17} Tony Smith, \emph{America’s Mission: The United States and the Worldwide Struggle for Democracy in the Twentieth Century} (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 189.
\textsuperscript{18} Luck, 137, 161.
\end{flushleft}
General Assembly as a U.S. delegate, first in 1946-47, and then again in 1950. In the years before joining the Eisenhower administration, Dulles also chaired the Board of Trustees of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

During those same years in the late nineteen forties, incidentally, his brother, Allen W. Dulles, who had spent the war as a covert operative in the clandestine Office of Strategic Services, was serving on the board of the Woodrow Wilson Foundation (WWF); he was the board secretary from 1947-50. Future Illinois governor Adlai E. Stevenson, an American U.N. delegate himself in 1946-47, was there, too, serving alongside Dulles on the Foundation’s board. In the years to come, both men would achieve public notoriety in their own ways: Stevenson would twice challenge Eisenhower unsuccessfully for the presidency as the Democratic Party’s standard-bearer, while Dulles served Eisenhower’s administration as the director of the Central Intelligence Agency.

But their service together in the Woodrow Wilson Foundation is, if nothing else, yet another striking reminder of the truly bipartisan nature of the Cold War Consensus. In the immediate post-World War II era, Wilsonianism was still a very big tent.

But what did the Cold War Consensus itself actually entail? To begin, it was part of a larger “liberal consensus” that cut across “the broad center of the political spectrum,” in the words of Godfrey Hodgson: “It was born of a fusion of certain elements from both liberal and conservative traditions… most conservatives came to accept some of the economic and domestic policies of Rooseveltian liberalism, while many liberals adopted a foreign policy whose major premise was the kind of anticommunism that had once been the mark of conservatives.”

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particular, the Consensus basically married liberal internationalism with liberal and left anticommunism.\textsuperscript{20} In combination, the former provided a vision of an ideal world order to strive for, while the latter infused U.S. foreign policy with an added sense of moral gravity. “Liberal anticommunists located the moral foundation of American containment policies in the universal struggle between freedom and totalitarianism, demonstrating that if America were to remain true to its values it was obliged to resist communism,” according to Richard Gid Powers.\textsuperscript{21} Indeed, in one of the defining texts of the early Cold War Consensus, \textit{The Vital Center}, historian Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. defined both fascism and communism as twin totalitarian evils locked in a mortal struggle against the forces of democratic liberalism “for the minds and hearts of men.”\textsuperscript{22} In essence, therefore, communism played the same role in the new postwar Wilsonianism that Prussian militarism had played in the first, and, to a lesser extent, Nazism, fascism, and Japanese imperialism in the second—the role of a competing, illiberal model of world order the spread of which had to be resisted.

In 1945, anticommunism was already a political force with an established and sometimes controversial history in America. Its origins go all the way back to the 1917 Bolshevik revolution in Russia and the antiradicalism that it inspired in the United States, in turn. Vladimir Lenin’s revolution was embraced by many sympathetic intellectuals and antiwar radicals in America at the time. And in opposition to such radicalism, Woodrow Wilson himself became an early exponent of anticommunism. Indeed, he came to see his proposed League of Nations as a bulwark against the spread of bolshevism, and he tried

\textsuperscript{21}Powers, p. 191.
to sell the organization as such, at least in part, during the treaty fight in 1919. Historian N. Gordon Levin Jr. emphasized this particular aspect of Wilson’s foreign policy in his study of the subject, describing the administration’s “liberal-capitalist internationalism” as defining a stable ideological center between “the threat of imperialism on the Right and the danger of revolution on the Left”\(^{23}\)—a characterization that echoed something of Schlesinger’s notion of post-World War II liberalism as the “vital center.” Much more recently, Donald E. Davis and Eugene P. Trani have gone so far as to argue that Wilson’s policies toward post-revolutionary Russia represented nothing less than the inauguration of an American “cold war” against Moscow that would last until 1933 and set the stage for the subsequent confrontation that developed after 1945.\(^{24}\)

The liberal internationalism that emerged from the era of the First World War was anticommunist, at least to the extent that it became necessary to address the challenge posed by Lenin’s competing and altogether antithetical conception of how the international community should be organized. Anti-Bolshevism was certainly one of many elements at work in the rationale for the limited military intervention in Russia that the United States participated in from 1918-20. Nevertheless, anticommunism did not become a central, defining element of the Wilsonian creed during those early, formative years. At least in part, this was because of the comparatively short duration of the original post-World War I “red scare,” which peaked in 1919-21 before gradually abating. But it was also no doubt due to the fact that the communist menace abroad appeared to recede in the nineteen twenties and thirties as Lenin and his successors turned inward to


consolidate the revolution they had made. For the Soviet Union, no less than the United States, the interwar period would largely be one of “isolationism”—albeit for very different reasons, of course.

It is true that American policy towards the Soviet Union was defined for many years by Washington’s refusal to extend to the new communist government in Moscow either diplomatic recognition or trade credits. Distrust and even hostility did linger in the United States towards communism, in general, and the Soviet Union, in particular, through the nineteen twenties. But to argue, as Davis and Trani do, that this posture constituted a “cold war” on the part of Wilson and his Republican successors is to engage in a bit of rhetorical exaggeration that seriously misrepresents the situation. In truth, the very real conflict that existed between these two opposing world systems—Wilsonianism and Soviet communism—was largely confined to the realm of the abstract and the theoretical during this very early period of Soviet-American relations, as John Lewis Gaddis has correctly pointed out.25

Anticommunism was even less important in the reformulated Wilsonianism developed by Franklin D. Roosevelt and his liberal internationalist allies during the Second World War. Indeed, it was scarcely there at all. In the preceding chapter, the present author has argued that Roosevelitan Wilsonianism ultimately placed more of an emphasis on aggression and war as fundamental dangers to the international system in any case. But bear in mind, too, that it was Roosevelt who took the lead in finally extending U.S. diplomatic recognition to the USSR in 1933. And that was just the beginning. Under the circumstances of the wartime anti-Hitler alliance with the

Kremlin—not to mention the favorable press coverage and government propaganda that promoted it to the American public—relations between Washington and Moscow would become much warmer still. In the wake of the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, the Russians were transformed into gallant allies in the fight against Nazism; and billions of dollars in U.S. military aide for the Soviet Union was forthcoming through the lend-lease program during the war years. The infamous Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, meanwhile, was conveniently forgotten. As a result, by 1945 anticommunism in the United States was at low ebb.

Under the very different circumstances of the immediate postwar years, on the other hand, a dangerous confrontation quickly developed between “the liberal and democratic spirit of the West and the totalitarian-militaristic spirit of the Soviet sphere,” as the directors of the Woodrow Wilson Foundation described it in 1946. And this confrontation would be much more than just an abstract or theoretical exercise. Anticommunism was suddenly revitalized as a major force in American politics with the outbreak of the Cold War. In fact, the Cold War Consensus that emerged during the Truman and Eisenhower years married liberal internationalism with anticommunism to a degree unprecedented even during the height of the original “red scare.” The end result was a new interpretation of Wilsonianism that was decidedly more conservative in many respects than the previous, Rooseveltian system.

One of the earliest expressions of the Consensus, a foundational policy that came to be known as the Truman Doctrine, explicitly tied anticommunism directly to the Wilsonian precept of national democratic self-determination. In outlining his proposed

aid package to Greece and Turkey in an address to a joint session of Congress on March 12, 1947, Truman proclaimed:

One of the primary objectives of the foreign policy of the United States is the creation of conditions in which we and other nations will be able to work out a way of life free from coercion… We shall not realize our objectives, however, unless we are willing to help free people to maintain their free institutions and their national integrity against aggressive movements that seek to impose upon them totalitarian regimes.

This is no more than a frank recognition that totalitarian regimes imposed on free peoples, by direct or indirect aggression, undermine the foundations of international peace and hence the security of the United States…

I believe that it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures. I believe we must assist free peoples to work out their own destinies in their own way.27

The Truman Doctrine, in turn, was subsequently incorporated into NSC-68, a much more expansive and ambitious American national security strategy document drafted by Paul Nitze and his U.S. State Department Policy Planning Staff and issued in mid-April 1950. “The assault on free institutions is world-wide now,” the report warned, “and in the context of the present polarization of power a defeat of free institutions anywhere is a defeat everywhere.” In response to this global danger, Nitze’s plan recommended as a long-term U.S. policy objective the construction of “a successfully functioning political and economic system in the free world” that would reaffirm, “abroad as well as at home, our essential values” of freedom and democracy, while at the same time ensuring “our own integrity, in which lies the real frustration of the Kremlin design.”28 In other words, communism was utterly incompatible with a liberal democratic Wilsonian world order led by the United States, and resisting the worldwide spread of

communism was therefore absolutely imperative if the “free peoples” of the world—Americans included—were to remain free.

With that in mind, policymakers in the late nineteen forties and early fifties set about creating a “successfully functioning political and economic system in the free world,” as Nitze and his staff had termed it. And the foundation for that system would be a global community of U.S.-aligned nation-states. In a way, the process of bringing such a community into being had actually begun several years before with the postwar liberalization and democratization of occupied Germany and Japan—an undertaking Tony Smith has called the “most ambitious program American liberal internationalism has ever undertaken.” The principle goal of that program, according to Smith, was to demilitarize these two former fascist nations; liberalization and democratization was seen, “virtually spontaneously,” by American political leaders as a means towards this end. But it was by no means a coincidence that the program also resulted in a restructured and reformed Germany and Japan that would “lend support to Washington’s leadership of world affairs after 1945,” Smith observed. Indeed, he credits American success in this project as pivotal in setting the stage for the ultimate victory of the liberal world order in the Cold War.29

Unfortunately, the triumph of democracy all around the world that Woodrow Wilson had so devoutly hoped for after the First World War proved elusive after the Second, as well. Indeed, beyond the fate of the vanquished Axis powers that it had occupied, the United States was not always very scrupulous about promoting democracy during the Cold War—at least directly. Quite the opposite, it often appeared. While

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29 T. Smith, 146-7, 154, 156, 175-6.
desirability of self-determination for peoples around the world, just as Wilson and Roosevelt had before them, they were also much more willing than their predecessors to intervene in other countries to support regimes that were in no way democratic.

Establishing a pattern that would persist throughout the Cold War, the American government in those early postwar years “worked for democracy where it could (as in Japan and Western Europe), called for it where it might (as in Eastern Europe), but realistically accommodated itself to working with authoritarian governments in other areas… when the pursuit of American interests required such flexibility,” according to Smith—a transformation in policy that he characterizes as amounting to a “substantial change away from Wilsonianism.”\(^{30}\) If nothing else, “[r]epeated flirtations” with “strongmen regimes” indicated a “serious shortcoming in the Wilsonian theory of world political opinion,” according to Frank Ninkovich—its presupposition of “the universalization of modern democracy.”\(^{31}\)

Across the world, successive Cold War-era U.S. administrations worked to create and support stable, friendly, authoritarian anticommunist regimes; in instances where liberal democracy was not an immediate, practical possibility, such regimes were simply regarded as being the next best alternative. No small amount of effort was devoted to putting the best possible face on what was often a less-than-ideal situation, of course. As Iwan W. Morgan helpfully reminds us, the notion of “free peoples” and the “free world” came to be fully synonymous with “anticommunist” in the context of the Cold War-era American political lexicon.\(^{32}\) And that certainly underscores that fact that, for policymakers in Washington, the most important consideration was the fight against

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\(^{30}\) Ibid., 117-8, 180-2.

\(^{31}\) Ninkovich, 193.

\(^{32}\) Morgan, 21.
communism. If the postwar struggle to make the world once again safe for democracy was to succeed in the long run, combating the spread of communism around the world, by any means necessary, had to be the first and overriding priority. In the meantime, if America’s allies in that fight did not always measure up to our own high standards, that problem would have to be deferred for a later date.

For men like Dean Acheson, it was a simple matter of pragmatism. In 1950, Acheson dismissed as “fomenters of disunity” those self-righteous “purists who would have no dealings with any but the fairest of democratic states.” To him, this kind of thinking represented a species of “escapism in dealing with the world as it was,” an unwillingness to realistically embrace the task of “building with the materials at hand a strong, safer, and more stable position for free communities” across the world. In a great many instances—too many, in retrospect—high principle did give way to considerations of political practicality. But at least to some extent, this result was almost certainly inescapable. Beyond the conflict of ideologies, the Cold War was also very much a traditional power struggle between two rival international blocs, and this dimension of the contest could scarcely have been ignored by those in responsible positions of leadership.

Stopping the spread of international communism was a political problem, to be sure. But no one doubted in the late nineteen forties that it was an economic problem as well. Prosperity would foster political stability around the world, the thinking went; the ravages of depression and war, on the other hand, might provide an opening for hostile communist political movements to take root. And so the question became: how was prosperity to be achieved? A concurrence in favor of a mixed economy—both at home

33 Acheson, Present at the Creation, 379.
and abroad—was very well established in the United States by the end of the Second World War. On the domestic front, certainly, the New Deal predominated as an integral component of the postwar “liberal consensus.” Indeed, Truman had actually planned to expand upon it until his ambitions were derailed by the outbreak of war in Korea. And the New Deal influenced Truman’s thinking on international economics as well. “During the administrations of Roosevelt and myself, it had been proved that the way to build a successful economy in which the most people enjoyed high standards of living was to keep the national resources out of the hands of special interests and in the possession of the people themselves,” Truman wrote in his memoirs. “This was our program domestically, and I wanted to make it a permanent part of our foreign policy.”

Rooseveltian Wilsonianism had stressed the expansion of the regulatory state as an integral part of its drive for an integrated, interdependent world economy. And Truman was inclined to a similar course. The influence of anticommunism notwithstanding, there was a strong element of continuity from the Rooseveltian system to the Cold War Consensus in the heavy emphasis both placed on the development of superintending international institutions alongside expanding trade.

Extending the reach of the regulatory state became an integral part of the effort to hasten postwar economic recovery around the world, especially. During the early Cold War years, priority programs for “relief and rehabilitation” were forthcoming from Washington, particularly under Truman’s administration. And the most famous of these was undoubtedly the European Recovery Program, otherwise known as the Marshall Plan. This was a special emergency program, formulated largely by secretary of state and

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34 Memoirs by Harry S. Truman, Volume Two: Years of Trial and Hope (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, 1956), 232.
former army chief of staff General George C. Marshall, for the reconstruction of war-torn Europe; nearly $13 billion was spent by the United States under the auspices of this plan from 1948-52 to promote Europe’s economic recovery. Of course, from the beginning policymakers also fully intended that the Marshall Plan would forestall the influence of communism, cement European ties with the United States, and promote international free trade, as well. Indeed, the plan, in conjunction with the Bretton Woods system, proved instrumental in integrating West Germany and the rest of Western Europe into the new global economy. And years later, Truman would express satisfaction with the results of the program in his Memoirs in comments that leave little doubt as to the Plan’s purpose as a Cold War weapon: “I think the world now realizes that without the Marshall Plan it would have been difficult for western Europe to remain free from the tyranny of Communism.”

In the pages of that same volume, incidentally, the former president also praised his own administration’s Point Four program in similar terms. That program, which Truman envisioned as an extension of the New Deal into the foreign policy realm, was an innovative foreign aid project aimed at sending technological skills, knowledge, and equipment to poor nations throughout the world. But more than that, it was, according to Truman, “the strongest antidote to Communism that has so far been put into practice.”

Interestingly, Marshall Plan aide had actually been made available to all the nations of Europe, including the Soviet Union and its satellite states—at least theoretically. For those countries behind the Iron Curtain, in particular, the offer was a

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35 T. Smith, 164.
36 Truman, Memoirs, Volume Two, 119
37 Ibid., 239.
largely symbolic gesture made at the suggestion of George Kennan.38 And as foreign policy decision-makers in Washington fully expected, the offer was not accepted. The Kremlin, which otherwise would have welcomed a generous American loan immediately after the war, nixed the idea of Russian and Eastern European participation after it became apparent that the aid money would not come without strings attached. In this case, those strings took the form of the Organization for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC), a new multilateral agency that would assess various nations’ requirements for food, supplies, and technical assistance, submit petitions for Marshall Plan aid based on those assessments, and then administer the resulting grants. The OEEC, the forerunner of today’s Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), was yet another manifestation of the regulatory state—an international institution intended to oversee and guide the global postwar economy. For that very reason, Amos Perlmutter has described the Marshall Plan as a “neo-Wilsonian New Deal.”39 For the Soviets, on the other hand, it represented a degree of interference in their internal affairs and those of their client states that they were not prepared to tolerate.

Beyond the immediate need for economic recovery, the larger objective of more fully integrating the world into a cooperative system of free trade also drove the Cold War Consensus. As the Marshall Plan demonstrated, those goals could actually be complimentary, and, therefore, pursued simultaneously. And Wilsonians certainly regarded the creation of an integrated world economic system as being no less vital a goal for the long term than economic relief was for the short term. “World trade is essential to world peace,” Church Peace Union general secretary Henry A. Atkinson declared in a

38 Gaddis, 41-2, 194.
39 Perlmutter, 123.
1953 statement that aptly summarizes the Wilsonian worldview: “It has been called the ‘blood of a healthful world order.’”\(^{40}\) Indeed, for liberal internationalists the experience of depression and global war through the nineteen thirties and forties only served to reinforce the urgent necessity of promoting economic cooperation and liberalized trade as a means toward securing both future prosperity and international peace. Certainly, these internationalists believed, as did Clark Eichelberger of the American Association for the United Nations, that a return to nineteen thirties-era economic isolationism on the part of the United States would result in a state of global “economic chaos, nationalism and bankruptcy, in which dictators and false ideologies could thrive with a third world war as the probable result.”\(^{41}\) Looking forward, on the other hand, as Truman would later explain in his *Memoirs*: “We had to refute the historic claim that a nation must use aggression and military means to gain markets.”\(^{42}\) And so Franklin D. Roosevelt’s successors completed the work of putting together the new postwar economic regime centered on GATT, the Bretton Woods system, and relevant United Nations agencies such as the International Labor Organization and the Economic and Social Council. In so doing, they were confident that this new mixed economy, applied on an international scale, would result in both worldwide economic growth and social justice.

Just as was the case with postwar relief measures, though, the American effort to foster a new, interdependent world economy also inevitably became harnessed to the concurrent development of an American-led “free world” political community. Generally

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\(^{40}\) The Church Peace Union: Report of the Secretaries, and the Auditors to the Board of Trustees at the Thirty-ninth Annual Meeting held in New York City, January 22, 1953, 10, Council on Religion and International Affairs Manuscripts, Swarthmore College Peace Collection, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania, Box 3 (Hereafter cited as CRIA MSS).

\(^{41}\) Letter from Clark M. Eichelberger to the board, officers, branches and cooperating groups of the AAUN, February 24, 1947, 2-3, American Association for the United Nations Manuscripts, Swarthmore College Peace Collection, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania (Hereafter cited as AAUN MSS).

\(^{42}\) Truman, *Memoirs*, Volume Two, 238.
speaking, postwar liberal internationalists, like their prewar predecessors, accepted that economic cooperation and political cooperation were inextricably linked, and that one could not be meaningfully achieved without the other. But more than that, the drive to organize and rationalize the new global economy had an explicit national security justification—in essence, the same one used to promote emergency relief programs like the Marshall Plan. As Nitze’s NSC-68 report indicated, such an economy, “based on multilateral trade, declining trade barriers, and convertible currencies,” was an integral component of a strong “free world” system that could resist the spread of international communism.\textsuperscript{43} In other words, victory for the United States and its allies in the Cold War depended on the “free world” remaining economically sound.

At the same time, though, successfully prosecuting the Cold War and resisting the spread of communism would quickly come to depend on embracing a decidedly different approach to collective security than that envisioned by Franklin Roosevelt just a few years before. Indeed, it is in the realm of collective security that postwar administrations made the biggest break with Roosevelt’s legacy.

Not that the United Nations had been suddenly disregarded and forgotten with the onset of the Cold War—quite the contrary. Despite the growing rift between East and West, American policy-makers maintained, at least publicly, a pose of steadfast confidence in the world organization’s prospects. As late as September of 1950, even in the face of the Soviet Union’s “New Imperialism,” Dean Acheson, in a speech before the UN General Assembly, reassured the gathered delegates that, “in a century of alternating war and hope… the foundation of our hope is the United Nations.” The Woodrow Wilson Foundation subsequently called the secretary’s speech “one of the most important

\textsuperscript{43} “NSC 68,” in \textit{American Cold War Strategy}, 48.
statements issued since the Conference at San Francisco” in 1945, and it published and
distributed his remarks widely in pamphlet form.44

As Acheson was addressing the assembly, U.S. combat troops were fighting in
Korea all along the Pusan perimeter and in the vicinity of Inchon and Seoul—and they
were doing so under the auspices of the United Nations. The onset of the Korean War just
three months before had taken the entire world by surprise. But the collective response of
the UN had at least momentarily seemed to vindicate the faith that Acheson, among
others, were expressing in the world body. “By giving wholehearted support to the
United Nations in its efforts to put down lawless aggression, and to uphold the rule of
law, our people are living up to the responsibilities which Woodrow Wilson foresaw
thirty years ago or more,” President Truman told a gathering of representatives from the
Woodrow Wilson Foundation during an Oval Office ceremony on January 10, 1951:

Woodrow Wilson labored for what at one time seemed a hopeless cause. He sought to
establish an effective world organization. He urged us to lead the world in the search
for a just and lasting peace. Although he could not live to see it, the seeds Wilson
planted are now bearing fruit.

The American people today recognize the truths that Wilson proclaimed, and by
the vigorous support of the United Nations our country has taken the lead in
mobilizing the strength of free men against the forces of tyranny and despotism.45

Nevertheless, it was apparent from early on that the UN and its Security Council
would simply not be able to function reliably as the guarantor of world peace that
Roosevelt had originally envisioned. Republican opposition leader Robert A. Taft argued
as much in a speech he delivered in the Senate in early January of 1951, and in his
memoirs, Dean Acheson had to admit years later that the conclusion “was and is hard to

44 The Peace the World Wants, Address by Secretary of State Dean Acheson before the United Nations
General Assembly, Flushing Meadow, NY, September 20, 1950, pamphlet, 3, 6-7, 9-11, WWF MSS, Box1.
quarrel with.”\textsuperscript{46} The root of the problem was very simple—by design, the Security Council required unanimity among the permanent members in order to act. “That weakness, that inadequacy of the Security Council, was realized from the beginning,” John Foster Dulles told a joint conference of the American Association for the United Nations (AAUN) and the Commission to Study the Organization of Peace (CSOP) as far back as December 1945.\textsuperscript{47} In fact, a number of different critics devoted to the cause of a truly global collective security system had spoken out about this very problem during and immediately after the war. In the autumn of 1945, Sumner Welles, by then an honorary president of the AAUN, called the veto “the outstanding defect of the United Nations Charter” and “the one destined… to create the greatest difficulties in the future.”\textsuperscript{48} Both Raymond Leslie Buell, president of the Foreign Policy Association through much of the nineteen thirties, and Harry D. Gideonse, president of the Woodrow Wilson Foundation, were similarly aghast at the potential implications of the veto.\textsuperscript{49}

And their misgivings were not misplaced. As it happened, the outbreak of the Cold War, pitting as it did several permanent members of the Security Council against one another, virtually ensured that the panel would be fatally split on all but the most peripheral and inconsequential of global issues. It was only because of a fortuitous boycott of the Council’s proceedings by the Soviet delegation that it had been able to sanction the “police action” in Korea. Not surprisingly, the Soviets never repeated that blunder again.

\textsuperscript{46} Acheson, \textit{Present at the Creation}, 491.
\textsuperscript{49} Steigerwald, 147-8; The Woodrow Wilson Foundation, Annual Report 1945-1946, booklet, 3, WWF MSS Box I.
The burgeoning East-West conflict also doomed whatever early prospects there might have been for the international regulation of nuclear weapons and technology through the United Nations, as we saw earlier with the failure of the Baruch Plan. That did not stop government officials from continuing to pay lip service to the notion of establishing such controls through the UN system, though. Dean Acheson publicly endorsed the concept as late as 1950, along with parallel “efforts of the United Nations to work out the basis for effective regulation and reduction of conventional armaments and armed forces.”50 And then, in December of 1953, Dwight Eisenhower put forward a rather ambitious, ill-fated proposal of his own in which the superpowers would contribute at least some portion of their nuclear materials to an independent UN agency, which, in turn, would mobilize atomic energy “to serve the peaceful pursuits of mankind”—a suggestion the press quickly dubbed “Atoms for Peace.” In the wake of Joseph Stalin’s death, Ike even took the opportunity to reach out to the Soviet Union directly with a suggestion that the two countries might now be able to work together to reduce what he described as “the burden of armaments now weighing upon the world.” 51 The Russian leader’s passing in 1953 did occasion at least a temporary thaw in the superpower Cold War confrontation for a period of some years. Still, international accords directed towards arms control and disarmament proved elusive.

And so, as the Church Peace Union’s Vernon H. Holloway pointed out in rather understated terms in 1951, “the United States on occasion may have to act independently of, or at least partially outside the international [United Nations] organization.” This, he pointed out quite reasonably, “might indeed be the only wise and responsible alternative

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50 *The Peace the World Wants*, Address by Secretary of State Dean Acheson, 15-16, WWF MSS Box I.
to defeatist inaction or to appeasement.” A similar line of thought, expressed in more unqualified fashion, had apparently taken hold in the Woodrow Wilson Foundation years earlier. “We for our part have been reluctant to accept the disturbing implications of Soviet policy,” the organization’s annual report for 1947-1948 noted with no small degree of self-confessed discouragement. But in a statement that left no doubt as to which side was at fault for the superpower confrontation, at least as far as the directors of the Foundation were concerned, the report continued:

In the Assembly, in the Security Council and in the Atomic Energy Commission we have endeavored earnestly and patiently to find common ground. Then, as the conviction grew that our best efforts were likely to prove unavailing, a due regard for our own security forced us much against our preference to initiate measures outside the framework of the United Nations… we shall continue to press for a peace based on justice, and until out of the United Nations there is forged an instrument capable of preserving such a peace, we shall pursue the policy of strengthening the defenses of the Western World.

Indeed, given the obvious limitations of the United Nations, it is not surprising that alternative collective security arrangements soon began taking shape in the West in the late nineteen forties and early fifties.

And, not by accident, these arrangements arguably had the sanction of the United Nations. In testimony before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, John Foster Dulles recalled that, given the situation in the Security Council, it had been clear, even in 1945, that “the nations ought to be free to organize effective protection on their own” and so “at San Francisco, we proposed that the Charter authorize collective self-defense.”

Most significantly, this was accomplished in Articles 51 and 52 of the United Nations

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53 The Woodrow Wilson Foundation, Annual Report 1947-1948, booklet, 5-6, WWF MSS Box I.
Charter. According to Article 51, “Nothing in the present Charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defense if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations, until the Security Council has taken measures necessary to maintain international peace and security.” Despite the direct reference in the Article to action by the Security Council, both the Commission to Study the Organization of Peace and Hamilton Fish Armstrong, the editor of Foreign Affairs magazine, suggested in the late nineteen forties that Article 51 offered a way around the vexing problems posed by the veto.55 But Article 52 was also relevant to the issue at hand. It made room for “the existence of regional arrangements or agencies for dealing with such matters relating to the maintenance of international peace and security,” the only proviso being that “such arrangements or agencies and their activities” must be generally “consistent with the Purposes and Principles of the United Nations.”

In his January 1949 inaugural address, Harry Truman signaled a shift in American policy towards less reliance on the United Nations in the realm of collective security. In that speech, he highlighted as a fundamental pillar of U.S. foreign policy the “strengthening of the freedom-loving nations against the dangers of aggression.” But, at the same time, he drew a clear distinction between the pursuit of that goal and America’s “continued support for the United Nations.”56 Instead, the “strengthening” of “freedom-loving nations” Truman had in mind would soon take the form of a whole series of multilateral defense treaties signed with countries all across the globe.

By far and away the most important of these treaties was, of course, the North Atlantic Treaty of 1949 that created NATO—an arrangement that for all practical

55 Eichelberger, UN: The First Ten Years, 33.
56 Truman, Memoirs, Volume Two, 227, 250.
purposes institutionalized and expanded the wartime Western military alliance against Hitler and redirected it against the newly emerging Soviet-dominated Eastern bloc. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization was, at least implicitly, an anti-Soviet military alliance, although the formal treaty language only specified that the member states would consider an attack on any one of them as being an attack on them all, thus triggering a collective response. In that sense, at least, British foreign minister Ernest Bevin, a pivotal figure in the establishment of the alliance, was quite right in pointing out that NATO was what the United Nations “should have been had the Soviets cooperated.”

In any case, NATO was only one of a number of such alliances. The Rio Pact of 1947, which established, at least on paper, a unified inter-American defense bloc, linked the United States with twenty different Latin American countries. The Southeast Asia Defense Treaty of 1954 supposedly created a formal anticommmunist military alliance in that region of the world. But in practice, neither SEATO nor the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) established the following year in the Middle East was able to duplicate the success of NATO. Of much greater practical importance were the numerous bilateral and trilateral agreements entered into by the United States with countries such as Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, the Philippines, Australia, and New Zealand.

To support all of these new military alliances, a Mutual Defense Assistance Program was inaugurated, as well, to extend military aid to American-allied nations—in effect, extending Roosevelt’s wartime notion of America as the “arsenal of democracy” into the Cold War era. “It is one of the many steps we are taking with other free peoples to strengthen our common defense in furtherance of the principles of international peace

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and order enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations,” Truman pronounced in a brief statement upon signing the requisite legislation in early October 1949. By 1970, the U.S. had supplied military equipment, services, and training to eighty countries around the world under the auspices of the military assistance program. Undoubtedly, the Wilsonianism of the Cold War Consensus was one that was even more highly militarized than either of the two previous formulations.

The end result was a sort of American empire “by invitation,” as John Lewis Gaddis has described it—a “free world” defense network in which America would serve as the principle guarantor of security against the encroachment of hostile communist powers. In many instances, the members of this defense network pledged that they would act in accordance with the principles of the United Nations Charter in carrying out their responsibilities. The North Atlantic Treaty, the Rio Pact, and the Baghdad Pact that created CENTO even explicitly cited Article 51 as establishing a legal basis for the security arrangements contained therein—all very much in keeping with liberal internationalist thinking on regional arrangements as an adjunct of global collective security. At the same time, however, it is clear that, in actual practice, these new postwar treaty arrangements were not mere extensions of global collective security. They were, instead, security systems fully intended to operate independently of the United Nations organization and in lieu of it in the likely event that the world body was unable to fulfill its primary function.
As the Soviet-American crisis deepened in the late nineteen forties, FDR’s Wilsonianism gave way to the Cold War Consensus in U.S. foreign policy with astonishing rapidity. Considering the fact that the Rooseveltian system itself was still comparatively very new, it is perhaps not surprising—although it is certainly ironic—that this dramatic shift would produce a notable ideological rift among liberal internationalists during the early postwar years. Some enthusiastically embraced the new Consensus. Others, meanwhile, were clearly much more reluctant to part with the great hope that the Roosevelt era had spawned—the hope for a world finally united as one in peace. In due course, the more reluctant would accommodate themselves to the Consensus in many, if not all, respects. The rift would never fully heal, however. As was the case after the First World War, the coalition of intellectuals and activists cemented by Wilsonian internationalism in the wake of World War II was a sometimes contentious “big tent.”

The postwar “big tent” phenomenon influenced the interpretation and application of a number of foundational Wilsonian principles, American exceptionalism being a good case in point. As we have already seen, previous generations had not only held up the United States as a model to be emulated around the globe, they had actually deemed the American people a chosen race to lead the world in the pursuit of universal democracy and freedom. Woodrow Wilson himself had been very forthright in his advocacy of these propositions. And elements of this thinking persisted into the mid-twentieth century. Harry Truman, for one, expressed such sentiments on the matter quite succinctly in his Memoirs: “Our population, unlike that of other great nations, is made up of strains from
every population around the world, and when we became the most powerful nation in the world, we tried to put into effect the ideals of all the races and nationalities which we had written into the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence.” 58

But some liberal internationalists were now less willing to embrace such thinking. This was apparent, for example, in a booklet prepared largely by Church Peace Union education secretary A. William Loos and entitled Two Giants and One World, published in 1948. In considering the possibility of spreading the benefits of America’s “democratic creed,” for example, Loos and his co-authors argued that it could not be done “self-righteously or smugly, as though here we had already achieved the ideal.” Indeed, these liberals were increasingly sensitive to the ways in which the country fell short of its ideals in actual practice, whether it was in terms of economic inequality, race relations, or the charge that “we are seeking to impose on other nations a form of democracy slavishly modeled on ‘the American way of life.’” 59 As Henry A. Atkinson simply put it in January of 1952, “There is no purely American science of government.” 60

Even so, Loos, Atkinson, and the Church Peace Union leadership still believed that the United States needed to exercise a preeminent role of moral leadership in the world—and they said so in the pages of Two Giants and One World. That leadership, they thought, should be rooted principally in a “strong reaffirmation in deeds as well as words of our dynamic faith in true democracy.” As to what that might entail exactly, Loos and his co-authors did not lack for illustrative examples to offer by way of an

58 Truman, Memoirs, Volume Two, 238.
59 A. William Loos, with the collaboration of Henry A. Atkinson, Carl Hermann Voss, and John R, Inman, Two Giants and One World: A Discussion of Soviet-American Relations (New York: Published for the Church Peace Union by Friendship Press, 1948), 75, CRIA MSS, Box 3.
60 The Church Peace Union: Report of the Secretaries, and the Auditors to the Board of Trustees at the Thirty-eighth Annual Meeting held in New York City, January 24, 1952, 7, CRIA MSS, Box 3.
explanation: “We displayed moral leadership, courageously and effectively, in the declaration of the Four Freedoms for all mankind, the wisdom and generosity of Lend-Lease, our initiation and support of UNRRA [United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration], and the development of a program for European recovery.” And they certainly thought that the nation should continue along these Rooseveltian lines as the champion of a new and reformed liberal democratic world order for the postwar era.

Perhaps more significantly, though, they also believed, as did the nation’s senior political leaders, that the United States bore the heaviest weight of responsibility for playing such a role of moral leadership in the world precisely because of its decisive military, economic, and political power. Not coincidentally, in the mid to late nineteen forties, both Truman and secretary of state James F. Byrnes, a Roosevelt administration holdover, had made this same point in urging both American leadership of the non-communist world and support for the United Nations. Indeed, the belief that America was an indispensable nation because of its now dominant international position was very widely held. And in the years to come, the ideal of American exceptionalism would increasingly come to rest on that belief as notions of historical or divinely-inspired destiny faded in popularity and influence.

Beyond the realm of American exceptionalism, the “big tent” phenomenon shaped ongoing developments in other fields of Wilsonian thinking and policy advocacy in the late nineteen forties and early fifties. Among those devotees of the Rooseveltian system reluctant to embrace the new Consensus, for instance, an ultimately futile effort was mounted early on to try to straddle the widening Cold War divide between the

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62 Truman, Memoirs, Volume Two, 229; Luck, 20, 23.
superpowers. This stance was apparently intended to moderate American attitudes
towards the Soviets, and by extension, U.S. policy, thereby helping to repair relations
between the two hostile camps—or, at the very least, keep those relations from
deteriorating any further. And with that accomplished, hopes for a world united as one in
peace might yet be preserved, they thought.

The straddle took a number of different forms. In terms of economic affairs writ
large, the leadership of the Church Peace Union, especially, saw a middle ground
between Washington and Moscow that might be fruitfully exploited. Indeed, A. William
Loos and the other authors of Two Giants and One World were of the opinion that “a
considerable number of the earth’s peoples are seeking a middle way between the
extremes of collectivism and laissez faire individualism”—a middle way between the
economic systems of the two superpowers, in other words, at least as they conceptualized
it. In a stab at even-handedness, their book refers to the “evils of collectivism” evident in
Soviet Russia. At the same time, however, they were at least as critical, if not more so, of
“the evils of a free enterprise economy, as observable in the United States”—evils that, in
their judgment, “too often result in unrestricted privilege for the few and inevitable
injustice for the many.”63

But the straddle could be glimpsed far more readily in the early reluctance of
many Rooseveltian Wilsonians to embrace the resurgent anticommunism of the postwar
era. “There is a line where plain speaking ends and red baiting begins,” a press release
issued by the executive committee of the American Association for the United Nations
explained in March of 1946. “We are in danger of crossing that line. Every possible effort
should be made through the United Nations to satisfy any legitimate needs of the

Russians.” In a similar vein, Clark Eichelberger, in the wake of the Cold War crisis over Greece and Turkey a year later, appealed for a position of moderation between extremists bent on “anti-Russian hysteria,” on the one hand, and the “uncritical defenders” of those communist governments whose polices are “at the root of much of the present trouble,” on the other. And so it went. In the years that followed, the AAUN continued to call for some kind of an “understanding with the Soviet Union,” as it did in January of 1948, albeit with the qualification that this understanding be achieved “without sacrificing principle and without appeasement.”

Always implicit—and sometimes quite explicit—in these pronouncements was the sense that the superpower conflict was neither necessary nor inevitable. Rather, many liberal internationalists persisted in a belief in which Franklin Roosevelt had also become heavily invested—the belief that reasonably cooperative relations with the Soviet Union could be maintained into the postwar era, and that the many differences that existed between the two camps could be eased through earnest negotiation, given the cultivation of a sufficient amount of good faith, good will, and mutual understanding.

Typifying this outlook again was A. William Loos’ Two Giants and One World—a book that represented, in Loos’ own description, “the product of group thinking” on the part of the Church Peace Union’s executive and education committees regarding the difficulties of Soviet-American relations. The diagnosis of the problems besetting those relations was clearly laid out by Loos and his contributors—and in a rather critical

64 American Association for the United Nations press release, Sunday, March 17, 1946, AAUN MSS.
65 Letter from Clark M. Eichelberger to AAUN branches and cooperating groups, April 9, 1947, AAUN MSS.
66 American Association for the United Nations press release, Saturday, January 10, 1948, AAUN MSS.
67 The Church Peace Union: Report of the Secretaries, and the Auditors to the Board of Trustees at the Thirty-fourth Annual Meeting held in New York City, January 22, 1948, 6, 19-20, CRIA MSS, Box 3.
fashion. They granted that the growing fear of the Soviet Union then gripping the country may be “understandable” given the circumstances. Yet they argued at length that the superpower rivalry was fueled largely by ignorance, hysteria, misguided self-righteousness, and a lack of faith on the part of Americans in their own political ideals. In contrast to the Consensus, they believed that, in a pluralistic world order that respected “diversities of gifts and differences of administration,” the United States and the Soviet Union should be perfectly able to co-exist peacefully:

It cannot be repeated too often that unless these two giants can live in one world, the cause of world peace will be irreparably damaged. Our faith in God and man, our belief that the divine potentialities of mankind can overcome the demonic drives within men, is the firm foundation of our conviction that understanding can and will be achieved. Pluralism of varying views and systems is not only a possibility in the modern world, but an absolute necessity. American and Russia can move toward the day when misunderstandings and discord will abate and the bridges of understanding between the two great nations will be constantly reinforced.68

Attempting in their own way to lay the foundations for such “bridges of understanding,” Rooseveltian internationalists never ceased pointing up the shortcomings of American policy vis-à-vis the communist bloc when they believed it was necessary and just to do so. They would continue to argue, as Henry A. Atkinson did in early 1951, that Western peoples “must accept our share of the responsibility” for the burgeoning Cold War.69 They could, and did, as Vernon H. Holloway suggested of religious internationals, “constantly remind the nation that it is subject to a universal rule of justice, so counteracting the self-righteous temptation to compare American virtue with Communist vice.”70 They maintained, as Holloway did, that if the Cold War were to be won, the country “must reaffirm and more effectively practice the principles of our

68 Loos, et al., 73, 80.
69 The Church Peace Union: Report of the Secretaries, and the Auditors to the Board of Trustees at the Thirty-seventh Annual Meeting held in New York City, January 25, 1951, 7, CRIA MSS, Box 3.
70 V. Holloway, Religious Ethics and the Politics of Power, 70.
Western democratic heritage.”\(^{71}\) For this very reason, U.S. government assistance to Greece and Turkey was opposed in 1947 by some on the premise that the beleaguered governments of those nations were not then truly democratic.

This is not to suggest, of course, that all liberal internationalist activists and organizations within the peace movement were equally reluctant to embrace the new surge of postwar anticommunist sentiment. Nor is it generally the case that they took an utterly and completely benign view of the Soviet Union and its policies. Even after devoting as much of an effort as they did towards depicting America’s primary Cold War adversary in the best possible light, A. William Loos and his contributors had to finally concede in *Two Giants and One World* that the USSR was, in fact, a totalitarian police state—although they did manage to treat the acknowledgment as virtually an afterthought.\(^{72}\) The Woodrow Wilson Foundation, on the other hand, while not always allowing the exigencies of the superpower confrontation to feature very prominently in its public pronouncements, could be quite hostile towards the Soviet Union when it did so. The organization’s 1947-1948 Annual Report, for example, described the Soviet Union in no uncertain terms as an aggressive and uncompromising power “based upon moral, political, and economic concepts repugnant to the most fundamental beliefs of the Western World.”\(^{73}\)

In fact, as time went on, anticommunist rhetoric became increasingly frequent even among the more reticent of liberal internationalist critics. Perhaps not surprisingly, this trend was driven by crises such as the one that took place in Berlin in 1948-49. But it was especially apparent in the wake of the onset of the Korean War. And so, for example,

\(^{71}\) *Ibid.*, 49.
\(^{72}\) Loos, et al, 19.
\(^{73}\) The Woodrow Wilson Foundation, Annual Report 1947-1948, booklet, 5, WWF MSS Box I.
we see in the Church Peace Union’s annual report for 1950 Henry A. Atkinson explicitly endorsing President Truman’s denunciation of communism as “an instrument for world conquest” by the Soviet Union—an instrument that would destroy the “free spirit of man.” Not only that, Atkinson would add to that sentiment his own now avowedly deep skepticism of communism’s pretensions to being, in his words, a “short-cut to utopia” for the world’s poverty-stricken masses.74 In the organization’s annual report two years later, he would even boldly declare: “We cannot afford to underestimate the threat of communism to our democratic way of life. Russia and her satellite nations are real enemies of liberty and their force must be met with armed force.”75 The mid-1953 report of the Commission to Study the Organization of Peace on regional security was equally blunt, now characterizing the post-World War II “Soviet system” without qualification as “an aggressive agency of Russian imperialism and communist expansion.”76 Such combative language had been absent from earlier reports published in the late forties.

The attempt to straddle the Cold War divide faltered in the end—perhaps inevitably so given the particular circumstances involved. Nevertheless, on other fronts Rooseveltian Wilsonians continued to press home their efforts to promote a peaceful, unified world. Again, economic policy was very important in this regard. Indeed, Henry A. Atkinson, for one, actually came to believe, quite incorrectly, that the fundamental issue vexing Soviet-American relations was the “control of markets” and that if the two

74 The Church Peace Union: Report of the Secretaries, and the Auditors to the Board of Trustees at the Thirty-seventh Annual Meeting held in New York City, January 25, 1951, 8, CRIA MSS, Box 3.
73 The Church Peace Union: Report of the Secretaries, and the Auditors to the Board of Trustees at the Thirty-ninth Annual Meeting held in New York City, January 22, 1953, 9, CRIA MSS, Box 3.
76 Commission to Study the Organization of Peace, Eighth Report and Papers presented to the Committee, Regional Arrangements for Security and the United Nations, June 1953, 9, Commission to Study the Organization of Peace Manuscripts, Swarthmore College Peace Collection, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania, Box 1 (Hereafter cited as CSOP MSS).
superpowers could reach an accord on issues of economics and trade, the remaining political issues “could be adjusted thereafter without too much difficulty.”

The theme of a united world was frequently sounded in relation to the subject of technical aid and economic assistance, especially. Religious-based organizations such as the Church Peace Union and the affiliated World Alliance for International Friendship through the Churches supported expansive assistance programs run under the auspices of the International Trade Organization and other various United Nations agencies as a means of achieving “the social equality, equity, and justice which have been objectives of prophetic religion through the ages.” The authors of Two Giants and One World were certainly enthusiastic in their advocacy of unconditional, large-scale economic assistance: “We can greatly help foster world stability and true democracy among the nations by continuing our economic help on generous terms to people and nations in need, no matter what their political or national status.” Hunger, oppression, disease, and social injustice—these were the “root causes of international anarchy,” they thought, and addressing them through the UN or by other means would help “achieve security and well-being for all members of the human family,” according to a Church Peace Union statement published in 1951.

Many liberal internationalists embraced the Marshall Plan precisely because of the nominal commitment made by the Truman administration to aid all of the devastated countries of Europe that sought assistance irrespective of their political allegiances; and

77 The Church Peace Union: Report of the Secretaries, and the Auditors to the Board of Trustees at the Thirty-sixth Annual Meeting held in New York City, January 26, 1950, 7, CRIA MSS, Box 3.
as a result, supporters like James T. Shotwell worked “long days and nights” to promote the program to the American public in conjunction with the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.\(^80\) The Point Four program, meanwhile, drew similar accolades, and for much the same reason.\(^81\) Such governmental policies, Henry A. Atkinson said in 1950, were an expression of the ideal of “the oneness of mankind.”\(^82\)

Clark Eichelberger, speaking on behalf of the American Association for the United Nations, endorsed the Marshall Plan as a means of stabilizing the nations of Europe, which, in turn, would strengthen the UN.\(^83\) Nowhere was the theme of a united world more visible than in the field of collective security, for Rooseveltian internationalists were, first and foremost, exceptionally devoted to and utterly unwavering in their faith in the United Nations. That this should be the case is not difficult to fathom. The UN represented nothing less than “a belated victory in the cause for which Woodrow Wilson died,” according to Frank Altschul, president of the Woodrow Wilson Foundation, in November of 1947.\(^84\) And sympathetic liberal internationalists from across the peace movement were absolutely bound and determined that the new global body must be made to work—somehow.

In those early formative years, the Woodrow Wilson Foundation stepped in to aid the United Nations materially as best it could—especially through its Woodrow Wilson Foundation.
Memorial Library. The Library originated back in 1927 with a donation of materials by former League of Nations undersecretary general and Foundation director Raymond B. Fosdick, and the WWF had since devoted years of effort to organizing and building it with financial support from the Rockefeller Foundation—an agency that Fosdick also presided over between 1936 and 1948. The Library featured an extensive collection of League of Nations documents as well as material directly related to post-World War II international planning. And as it was fortuitously located at the Foundation’s New York City headquarters on East 65th Street, UN officials were able to make extensive use of the Library in the late nineteen forties. “There was daily use of this material in the early days of the United Nations when it was organizing its Secretariat, building its buildings and taking over the League’s work,” the Woodrow Wilson Foundation’s 1961-1963 report proudly noted. “Reference to the League’s experience was enormously helpful to the new world organization.” In fact, the Foundation ultimately donated much of the contents of the Woodrow Wilson Memorial Library to the United Nations in 1950.85

Other organizations similarly strove to contribute to the new world body in one form or another. In 1946, for example, the American Association for the United Nations, in conjunction with the National Education Association and the U.S. State Department, collaborated with NBC to produce the United Nations Project—a four month long series of UN-related radio programs. That project, in turn, culminated in a first annual “United Nations Week” set to coincide with the opening of the General Assembly in New York City.86 In fact, United Nations Week became an annual event in the late nineteen

86 “The NBC United Nations Project,” This is the National Broadcasting Company, April 1946, AAUN MSS.
forties—one that the AAUN systematically promoted in a number of different ways: the distribution of posters, literature, buttons, and pledge sheets; the lobbying of governors and mayors to issue proclamations; the suggesting of varied UN-related activities for local schools and community groups.

The Church Peace Union and the World Alliance for International Friendship through the Churches—both officially accredited with the UN, the former as a cooperating agency and the latter as an international consultative organization—also heavily promoted United Nations Week in active collaboration with the AAUN. That collaboration, incidentally, was no doubt facilitated by the fact that CPU general secretary Henry A. Atkinson also served on the executive committee of the American Association for the United Nations during this period. But in any case, these faith-based organizations were devoted to using religious appeals, especially, to “change the hearts of the nations so that they will give up their small national interests for the greater international good,” as Atkinson himself put it in early 1947. And with that goal in mind, they suggested prayers for the world body in conjunction with United Nations Week, as well as UN-themed sermons, Bible and Sunday school classes, and church-affiliated social club lectures and discussions.87 “In all printed matter and by spoken word we have felt the urgency of the time was to give information and understanding with regard to the operation of the United Nations,” Union associate secretary Harry N. Holmes stated in his 1947 annual report. “We have endeavored to impart this understanding and so, stimulate an enthusiasm for this institution that embodies the hopes of mankind.”88

87 The Church Peace Union: Report of the Secretaries, and the Auditors to the Board of Trustees at the Thirty-third Annual Meeting held in New York City, January 23, 1947, 5, CRIA MSS, Box 3
88 Ibid., 21.
The United Nations was, as Holmes described it, “the only institution that, by its functioning, can bring order and prosperity and peace to our world,” and this belief, widespread amongst liberal internationalists, evoked especially strong feelings of duty and obligation towards the organization. “Peace, progress, and security will largely depend on the realization throughout America that a sense of mission confronts the nation,” the CPU associate secretary continued. That mission, he believed, consisted in an “inescapable responsibility” on the part of the United States both to help the UN succeed and to build popular support for the world body.\textsuperscript{89} In a similar vein, an AAUN statement of policy declared in October of 1946 that the country, being “physically and morally equipped to occupy a place of great leadership in the United Nations,” was obligated by that position to provide such leadership. The country, the association insisted, “must always put its best people at the services of the United Nations.”\textsuperscript{90}

The American Association for the United Nations, the Commission to Study the Organization of Peace, and the Church Peace Union were themselves especially stalwart in their commitment to the universal, worldwide system of collective security that the United Nations represented. As the AAUN executive committee unequivocally declared on March 17, 1946, “All efforts for the achievement of security should be undertaken through the United Nations”:

The nation must choose between isolation, anarchy, alliances, balance of power, which mean a third world war; or choose cooperation through the United Nations which is the only road to permanent peace. There are no half-way measures and no compromises between these choices. We stand for the United Nations.\textsuperscript{91}

\textsuperscript{89} Ibid., 20.
\textsuperscript{90} Statement of Policy: 7 Point Program to Guide Our Foreign Policy Recommended by American Association for the United Nations, booklet, 8, October 1946, AAUN MSS.
\textsuperscript{91} American Association for the United Nations press release, Sunday, March 17, 1946, AAUN MSS.
In June of the following year, a statement adopted by the Church Peace Union and the World Alliance for International Friendship through the Churches expressed much the same sentiment.

By that time, however, President Truman had issued his famous response to the building crisis in Greece and Turkey—the Truman Doctrine. And that policy, in turn, raised concerns amongst many liberal internationalists that the collective security machinery of the UN might not only become neglected, but even actively circumvented and undermined as a result of decisions taken by policymakers in Washington. Clark Eichelberger, while otherwise generally supportive of the Truman Doctrine in internal AAUN correspondence, worried about the lack of United Nations involvement in the administration’s plans, and the Association subsequently raised the issue publicly. The Church Peace Union’s June statement similarly declared that there “must be no more bypassing of the United Nations.”92 The executive committee of the Federal Council of Churches also took the same position.93

In the years that followed, pleas for more United Nations involvement in the management of international crises would become a common refrain in liberal internationalist pronouncements. According to its champions, the UN remained vitally important for the purposes of postwar collective security—this, despite the obvious difficulties for the organization stemming from the Cold War. But given those limitations, what role could the United Nations actually play? Liberal internationalists had a number of different answers in response to that question. They pointed to its ability

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93 V. Holloway, Religious Ethics and the Politics of Power, 53.
to address the “root causes” of world political turmoil through economic and technical assistance programs, certainly.

But beyond that, they argued that the United Nations was also important as a venue for the formulation and expression of “world opinion.” In its fifth report of June 1947, which focused on UN involvement in security and disarmament issues, the Commission to Study the Organization of Peace highlighted the importance of “world public opinion” as a force that they thought could help break the Cold War stalemate that prevented progress on so many vital global issues. In particular, CSOP was taken with the potential power and influence of the United Nations General Assembly in global politics, just as were U.S. decision-makers generally during this period; this was largely due to the fact that it represented all United Nations members, and, therefore, reflected the “full force of world opinion,” according to the Commission’s study. But some, like John Foster Dulles, would also come to see the UN as an instrument through which world opinion could be molded, as well. Dulles sometimes defended the United Nations, for example, as an instrument that “served to enlighten world opinion about the nature of the Soviet leadership.”

Internationalists like Dulles also frequently emphasized the role of the United Nations in actively building friendship and comity among the nations of the world. At the 1945 AAUN-CSOP conference in New York City, for example, the future secretary of state expounded upon what he took to be the vital role of the General Assembly in developing the “fellowship and spiritual unity,” the “trust and understanding,” that would

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95 House Committee on Foreign Affairs, 279, quoted in Luck, 138.

In the establishment of international fellowship, unity, understanding, and trust, there is at least the beginning of an essential foundation for a single world society—and the basis for a system of international law. Liberal internationalists going all the way back to Woodrow Wilson had taken international law to be a central facet of any collective security arrangement worthy of the name. And the role of the United Nations in the ongoing evolution and institutionalization of international law was a particularly important consideration for internationalists in the peace movement during the immediate postwar period. James T. Shotwell, in his remarks to the same 1945 New York City AAUN-CSOP gathering, stressed the necessity of a global institutional arrangement for keeping order among nations:

All history shows us that the only way to maintain a consistent gain in the field of morals is by erecting institutions of an impersonal character representing the society as a whole, in which we can embody these ideals and carry them to fruition. It cannot be left to impulse, to emotional moods of nations, nor even to the great prophets and teachers in the field of ethics. It must be brought to a situation where there is a willingness to accept the judgment of the community as to what is right and wrong—not your judgment alone as to whether you are right or wrong—but the judgment of the community. And so, in the world of nations, there must be, if we are going to get rid of war, an objective judgment by an institution which embodies the common will of the nations, and that does not mean just two or three nations, it means all who would be involved in the problem or in the war itself.\footnote{James T. Shotwell, “Disarmament and the Elimination of War,” in \textit{Looking to the United Nations Assembly: Proceedings of Public Conference, New York, December 14, 1945}, 13, AAUN MSS.}
“The weakness of the balance of power system as it has operated in world politics,”
according to the fifth report of the Commission to Study the Organization of Peace, “has
been the inadequacy of the community of nations to maintain a law prohibiting resorts to
violence.” It was this weakness that the United Nations was intended to remedy.

The ongoing devotion of liberal internationalists to the United Nations as an
instrument of collective security was also evident in the role they thought it might play in
bringing about a new era of general disarmament in terms of conventional weapons. In
the immediate aftermath of World War II, Clark Eichelberger welcomed the notion of a
postwar disarmament brokered under the auspices of the United Nations; he worried that
the country might be overtaken by “fascist regimentation” if yet another arms race were
to be unleashed. And internationalists continued to champion the cause—in many
cases long past the point at which it should have become apparent that an accord with the
Soviet Union was simply not in the offing. A committee of the Commission to Study the
Organization of Peace, chaired by James T. Shotwell and including Eichelberger and
Sumner Welles, advocated the vigorous pursuit of disarmament through the UN in its
fifth report issued in June of 1947—three months after the announcement of the Truman
Doctrine. At about the same time, the Church Peace Union was championing this
position as well. And it continued to do so, even after the outbreak of war in Korea. As
Henry A. Atkinson put it in the group’s annual report for 1950, “now that the United
Nations has defined not only in words, but in action what is meant by collective security,

99 Commission to Study the Organization of Peace, Fifth Report, Security and Disarmament Under the
United Nations, June 1947, 12, CSOP MSS.
100 Clark M. Eichelberger, “Control of Atomic Energy,” Looking to the United Nations Assembly:
Proceedings of Public Conference, New York, December 14, 1945, 5, AAUN MSS.
101 Commission to Study the Organization of Peace, Fifth Report, Security and Disarmament Under the
United Nations, June 1947, 9, CSOP MSS.
102 Loos, et al, 79.
we must proceed to a degree of disarmament so that the individual nation which refuses to cooperate will be treated by the world organization as the local community treats the illegal ‘gun-toter.’” Absent such an arrangement, the CPU’s general secretary warned that the UN would be “impotent in the face of recurring crises.”

There was also much enthusiasm among liberal internationalists, of course, for the prospects of international controls on atomic weapons and technology. From very early on, Eichelberger and the American Association for the United Nations had promoted the pursuit of such controls under the aegis of the United Nations; they did so as an exercise in confidence-building, both in the context of superpower relations and in respect to the new and, as yet, untested world body. Eichelberger, in fact, later boasted that the AAUN had begun lobbying Washington on this matter within days of the first use of the atomic bomb against Japan.

And, not surprisingly, the Commission to Study the Organization of Peace took a similar view. For CSOP, this was an opportunity for the United States to acknowledge and exert its unique position of leadership on the issue, owing to the fact of its “temporary monopoly” on the possession of the requisite technology. “This assumption of leadership by the United States government would tend to restore good understanding and unity in action among the principle powers,” a special CSOP committee determined in October of 1945—a conclusion clearly predicated upon the dubious assumption that

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103 The Church Peace Union: Report of the Secretaries, and the Auditors to the Board of Trustees at the Thirty-seventh Annual Meeting held in New York City, January 25, 1951, 10, CRIA MSS, Box 3.
104 Letter from Clark M. Eichelberger to AAUN Chapters and Cooperating Groups, October 30, 1945, AAUN MSS; Letter from Clark M. Eichelberger to AAUN Chapters and Cooperating Groups, November 23, 1945, AAUN MSS.
there were no insurmountable obstacles to United Nations control, if only the U.S. could win the trust of the world’s other “principle powers.”

Even after the failure of the Baruch Plan, the ideal of some form of United Nations control over atomic stockpiles remained popular among liberal internationalists, and, as was the case with conventional weapons, many clung to the illusion that an accord along those lines was still possible. The Executive Committee of the American Association for the United Nations, for example, publicly articulated this position in January 1948, rather naively describing the contending positions of the American and Soviet governments on the issue as “not irreconcilable, granting a solution of outstanding political problems.”

Bernard Baruch himself continued to speak out in favor of arms control and disarmament, too, although he always made it a point to emphasize the importance of what he termed a “guarantee of safety.” At a May 1955 meeting of the Woodrow Wilson Foundation, he warned that Americans “must not be beguiled by wishful thinking” on the subject of arms control: “Every plan for disarmament deserves careful consideration but none can be adopted which fails to provide direct, effective and certain guarantees for enforcement of its terms.” Any plan falling short on that point would be “incalculably dangerous,” in his view. Baruch’s assessment faithfully reflected liberal internationalist thinking on the necessary relationship between collective security and disarmament. Nations could not be reasonably expected to disarm in the absence of the

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106 “Control of Atomic Energy,” American Association for the United Nations statement, October 1945, AAUN MSS.
107 American Association for the United Nations press release, Saturday, January 10, 1948, AAUN MSS.
credible security “guarantees” that Burch referred to in 1955—guarantees that collective
security arrangements like the UN were intended to provide. “The conclusion is
inescapable that the subjects of disarmament and collective security are interrelated,”
Clark Eichelberger wrote that same year. “They must be approached simultaneously.”109

But how might the United Nations provide security “guarantees” for the nations
of the world—especially given the limitations that the organization now faced with the
onset of the Cold War? Obviously, military force would still have to be part of the
equation in some form or fashion. Despite their continuing enthusiasm for disarmament,
liberal internationalists in the wake of World War II remained well aware of the
importance of arms as a necessary adjunct of collective security. And Rooseveltians, in
particular, were adamant that military force used for this purpose should be wielded
strictly under the auspices of the UN.

As to how might that be accomplished as a practical matter, a number of different
suggestions came from various quarters. Immediately after the war, for example, some
internationalists renewed their proposals for some kind of an independent international
police force under United Nations control. In December of 1945, former Minnesota
governor Harold E. Stassen, who had spent nearly two years on active duty with the U.S.
Naval Reserve during the war and subsequently served as a delegate to the UN
Conference at San Francisco, advocated such an independent force, “not attached to or
controlled by any one nation,” and including air units equipped with “a moderate quantity
of atomic bombs.”110

109 Eichelberger, UN: The First Ten Years, 46-7, 53.
York, December 14, 1945, 22-3, AAUN MSS.
Along somewhat similar lines, the Commission to Study the Organization of Peace had always advocated a dedicated UN military establishment—a “United Nations Legion”—that would respond at once to acts of aggression.¹¹¹ In its Fourth and Fifth Reports of January 1944 and June 1947, the Commission even sketched the basic outlines of such a force—“a relatively small international air force” that would be deployed in conjunction with contingents of volunteer UN police. As envisioned by Clark Eichelberger and his CSOP collaborators, the air force component would provide reconnaissance, although Eichelberger himself also thought it would serve as a “preliminary warning” to aggressors. The ground contingents, meanwhile, in addition to maintaining security for United Nations installations and field operations, might also, depending upon the circumstances, render service as peacekeepers and election monitors, or perhaps even operate as a global constabulary, according to this concept.¹¹²

Other liberal internationalist peace organizations agreed that some kind of United Nations force was both practical and desirable. As Eichelberger himself pointed out in 1948, the American Association for the United Nations had advocated the idea since before the UN was formally established.¹¹³ And even in the late nineteen fifties, the AAUN was still officially calling for some such arrangement, pointing to the apparent success of the multinational “Emergency Force” deployed to the Middle East in the wake

¹¹³ Clark M. Eichelberger, A Letter to the Chapters on World Government, pamphlet, 4, April 1948, AAUN MSS.
of the 1956 Suez crisis as proof of the concept’s viability. The Church Peace Union, too, was in favor of the idea in the years that immediately followed World War II.

But even if a truly independent force had been created for the United Nations, liberal internationalists anticipated that it would still have to be supplemented by national contingents from various UN member states. With an eye towards fulfilling such requirements, both the Commission to Study the Organization of Peace and the American Association for the United Nations urged upon Washington the immediate designation of American military units for police action under Articles 43 and 45 of the United Nations Charter at the end World War II. And they continued to press unsuccessfully for such designations well into the late nineteen forties and early fifties—American participation in the Korean War notwithstanding.

All the same, these otherwise hopeful and supportive internationalists were all too aware of the manifest shortcomings of the United Nations. And even among the stalwarts, there was a sense by the late nineteen forties that the machinery of the UN system was clearly in need of some kind of revision or reform. Again, numerous ideas for various changes were floated. As early as in 1946, for instance, the American Association for the United Nations was urging the Truman administration to declare that, in the event of a veto by one of the permanent members, the United States would press ahead and take

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action against an aggressor under Article 51 of the UN Charter—if such a response had the support of at least seven members of the Security Council.\textsuperscript{117}

Meanwhile, on a different line of approach, some would-be reformers seized upon the idea of using the United Nations General Assembly as a potential alternative forum for organizing collective action. CSOP’s Sixth Report, issued in May of 1948, proposed a draft treaty empowering the General Assembly to authorize military force with a two-thirds vote of its membership in the absence of action from the Security Council.\textsuperscript{118} And in the wake of the inauguration of hostilities in Korea—and its attendant political difficulties—Dean Acheson suggested this same general approach in a speech that he gave before the world body on September 20, 1950. “The Charter, in Articles 10, 11, and 14, also vests in the General Assembly authority and responsibility for matters affecting international peace,” the secretary of state pointed out to the assembled UN delegates on that occasion. “The General Assembly,” he proclaimed, “can and should organize itself to discharge its responsibility promptly and decisively if the Security Council is prevented from acting.”\textsuperscript{119}

The end result of this advocacy was Resolution 377, the Uniting for Peace resolution, which was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on November 3\textsuperscript{rd} of that same year, 1950. This instrument, according to an enthusiastically supportive Commission to Study the Organization of Peace:

…provides for determination of aggression by the General Assembly, for the earmarking of national forces for collective action by states acting individually, and for Assembly recommendation of the use of such force… The result has been a

\textsuperscript{117} Statement of Policy: 7 Point Program to Guide Our Foreign Policy Recommended by American Association for the United Nations, booklet, 5, October 1946, AAUN MSS.


\textsuperscript{119} The Peace the World Wants, Address by Secretary of State Dean Acheson, 9-11, WWF MSS Box I.
practical elimination of the great-power veto in the operation of collective security and collective self-defense, thus modifying the original conception of the Charter, that collective security could not function against a great power or any other state which such a power wished to defend.\textsuperscript{120}

Clark Eichelberger was similarly enthusiastic about the Uniting for Peace measure, implying in his analysis of the first decade of the UN’s operation that the resolution had effectively solved the problem of the Security Council veto once and for all.\textsuperscript{121}

Unfortunately, it simply is not true. Since 1950, the Uniting for Peace mechanism has been invoked only ten times, perhaps most notably in connection with the 1956 Suez crisis and the Soviet invasion of Hungary that took place later that same year. And the effectiveness of General Assembly action under the auspices of Uniting for Peace has been highly debatable at best.

Moreover, it bears pointing out that both liberal internationalists, in general, and American policymakers, in particular, promoted the role of the General Assembly in collective security matters at mid-century knowing that the U.S. was then able to politically dominate that forum with relative ease. “During the UN’s first decade,” Edward C. Luck has written, the United States “could be assured of a favorable response to most western initiatives” in the Assembly, and therefore could “pursue U.S. interests in a propitious and largely supportive atmosphere” there. But that situation began to change radically, of course, during the late nineteen fifties and into the sixties as decolonization proceeded apace and the ranks of UN member-states correspondingly swelled. Under those circumstances, the pro-western majority in the Assembly disappeared. And as a

\textsuperscript{120} Commission to Study the Organization of Peace, Eighth Report and Papers presented to the Committee, \textit{Regional Arrangements for Security and the United Nations}, June 1953, 17, CSOP MSS.

\textsuperscript{121} Eichelberger, \textit{UN: The First Ten Years}, 2, 16.
result of that development, U.S. diplomacy has quite understandably retreated back to the Security Council.¹²²

Yet another alternative, as we have seen, was the establishment of regional collective security agreements—an approach for which liberal internationalists had given a qualified endorsement in the early to mid-nineteen forties. Indeed, the necessity for regional accords as a supplement to the UN organization was well recognized, particularly in the European context.¹²³ Still, Rooseveltians especially emphasized the United Nations as the only real long-term solution to the problem of maintaining world peace. “The alliance system weakened the League of Nations and the mistake must not be repeated,” the American Association for the United Nations had declared back in March 1946. “All military commitments which the United States undertakes to maintain peace should be undertaken through the United Nations.”¹²⁴ With that view firmly in mind, there was reluctance on the part of many internationalists to whole-heartedly endorse the formation of NATO and other non-United Nations security organizations. Henry A. Atkinson of the Church Peace Union, for one, worried in early 1951 that the North Atlantic Treaty, while defensive in nature, might itself become a “threat of war.” And he dismissed as “baffling” any suggestion that the United States should form more such alliances.¹²⁵

Might the strength of regional security organizations compete with, or even overshadow, the global system of collective security? Might such groupings even spur

¹²² Luck, 29, 106-7, 158-9.
¹²⁴ American Association for the United Nations press release, Sunday, March 17, 1946. AAUN MSS.
¹²⁵ The Church Peace Union: Report of the Secretaries, and the Auditors to the Board of Trustees at the Thirty-seventh Annual Meeting held in New York City, January 25, 1951, 10, CRIA MSS, Box 3.
the formation of rival organizations? Studies done by the Commission to Study the Organization of Peace during this period expressed the worry that alliances like NATO would ultimately undermine the UN’s role as an all-embracing collective security arrangement. In late 1948 and early 1949, while proposals for a North Atlantic alliance were first being circulated, the Commission evaluated the contingency and concluded that such an organization might not only detract from the United Nations, it could also unnecessarily “augment the bi-polar character and the political instability of the world” as well. A subsequent report, CSOP’s eighth, released in June 1953, even expanded upon this conclusion, arguing that this ongoing “bi-polarization of the world” only served to increase the likelihood of war.

As an alternative, the Commission recommended instead a new collective defense regime under Article 51 that would be open to any United Nations member. In fact, CSOP was very much in favor of the idea of expanding NATO itself in just such a fashion in the early nineteen fifties, opening the new alliance to any country that wanted to join regardless of its geographical location. The American Association for the United Nations, too, while eventually extending qualified support for the new alliance, also urged a new multilateral arrangement, based on the UN, that would supplement the North Atlantic Treaty. 126 Interestingly, these organizations promoted this basic approach despite the fact that, by CSOP’s own admission, previous measures intended to strengthen collective security arrangements under the United Nations had been consistently opposed by the Soviet Union and its client states, resulting in a system that “facilitated coordination of only the non-Soviet world”—an undesirable outcome certainly for those

126 E. T. Smith, 88.
seeking a world united in peace.\(^{127}\) But the overriding concern, again, was to develop a genuinely inclusive global defense system rather than more selective or regional arrangements that might detract from that goal.

And that is what makes the reaction of Rooseveltian internationalists to the Korean crisis so paradoxical. Nowhere was the United Nations’ inadvertent “coordination of only the non-Soviet world” ever more evident than in Korea, of course. And yet, whatever concerns they may have had otherwise regarding the flaws inherent in the United Nations system or the dangers posed by reinforcing a bipolar world order, staunch advocates of global collective security were entirely confirmed in their faith—just as the Truman administration apparently was—when the Security Council bestowed its imprimatur on the largely American military response to the communist invasion of South Korea in 1950. In all fairness, though, the Council’s response could not have fit more perfectly the global “police action” model that had been articulated by liberal internationalists during the Second World War. And so while the wildly approving reaction may have been paradoxical in a number of ways, it was nevertheless quite understandable under the circumstances.

The champions of global collective security enthused over the apparent triumph of their grand designs and ambitions. “Perhaps the United Nations after all, and more than ever, is the answer,” a pamphlet published by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace declared with palpable optimism. “The handling of the Korean crisis suggests that it may be.” The American Association for the United Nations certainly

agreed—that organization reprinted the Carnegie pamphlet and distributed it as well.\textsuperscript{128} In a similar vein, the Church Peace Union and the World Alliance for International Friendship through Religion heralded the United Nation’s “determined stand against aggression in Korea: whatever the military outcome of this police action, the principle of collective security must be supported if we are ever to rid the world of the war scourge.”\textsuperscript{129} The Woodrow Wilson Foundation did its part, too, presenting its Award for Distinguished Service to President Truman that year in recognition of “his devoted support of the United Nations and his courageous reaction to armed aggression on June 25, 1950.”\textsuperscript{130} While the WWF was more agreeably disposed than other liberal internationalist peace organizations towards collective security arrangements outside the UN system, the organization still very much associated “the Wilsonian ideal” with the United Nations, first and foremost.\textsuperscript{131}

Years later, that enthusiasm for the United Nations was still very much in evidence. Clark Eichelberger, for his part, would go so far as to claim in 1955 that the world might have destroyed itself already by that time had it not been for the “unifying moral force” of the UN. Not only that, he darkly suggested that anyone not fully backing the world body was quite literally an enemy of world peace:

The first obligation of any people and any government and any statesman is continuously to contribute to this sense of world unity for which the United Nations provides both the framework of principles and the machinery for action. Any people, any government or any statesman who unconsciously, thoughtlessly or deliberately detracts from or weakens this sense of unity is damaging the fabric of peace and contributing to a third world war.\textsuperscript{132}

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\textsuperscript{128} Where Do We Go From Here?, pamphlet, 7, n.d., AAUN MSS.
\textsuperscript{130} The Woodrow Wilson Foundation, Annual Report 1950-1951, booklet, 16, 19, WWF MSS Box I.
\textsuperscript{131} The Woodrow Wilson Foundation, Annual Report 1947-1948, booklet, 5-6, WWF MSS Box I.
\textsuperscript{132} Eichelberger, UN: The First Ten Years, 5-6.
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Alfred J. Hotz, Chair of the Department of Political Science at Western Reserve University, was more circumspect in his contemporary assessment of the UN but no less supportive of the organization. “We should not expect too much from the United Nations in our tragically divided world,” he wrote at mid-decade in a pamphlet published by the Church Peace Union. Still, Hotz felt, as did Eichelberger, that “there is an abiding need for the United Nations…it is a symbol of hope in these troubled times.” And, Hotz suggested, the organization could yet serve as a practical instrument for moderating the superpower rivalry and promoting world peace, if only we properly understood the limitations of the UN system and took advantage of what opportunities it could afford.133

Other Alternatives to the Cold War Consensus in the Late Nineteen Forties

The Wilsonian Cold War Consensus was only one of a number of different responses that emerged to the crises that threatened the world after the conclusion of World War II. Beyond the confines of the Consensus—but not necessarily the Wilsonian “big tent”—devotees of world government, the scientist’s peace crusade, and a new Progressive Party also sought to promote their own ideas regarding how the problems of the postwar world should be addressed. And liberal internationalists in the late nineteen forties sometimes responded to these competing movements with varying degrees of sympathy—even if they didn’t necessarily embrace them.

That was the case, for instance, with regards to the world government movement. As we have already seen, advocates of a world government far more ambitious and far reaching than the new United Nations organization had begun organizing even before the war, and during the war years their movement continued to grow and build. The wartime movement was supported by many Protestant—but not Catholic—religious organizations and a diverse cross-section of elite opinion-makers whose influence transcended their numbers: scientists Albert Einstein and Harold Urey; writers Thomas Mann and Upton Sinclair; and Socialist party leader Norman Thomas. According to Lawrence Wittner, the leadership of this world government movement had, by and large, not only supported, but had actively participated in, the American war effort. And in the years immediately after the war, they captured the public’s imagination.

For his part, Clarence Streit continued to press his case for a “Union of the Free,” a federation of democratic nations that would serve as the nucleus of a future World Republic. He was convinced that such a federation, which he associated with the advance of American-style federal government and “civil liberty” across the globe, would serve as a sure antidote to the twin threats of dictatorship and nuclear annihilation. And at the fifth annual convention of his Federal Union, Inc. in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania on November 16, 1945, he called on his followers to summon the courage and faith of their American frontiersman forbearers in promoting the idea.

But even then, Streit’s following was actually fading fast. Interestingly, the issue of sovereignty would prove to be a key element in his organization’s undoing. In making the argument for a “Union of the Free,” the Federal Union president observed that his

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proposals would necessarily require the “people of the free nations” to break free from “the grip of absolute national sovereignty.”\textsuperscript{135} But in the wake of the most destructive war in human history, this thinking apparently did not go far enough for Streit’s supporters. In fact, the Federal Union all but imploded almost immediately after the conclusion of hostilities in 1945—a development Wittner attributes to both the sense of urgency that gripped world government enthusiasts at that juncture and their total abandonment of the entire ideal of national sovereignty in any form.\textsuperscript{136}

This is not to say that either Streit or his organization disappeared entirely from the public scene. Through the late nineteen forties, a greatly diminished Federal Union, Inc. continued to push for a “union of the democracies” that would strengthen the United Nations and “prevent their falling to the Communists one by one,” as executive director Don Dennis put it in a fund raising letter in late 1948.\textsuperscript{137} Moreover, Streit, former Supreme Court Justice Owen J. Roberts, and former assistant secretary of state William L. Clayton jointly organized an Atlantic Union Committee in 1949 as an independent spin-off of the Federal Union. The purpose of the new organization was to lobby the U.S. Congress for an international convention to explore a potential union of select European and North American democracies. But that endeavor was ultimately unsuccessful, too, of course, even if Streit’s efforts along these lines did at least propel him to the cover of the March 27, 1950 issue of \textit{Time} magazine—not to mention winning him devoted converts like Tennessee Senator Estes Kefauver.

\textsuperscript{135} Facing Another Bomb: Address at the Fifth Annual Federal Union Convention Pittsburgh, PA. November 16, 1945 by Clarence K. Streit, Federal Union, Inc. Manuscripts, Swarthmore College Peace Collection, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania (Hereafter cited as FUI MSS).
\textsuperscript{136} Wittner, \textit{Rebels Against War}, 141.
\textsuperscript{137} Letter from Don Dennis, December 7, 1948, FUI MSS.
In the years immediately following World War II, the center of gravity of the world government movement had clearly shifted to other organizations. And in April of 1947, no less than five of them came together to create what would become the dominant postwar lobby for world government, United World Federalists (UWF). Committed to strengthening the United Nations into a real world government, the UWF, at its height in 1949, boasted between forty-five and fifty thousand members in 720 local chapters across the country. As for its leadership, Lawrence Wittner has described it as “often of liberal Protestant extraction, residing largely in metropolitan areas on the East coast” and coming mostly “from well-to-do families.” In other words, it was essentially the same demographic from which contemporary liberal internationalist elites were drawn.

And that leadership was not entirely at odds with the postwar Consensus: while sometimes critical of American foreign policy immediately after the war, world federalists also found much to criticize about the conduct of the Soviet Union, as well. In fact, federalists generally accepted that, absent a true world government, the United States should remain militarily strong and ready to compete with the Soviet’s for worldwide influence. United World Federalists also strongly supported the Marshall Plan as, at the very least, a step in the right direction towards global integration. Liberal internationalists within the peace movement, in turn, increasingly shared with world federalists a growing distrust of nationalism and national sovereignty. As we have already seen, this distrust had been building since before the Second World War; and in the years that immediately followed the war, that trend was still gaining ground. On a

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138 Wittner, Rebels Against War, 172.
139 Ibid., 174-5; Charles DeBenedetti, The Peace Reform in American History (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980), 150-1
140 Luck, 57.
number of different issues, then, there was some significant amount of common ground between the two movements.

Nevertheless, internationalists found fault with federalists and their program. Clark Eichelberger, for example, responding on behalf of the American Association for the United Nations, chided them for indulging in escapist fantasies that could only serve to distract thoughtful people from the world’s immediate problems. “Everyone looks forward to the time when there may be a world legislature composed of men of such independence that they will feel themselves representatives of the entire world as well as their own constituents,” he wrote in an AAUN pamphlet published in November 1946. But he was also quite certain that, for practical reasons, that time had simply not yet arrived. Nor was he impressed with calls for a federation of the Western world that excluded the Soviet Union, such as the one Clarence Streit was promoting. That scheme, in his view, would only cause the world further harm by essentially codifying the Cold War rupture between East and West.141

It was perhaps in response to Streit’s ideas, also, at least in part, that the Church Peace Union and the World Alliance for International Friendship through the Churches, in reference to United Nations Week in October 1946, suggested that the “idea of two worlds many be attractive, but it will prove to be a deadly danger. We must have one world or we shall eventually have none.”142 Like Eichelberger, apparently, CPU extension secretary Carl Hermann Voss also believed that “true world government” was the ultimate long-term goal that internationalists should ideally strive for. He was also

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141 The United Nations Charter and World Government, Statement by Clark M. Eichelberger, Director, American Association for the United Nations, pamphlet, 2-4, November 1946, AAUN MSS.
persuaded that it was “the task of the churches—Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish—to break down the partitions which divide the nation states” and “destroy the pride of nationalism which corrodes” the spirit of genuine world community. But he, too, knew that world public opinion had simply “not yet matured” sufficiently to make such a world community possible.143

In any event, United World Federalists quickly fractured and its membership plummeted, particularly after 1950, as the Cold War conflict became increasingly sharp. In response to worsening tensions between the superpowers, some world federalists actually chose to embrace the Consensus wholeheartedly; for his part, Cord Meyer, the president of the organization, became disillusioned with the ideal of world government and, by 1949, had secretly begun working for the Central Intelligence Agency. But others chose to devote themselves to “nuclear pacifism” and continue the pursuit of a one world government, according to Charles DeBenedetti.144

Nuclear technology was the central focus of the scientists’ peace crusade, the first iteration of which also quickly came and went in the late nineteen forties. Its origins go back to the creation in November 1945 of the Federation of Atomic Scientists, an organization of scientists and engineers led by Leo Szilard and Eugene Rabinowitch. That group, in turn, reorganized itself as the Federation of American Scientists (FAS) just a month later. And it was this larger organization that really propelled the scientists’ peace crusade, pushing as it did for the civilian control of atomic energy in the United States, as well as the imposition of international safeguards to prevent a nuclear arms race. As we have already seen, such arrangements would not have been at all

143 The Church Peace Union: Report of the Secretaries, and the Auditors to the Board of Trustees at the Thirty-third Annual Meeting held in New York City, January 23, 1947, 15-16, CRIA MSS, Box 3
144 DeBenedetti, 151.
incompatible with a Wilsonian world order. For the great majority of Federation members, however, the international control of atomic technology was a stopgap measure; they would have preferred a world government as their first solution. In any case, by early 1946, the FAS already boasted some 3,000 members, “including 90 percent of the scientists who had worked on the atomic bomb,” according to Lawrence Wittner—a remarkable degree of early growth that he attributes to the fervor with which many atomic scientists initially embraced the “antinuclear crusade.” At least on the domestic front, the organization’s agenda even met with success with the creation of the Atomic Energy Commission. But the failure of the Baruch Plan, which the FAS had promoted, along with the subsequent rift that opened up in the scientific community over the desirability of pursuing thermonuclear weapons development in 1948-49, served to limit the effectiveness of the Federation during the early years of the Cold War. These same factors also necessarily limited the ability of the scientists’ peace crusade more generally to challenge the Cold War Consensus during this same time frame.

Instead, the most significant practical alternative to the Consensus emerged from the realm of electoral politics in the form of the Progressive Party of Henry Wallace during the 1948 presidential election season. Wallace had been vice president during Franklin Roosevelt’s unprecedented third term in the White House. But in the wake of the successful campaign to place then Missouri Senator Harry S. Truman on the Democratic Party’s winning 1944 ticket, Wallace chose to become FDR’s secretary of commerce. And it was from that post in Truman’s administration that he was forced to

146 Ibid., 60-1.
147 DeBenedetti, 148-9.
resign in 1946 over his vocal criticism of the direction that U.S. foreign policy was taking vis-à-vis the Soviet Union.

Wallace himself was a liberal internationalist in the mold of Roosevelt—an advocate of free trade, cooperative international politics, arms limitation, and a “progressive capitalism” that would plan the economic system from the ground up to eliminate monopoly power and promote “economic justice.” In fact, he served on the board of directors of the Woodrow Wilson Foundation from 1946-48 alongside a number of prominent former officials from Roosevelt’s State Department: Sumner Welles; former assistant secretary of state Francis B. Sayre, who was a son-in-law of Woodrow Wilson’s; and Alger Hiss, a one-time aide of Sayre’s, who, with the support of John Foster Dulles, would rise to the presidency of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in early 1947 before becoming embroiled in a sensational—and still enormously controversial—espionage scandal.

Favoring the much more cooperative tone of Soviet-American relations that had characterized FDR’s handling of the wartime alliance, Wallace spoke out against those he felt were steering the country toward an unnecessary confrontation with the Kremlin. He knew well that Soviet “ideas of social-economic justice” would compete with American ideas of “free enterprise democracy” after the war, but he insisted that, “by mutual agreement, this competition should be put on a friendly basis” so that “the Russians should stop conniving against us in certain areas of the world just as we should stop scheming against them in other parts of the world.”

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Graham White and John Maze, “wanted to believe that the Soviet Union… was essentially peaceful and concerned only to promote economic justice and welfare among its peoples.” And for that reason, he opposed the Truman Doctrine and only supported the Marshall Plan as long as it did not become a Cold War weapon.\textsuperscript{150}

Promoting economic justice and welfare for the peoples of the world were integral components of Wallace’s own vision of the ideal postwar world order, the “Century of the Common Man,” as it came to be called. Wallace envisioned a more egalitarian international society in which no country, including the United States, would dominate. As he explained in a speech back in May 1942:

Some have spoken of the “American Century.” I say that the century on which we are entering—the century which will come out of this war—can be and must be the century of the common man. Perhaps it will be America’s opportunity to suggest the freedoms and duties by which the common man must live. Everywhere the common man must learn to build his own industries with his own hands in a practical fashion. Everywhere the common man must learn to increase his productivity so that he and his children can eventually pay to the world community all that they have received. No nation will have the God-given right to exploit other nations. Older nations will have the privilege to help younger nations get started on the path to industrialization, but there must be neither military nor economic imperialism.\textsuperscript{151}

It was this vision, coupled with his unease with the burgeoning Cold War, which propelled, in good measure, Wallace’s presidential run in 1948. And his candidacy attracted others who dissented from the new Cold War Consensus. American communists and fellow travelers certainly embraced Wallace, as did liberals opposed to the rise of anticommunism in the nation’s politics.\textsuperscript{152} Albert Einstein endorsed Wallace’s candidacy, too, although few peace-minded atomic scientists followed his lead; world federalists, for

\textsuperscript{150} White and Maze, 246, 253.
\textsuperscript{152} Powers, 200-1.
their part, generally avoided involvement with any of the presidential candidates. The major liberal internationalist organizations of the American peace movement did not officially involve themselves with the Wallace campaign, either. Indeed, one searches in vain for any contemporary reference whatsoever to the Progressive standard-bearer’s candidacy in the archival materials consulted for this study.

Arrayed against Wallace, on the other hand, were liberals who had embraced the Cold War Consensus. Institutionally, their base of operations originated in the Union for Democratic Action (UDA), an organization created in the spring of 1941 by New Dealers—and Socialists opposed to Norman Thomas’s pre-Pearl Harbor isolationism—for the purpose of supporting FDR’s policy of “all aid short of war” for nations fighting Nazi Germany. Chaired by Reinhold Niebuhr and supported by Eleanor Roosevelt, the organization had actually backed Wallace’s re-nomination as vice-president at the Democratic national convention in 1944, interestingly enough. Nevertheless, the UDA always possessed something of an anticommunist bent, and it quickly shifted its agenda from support for the U.S. war effort to one of opposition to international communism after 1945. As Mark L. Kleinman has written, the UDA “represented the institutionalization of ‘cold war liberalism’ well before the cold war began.”

In order to counter the rival, pro-Wallace Progressive Citizens of America, the UDA created an alternative organization in January 1947—the staunchly anticommunist Americans for Democratic Action (ADA). Among its leadership were many well-known liberal figures: Eleanor Roosevelt, Minneapolis mayor Hubert H. Humphrey, United Auto Workers president Walter Reuther, and International Ladies Garment Workers

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153 Wittner, Rebels Against War, 194-5.
Union president David Dubinsky. Harvard University economist John Kenneth Galbraith, who had held positions in the New Deal-era Agriculture Department and the wartime Office of Price Administration, was among the organization’s founders, too, as was Arthur Schlesinger Jr. In The Vital Center, Schlesinger would savagely attack Wallace as a “well-intentioned, woolly-minded, increasingly embittered man” who was “made to order for Communist exploitation.”155 Former personal associates of FDR, including interior secretary Harold Ickes and undersecretary Abe Fortas, also associated themselves with the ADA as the election approached; for them, Wallace’s Progressive Party came to represent “a repudiation of the methods and purposes of Franklin D. Roosevelt,” as William E. Leuchtenburg has pointed out.156

Not all ADA members started out as loyal supporters of Truman, it should be noted. Some, including Franklin Roosevelt’s sons, had hoped to enlist Dwight D. Eisenhower as the Democratic Party’s nominee in 1948.157 But by the end of August, Americans for Democratic Action had come out strongly behind Truman’s re-election bid, and it subsequently crusaded not only against Wallace personally, but also against the presence of communists in both liberal and labor organizations more generally.

As it would turn out, Wallace received less than three percent of the popular vote in the 1948 presidential election. White and Maze, in particular, point to the Berlin crisis that began in June of that year as decisively undermining the Progressive candidate’s foreign policy message.158 But the advent of the Korean War in June of 1950 dealt the

155 Schlesinger, 115.
158 White and Maze, 269.
party yet another major blow. Indeed, it brought to an end for at least the next decade any serious opposition to the Cold War Consensus. United World Federalists and other world government organizations came out in favor of intervention in Korea as an example of United Nations action to stem the threat of “aggression” broadly defined. The Federal Council of Churches followed suit, as did Norman Thomas and the Socialist Party. As critical as he was of the “militarization” of U.S. foreign policy, Thomas’s own early admiration for the Bolshevik Revolution had long since turned to staunch opposition to Soviet-style communism. For that very reason, he had even reluctantly endorsed the North Atlantic Treaty in 1949—something that the Socialist Party itself was not prepared to do.¹⁵⁹ Even Wallace, who had become increasingly distrustful of the Soviet Union over the previous two years, joined in publicly denouncing the North Korean invasion and welcoming American military intervention. When the balance of the Progressive Party hierarchy elected not to follow his lead on the issue, Wallace resigned his position as party chief and largely retired from public life.

Conclusion

By the early nineteen fifties, the Cold War Consensus reigned supreme as the dominant paradigm shaping American foreign policy thinking. It was a decidedly Wilsonian framework springing from the crisis atmosphere that gripped the post-World War II world; and like previous formulations, it too weaved together ideas on national democratic self-determination, collective security, American exceptionalism, and an integrated world economy.

¹⁵⁹ E. T. Smith, 20, 88.
In some respects, the Consensus resembled the still very new system of Rooseveltian Wilsonianism that it supplanted. For example, in the realm of global economic policy, it continued to give a heavy emphasis to the development of the regulatory state and the expansion of international institutions alongside expanding trade. In the realm of global economic policy, at least, a crusading sense of progressive reform was therefore retained into the early Cold War era. And so it is here that we find a particularly strong thread of continuity. The work of formalizing the Bretton Woods system was completed in the years immediately after the war. But in new initiatives like the Marshall Plan, too, the pursuit of both reform and expanded trade proceeded apace.

American exceptionalism, meanwhile, also continued to be a unifying force among liberal internationalists, although the basis for exceptionalism was now shifting in the context of an increasingly secular age in which liberals, especially, were becoming more willing to speak out about America’s vices as well as its virtues. Whereas before a sense of historical and religious destiny had frequently pervaded ideas about American exceptionalism, postwar Americans were becoming more inclined to stress a sense of duty owing to the nation’s preeminent position in the world. By virtue of its enormous wealth and power, liberal internationalists concluded that the United States was positively obligated to play a leading role on the world stage. All the same, though, they still maintained an abiding faith in the essential correctness of their ideas as well. That, too, continued to help drive forward the quest for a new Wilsonian order.

Beyond that, however, the Consensus was a good deal more conservative in many respects than the previous Wilsonian formulation. With regard to the notion of imminent dangers to the international system, for example, the postwar Consensus returned to
Wilson’s focus on the threat posed by illiberal political systems—particularly that of international communism. Indeed, anticommunism was a hallmark of the Consensus, defining not only the threat to world order, but also how national democratic self-determination, collective security, and even free trade would be promoted, as well. As a practical matter, the pursuit of global democracy was subsumed into and made subordinate to the anticommunist crusade—for better and for worse. In fact, the progressive impulse to reform the world was decidedly muted under the conditions of the Cold War for practical reasons, at least in the political realm.

The principle of collective security was transformed in an especially dramatic fashion, with the previous emphasis on world organization and the rule of law supplanted—especially in actual practice—by a far-reaching system of regional and bilateral anticommunist military alliances. In other words, the country would not only continue its World War II-era role as the “arsenal of democracy” in the face of a new postwar foe, it would now lead a new “free world” community of nations against that foe. NATO was by far and away the most important of the new military alliances that took shape in the early years of the Cold War, but in the end it was only one of many. And so the Cold War Consensus introduced into Wilsonianism a yet more militarized conception of collective security beyond even what Franklin Roosevelt had contemplated during the Second World War. Moreover, the perhaps inevitable identification of the newly-emerging “free world” economic system with the “free world” political system tended to work against the Wilsonian notion that global trade would lead to global peace.

These changes were not universally acclaimed, though. In fact, a serious rift among liberal internationalists emerged after the onset of the Cold War; as was the case
during the era of the First World War, Wilsonian liberal internationalism during this period, too, comprised a very “big tent” politically. Many liberal internationalists from the peace movement who had championed the reformulated Wilsonianism of the Roosevelt years were highly reluctant to embrace some aspects of the new Consensus. At least in part, this was due to the fact that the latest Wilsonian formulation followed so closely on the heels of the still very new Rooseveltian system, which was still in the process of being established when the war ended. And it was, no doubt, also because of the continuing lure of the grand ideal of an entire world finally united as one in peace. But for whatever reason, enthusiasm for the newly-emerging postwar anticommunism was initially muted in some quarters as Rooseveltians, especially, attempted to strike a more even-handed pose vis-à-vis the two superpowers. Even after Korea—perhaps, in part, because of Korea—any conception of collective security that appeared to threaten the centrality of the United Nations was viewed with suspicion by these same disaffected liberal internationalists. All the same, the readily-available alternatives to the Consensus in the late nineteen forties—world government; the scientist’s peace crusade; and a new Progressive Party—failed to gain traction. Instead, the “big tent’ would endure into the decade of the nineteen sixties.

Notes on Historiography

Over the course of the preceding chapters, the present study has outlined how the bodies of literature produced by peace historians, on the one hand, and scholars working in the field of American foreign relations, on the other, are not much conversant with each other. As we have already seen, the links between them, such as they have been
developed to date, are tenuous at best where treatments of pre-1945 history are concerned. Unfortunately, in historical accounts of the early years of the Cold War, the divide between the two fields becomes even wider. And so, once again, the same basic pattern of limitations and drawbacks in the relevant literature emerge—limitations and drawbacks that the present study seeks to remedy.

As to the work of peace historians, the narrative that predominates this era is one of dashed hopes and shattered dreams for the movement that they so assiduously champion. And just as was the case with descriptions of the fifteen year-period leading up to the end of the Second World War in 1945, this storyline, too, is shaped overwhelmingly by the supremacy of the Progressive-Revisionist and antiwar pacifist interpretive frameworks. The years immediately following the cessation of hostilities was one of revival for the movement according to Lawrence Wittner in Rebels Against War: “With the end of the war traditional pacifist organizations lost their ‘outlaw’ status and began to regroup a bit of their fallen prestige.”¹⁶⁰ Non-violent resistance was adopted by “the youngest generation of pacifists” after World War II as a means of combating injustice at home, and the causes of nuclear pacifism and world government also “enjoyed a considerable vogue for a time.”¹⁶¹ But, regrettably, “the promising stirrings in the postwar peace movement collapsed… as the United States iced over in the chill of the Cold War,” Wittner concludes.¹⁶² Charles DeBenedetti, in The Peace Reform in American History, offered a similar take:

Rallied to support a frustrating postwar war, most Americans viewed volunteer peace seeking by 1949 as a suspect—if not subversive—endeavor. The organized peace movement understandably suffered as a result. Prompted by fresh cadres of

¹⁶⁰ Wittner, Rebels Against War, 151.
¹⁶¹ Ibid., 302.
¹⁶² Ibid., 212, 302.
atomic scientists and world federalists, the peace reform enjoyed a brief renascence in the late forties, until the Korean War and a surge of right-wing nationalism shoved the movement hopelessly to the defensive. Fixed in the grip of ultranationalism, American politics offered no serious room for the disarmament, world government, pacifist, and noninterventionist alternatives proffered by peace workers in the 1950s. Officially and popularly, peace subsisted in the assertion of American power. 163

Again, we are presented with a narrative within which the liberal internationalists of the period have a great deal of difficulty finding a home. Certainly neither DeBenedetti nor Wittner expend much effort in locating one for them. Instead, their chronicles of the peace movement’s history during the early years of the Cold War are populated virtually entirely by atomic scientists, world federalists, socialists, and pacifists—the last group broken down into no less than three sub-categories in Wittner’s treatment of the subject: traditional, radical, and nuclear. For Charles F. Howlett and Robbie Lieberman, too, in the pages of their A History of the American Peace Movement from Colonial Times to the Present, much the same cadre of peace-seekers command almost all of their scholarly attention. E. Timothy Smith, for his part, in his monograph Opposition Beyond the Water’s Edge: Liberal Internationalists, Pacifists, and Containment, 1945-1953, only manages to comfortably locate “liberal internationalists” within the preferred master narrative by arbitrarily defining the term so as to exclude entirely “proconsensus internationalists” who failed to vigorously oppose the Cold War. 164 Indeed, among the men that Smith holds up as representing various strains of liberal internationalism, the most prominent of them publicly were Henry A. Wallace and Norman Thomas.

The liberal internationalists that comprise the primary subject matter of the current chapter, in contrast, are rarely acknowledged in the peace histories cited above—and even then, the acknowledgement is rendered only in the most general of terms and

163 DeBenedetti, xv.
164 E. T. Smith, 3.
entirely in the context of hostile criticism. Howlett and Lieberman, in particular, maintain a decidedly hostile stance towards liberal internationalists—in those comparatively few instances when they are permitted to make an unwelcome intrusion into their narrative. By way of offering a critique, they point up what they consider to be several ironies: (1) that “Cold War liberals, fearful of a return to a post-World War I pattern of isolationist pacifism, now resorted to a militant, interventionist internationalism”; and (2) that these same liberals would subsequently act in “undemocratic” ways to isolate domestic communists in the name of “defending democracy.” Charles DeBenedetti, too, had rendered a rather dark assessment of the rise of “anti-Communist liberals who supported Truman’s Cold War policies”:

The massive fracture of postwar liberalism and the accompanying “defection of the intellectuals” to either apathy or the celebration of Cold War America—coming atop labor’s besiegement, the socialists’ decline, student uninterest, women’s distractions, and Protestantism’s passivity—altogether cut peace activists from their traditional sources of support. With the country’s progressive coalition in disarray, peace reformers lost their most reliable audiences and strongest sympathizers. And they could not find others…

Whatever the merits of these direct and indirect criticisms of Cold War liberalism, notice, once again, how they faithfully reflect the perspectives of Progressive-Revisionist and antiwar pacifist thought.

Precisely because of the preeminence of those particular interpretive frameworks, the role of peace-seeking liberal internationalists in shaping the history of U.S. foreign policy in the early years of the Cold War is largely transparent to peace historians. By approaching the subject from outside these perspectives and drawing on insights from the

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166 DeBenedetti, 154-5.
foreign policy field, however, this neglected aspect of American peace history can be recaptured, as the present chapter illustrates.

Introducing liberal internationalists from the peace movement as objects of study also allows us, again, to redress some of the limitation evident in the historical literature on Wilsonianism: (1) an insufficient awareness of the contingency of Wilsonian precepts; and (2) a lack of thorough, systematic treatment. These limitations can be seen, for example, in Frank Ninkovich’s *The Wilsonian Century* and its treatment of the early years of the Cold War. “A marginal creed to this point, Wilsonianism would only become central to U.S. foreign policy in the postwar years,” he writes—incorrectly, as we noted in the previous chapter. “[A]fter World War II,” however, “cleansed of utopian expectations, it came fully into its own, not in an international organization, but as the dominating conception of American foreign policy in the cold war”\(^{167}\)

In yet another remarkably novel interpretation, Ninkovich claims that Cold War-era Wilsonianism “became very much a national program.”\(^ {168}\) And by that, he means that U.S. foreign policy, beginning with the presidency of Harry S. Truman, resulted in an “Americanization of internationalism,” with the intention of providing “a national home for collective security.”\(^ {169}\) In other words, what Ninkovich is suggesting is that the defining feature of the United States as a Wilsonian actor in the international system during this period was its unilateralism—its willingness to take wholly upon itself the burden of safeguarding and promoting liberal democratic world opinion, whether the world was ready for it or not. The Truman Doctrine is the archetypal policy in this “national program,” he argues. With the announcement of that policy, Truman “sounded

\(^{167}\) Ninkovich, 77, 144.
\(^{168}\) *Ibid.*, 146.
the death knell for collective security as it had traditionally been perceived."\textsuperscript{170} And to underscore the point, Ninkovich points to the dominant role of the U.S. in the Korean War as proof that the prosecution of that war does not truly represent the workings of genuine collective security.\textsuperscript{171}

As was the case with his idiosyncratic understanding of Franklin Roosevelt’s Wilsonianism, this narrative also derives from Ninkovich’s unorthodox and overly narrow definition of the creed as a “crisis internationalism” in the service of world opinion—a definition that fails to grasp adequately both the underlying complexity of the Wilsonian system and its rapid evolution in the face of the many new dangers to world peace emerging in the late nineteen forties. Indeed, he maintains this interpretation despite the fact that Wilsonian notions of democratic self-determination and collective security were again changing dramatically in response to the circumstances of the Cold War, as this chapter illustrates. Far from being a death knell, the Truman Doctrine was the harbinger of a creatively reimagined Wilsonian system. It was a system in which America would act “unilaterally,” in a sense—an inevitable development given the leadership position of the country within that system on account of its relative size, wealth, and power. But to reduce Cold War Wilsonianism to unilateralism is to miss the web of political, social, and economic ties among the “free world” nations that truly defined the Wilsonian system in the minds of those who created it.

In contrast to Ninkovich, Amos Perlmutter takes a much more expansive view of Wilsonianism as seeking a new world order that is “intended to be liberal internationalist,

\textsuperscript{170} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{171} Ibid., 181.
anti-revolutionary, capitalist, pacific in nature, and exceptionalist.”\textsuperscript{172} At the same time, though, the role he accords the ideology in shaping U.S. foreign policy decision-making is comparatively limited—almost certainly too much so. For Perlmutter, Wilsonian ideas provided a moral sanction, an “umbrella of ideological persuasion,” under which neo-realists could successfully execute their plans. And so the picture that emerges in the pages of \textit{Making the World Safe for Democracy} is one in which Washington “essentially followed power politics but as always with a neo-Wilsonian vision.”\textsuperscript{173} Perlmutter does not represent this as cynicism on the part of decision-makers—far from it: “Their worldview was uniquely American—projecting great power not to intimidate others but to offer a prescription for a stable world order.”\textsuperscript{174} And it is precisely this mix of idealism and realism that he credits for the country’s ultimate success in waging the Cold War.

There is certainly an element of truth in Perlmutter’s argument. As the material covered in this chapter indicates, by no means all of the men shaping American international relations during the time period in question were committed Wilsonians. And as we have seen here, as well, as in the case of Wilsonian national democratic self-determination, for instance, the translation of abstract ideas, values, and aspirations into actual practice in the temporal realm is almost never a simple, straightforward matter. Still, it would profit us to bear in mind an insight that Ninkovich brings to the study of Wilsonianism and which this study implicitly demonstrates—the notion that ideas themselves powerfully shape both our perceptions and our thinking about the world, quite apart from whatever the “objective” reality of a given situation might be.

\textsuperscript{172} Perlmutter, 5.
\textsuperscript{173} \textit{Ibid.}, 124-5, 137-8.
\textsuperscript{174} \textit{Ibid.}, 44.
In any case, Perlmutter’s historical account of Wilsonianism in the early years of the Cold War, like that offered by Ninkovich, periodically suffers from a certain rigidity in the way various Wilsonian ideals are framed. For example, he writes that “contrary to FDR’s hopes, the collective security concept did not take off, as the experience of the United Nations demonstrates; in fact, the idea of collective security was defeated as soon as World War II came to an end.”\textsuperscript{175} Perlmutter is, of course, perfectly right in pointing out the manifest failure of the United Nations as a collective security arrangement. But does the conclusion that he has drawn about collective security writ large follow? No, it does not. Again, the difficulty here is that the concept of collective security has been defined too narrowly, and in such an ahistorical manner, so that alternative arrangements that do not very closely resemble the UN in terms of its all-embracing universality are simply excluded. But as we already know now, Wilsonian notions of collective security did adapt and change in response to the burgeoning Cold War so as to produce a number of different alternative arrangements.

\textsuperscript{175} Ibid., 111.
Chapter Four

Demise of the Wilsonian “Big Tent”

On February 27, 1968, CBS Evening News anchorman Walter Cronkite ended a special televised report on the fighting in South Vietnam with a now famous editorial. “We have been too often disappointed by the optimism of the American leaders, both in Vietnam and Washington, to have faith any longer in the silver linings they find in the darkest clouds,” he intoned. The veteran newsman’s ultimate conclusion: “it seems now more certain than ever that the bloody experience of Vietnam is to end in a stalemate. This summer’s almost certain standoff will either end in real give-and-take negotiations or terrible escalation…” It was one man’s very public vote of no confidence in the administration of President Lyndon B. Johnson and its handling of the war. And LBJ himself was apparently under no illusions regarding the import of the broadcast. Afterwards, he is reputed to have said, “If I’ve lost Cronkite, I’ve lost Middle America.”

Cronkite’s devastating commentary had been prompted by the momentous Tet offensive inaugurated almost one month earlier by the North Vietnamese Army and the Viet Cong, as South Vietnam’s communist-dominated National Liberation Front was popularly dubbed. It was a massive, nationwide attack that had been intended to inspire a popular uprising by the South Vietnamese citizenry against the government in Saigon and its American ally, thus bringing a quick end to the war. It did not quite work out that way, however. In fact, it is now generally recognized that Tet was a military disaster for the Vietnamese communists. The popular uprising they expected never materialized and the VC were utterly decimated, suffering huge losses from which they would never fully
recover. Yet, as Cronkite’s reaction demonstrates, the affair became a public relations
disaster for Johnson—a psychological defeat that helped to undermine both his
administration and the public’s support for the war.

Tet was a turning point in the history of a deeply divisive conflict for the United
States. It was the Vietnam War, in the end, that ultimately broke up the broad-based Cold
War Consensus in American politics—and the Wilsonian “big tent” along with it. In the
wake of the conflict in Southeast Asia, what remained of Wilsonianism within the
American peace movement on the political left would derive entirely from the older
Rooseveltian system, now freed from the constraints of the Consensus. Indeed, the
demise of the Consensus may be attributed, at least in part, to the continuing appeal of the
Rooseveltian worldview among many liberal internationalists. At the same time, Cold
War Wilsonianism survived as a vital force only among some Republicans and allied
neo-conservative Democrats. But by no means were these Republicans politically
ascendant at the end of the decade, even within their own party. By the end of the
nineteen-sixties—years before the fighting in Vietnam was even ended—the influence of
Woodrow Wilson and his intellectual heirs on U.S. foreign policy would be marginalized
to a greater extent than at any time since the early to mid-nineteen thirties.

Vietnam dealt the decisive blow to the Cold War Consensus. But at least to some
extent, the stage was set for its downfall by ongoing developments that actually
originated before the war. This is suggested, certainly, by the great speed with which the
Consensus began to unravel after the war was “Americanized” in 1965. But how did that
process actually play out? In the years leading up to the American intervention in
Southeast Asia, the Consensus reigned supreme in the Washington establishment—at
least by all outward appearances. But tellingly, Wilsonianism within the peace movement was on the wane during this period for a number of different reasons—even as the movement itself embarked on a great revitalization and expansion. And through the changes that took place within the peace movement in the nineteen fifties and sixties in terms of organization, personnel, and policy advocacy, the final demise of the Consensus and the Wilsonian “big tent” can be observed and charted.

The Changing Face of the Peace Movement

In the years past the mid-century mark, a host of developments significantly reworked the landscape of American political culture. And that shifting landscape, in turn, had some momentous implications for the American peace movement. With the advent of an armistice in Korea in 1953, the nation was again at peace—relatively speaking. And with the end of the war in Korea, as well as the dispatch of the infamous anticommunist demagogue Senator Joseph R. McCarthy of Wisconsin the following year, the “red scare” that had gripped the country abated, at least to the extent that the range of legitimate, or, at least, tolerable, political opinion and activism in American public life opened up quite noticeably. This would ultimately prove to be a boon to the peace movement for obvious reasons.

Even more relevant to the transformation of the peace movement, however, was the development of thermonuclear devices and delivery systems of intercontinental range by both superpowers. These remarkable technological advancements finally made real the potentiality of a global nuclear Armageddon—a potentiality that had heretofore
remained largely hypothetical, even in the years immediately following Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The launch of the first Sputnik satellite by the USSR in 1957, in particular, was a watershed event—one that helped to drive home a realization on the part of the general public that the possibility of nuclear annihilation had become frighteningly real.

And so, now, in the latter years of the nineteen-fifties, the nuclear age loomed ever larger as a source of danger for the world—and the Wilsonian world order. If, some four decades earlier, Woodrow Wilson had been somewhat before his time in thinking that war itself posed an existential threat, the times had finally caught up with him. It is a token of the times that, in 1956, the Woodrow Wilson Foundation celebrated the centenary of the late president’s birth with a program of commemorative lectures, discussions, and publications organized under the theme: “Freedom For Man—A World Safe For Mankind.” Wilson had wanted to make the world “safe for democracy,” Foundation president August Heckscher pointed out in announcing the organization’s plans in May of the previous year. “But it is a measure of the fearfulness of things that have occurred since his death that in this centennial year we have felt compelled to give a new dimension to even that tremendous phrase.”

In the late nineteen-fifties and early sixties, these factors—the relative slackening of the “red scare” and the subsequent intensification of the nuclear threat—helped to spur a resurgence of activism in America that would change altogether the face of the American peace movement. And yet curiously—perhaps even paradoxically—this new surge of energy and enthusiasm would not generally extend to the major liberal

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1 “Freedom For Man—A World Safe For Mankind”: An Address delivered by Bernard M. Baruch together with the Introductory Remarks of August Heckscher, President, at a Meeting held at the Woodrow Wilson Foundation, May 25, 1955, to Announce Plans for the Woodrow Wilson Centennial Anniversary 1856-1956 (Stamford: The Overbrook Press, 1955), 6, WWF MSS Box I.
internationalist organizations. Perhaps, at least in part, this was a result of the rise of Wilsonian ideals to a level of unqualified dominance within the official American foreign policy establishment that accounts for this phenomenon. Frank Ninkovich has suggested that over the years, Wilsonian “crisis internationalism” had been rendered utterly routine, thus sapping its vitality. In that case, it may be fairly said that the peace organizations promoting Wilsonianism in its various guises had, in some measure, become victims of their own success. Perhaps it is also partly a result of the increasing diversity of viewpoints within the movement that had now become possible. But whatever the larger explanation, the fact remains that a number of venerable liberal internationalist groups had retired from the scene for all practical purposes by the early sixties.

The Woodrow Wilson Foundation was one such group. Of all the internationalist organizations working within the peace movement in the post-World War II era, the Foundation was perhaps the one that had most closely embraced the Cold War Consensus. Indeed, between 1946 and 1957, it served as a distribution center for State Department documents, as well as producing its own informational literature pertaining to Wilson and America’s involvement in international affairs. But an even better indication of the extent to which the organization had embraced the Consensus is the list of winners of its Distinguished Service Award in the immediate postwar period. Recipients of that prize, the Foundation’s highest honor, during those years, included not only President Truman, but Bernard Baruch, Dean Acheson, and George C. Marshall.

But in the late nineteen fifties, the Foundation’s overriding goal of memorializing Wilson and promoting his ideals led to the establishment of a project that would absorb it

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entirely within the space of a few short years. That project was the publication of a massive multivolume collection, *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*. The Foundation made the decision in 1957 to undertake the task, in partnership with Princeton University, and it subsequently set about raising funds and putting together an editorial staff headed by historian and influential Wilson biographer Arthur S. Link. Yet so great was the project in terms of scale and cost that by early 1963, the directors felt themselves compelled to reorganize the entire Foundation around it. They sold off the organization’s New York City headquarters building, moved onto the Princeton University campus, and brought to an end “all other activities—administrative, operative, [and] substantive.”

In time, the Church Peace Union would also eventually fade away as an active liberal internationalist advocacy group. Through at least the mid-nineteen fifties, at least, the promotion of the United Nations remained a primary foreign policy concern for the organization and its aging general secretary, Henry A. Atkinson. Indeed, under Atkinson’s leadership, the Union persisted in its efforts to materially serve the cause of the United Nations wherever it could. For example, it continued to promote annual United Nations Week events and publish favorably-disposed informational pamphlets concerning the world body, often in cooperation with various like-minded official and semi-official establishments such as the U.S. Committee for the UN and the Conference Group of U.S. National Organizations on the United Nations. The Union even routinely assisted in conducting four-day orientation seminars at UN Headquarters in New York City for visiting, out-of-town denominational groups.

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4 The Church Peace Union: Report of the Secretaries, and the Auditors to the Board of Trustees at the Forty-first Annual Meeting held in New York City, January 27, 1955, 10, Council on Religion and
Atkinson’s January 1955 report to the annual meeting of the board of trustees identified the question of “how best we may help in every possible way the work of the United Nations” as being one of the most important issues confronting the board.\(^5\) But in that year, 1955, Atkinson was in his thirty-seventh and, as it would happen, final year as the Church Peace Union’s chief administrative officer, having held the post since January of 1918—the very month Woodrow Wilson had delivered his famous Fourteen Points speech to the U.S. Congress. And in the wake of Atkinson’s retirement, education secretary A. William Loos took over the administration of the Union.

Loos certainly brought his own liberal internationalist perspective to the subject of American foreign relations. In the annual reports he produced in his first years in office, there appeared, for example, criticisms of U.S. foreign aid programs, which Loos considered insufficiently generous, as well as U.S. trade policy, which he considered too protectionist. And for the first time, one may find, as well, complaints about the “militarization of U.S. foreign policy,” which for Loos represented a failure in humility. “If righteousness exalteth a nation, self-righteousness has without question contributed to the decline of our influence during recent months and years,” he wrote in early 1958.

Those reports leave little doubt that the Church Peace Union’s new chief administrator regarded lessening the threat of war—particularly a nuclear war—via arms control as a “most critical imperative.”\(^6\)

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International Affairs Manuscripts, Swarthmore College Peace Collection, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania, Box 4 (Hereafter cited as CRIA MSS); The Church Peace Union: Report of the Secretaries, and the Auditors to the Board of Trustees at the Forty-second Annual Meeting held in New York City, January 26, 1956, 4, CRIA MSS.

\(^5\) The Church Peace Union: Report of the Secretaries, and the Auditors to the Board of Trustees, January 27, 1955, 5, 9, 18, CRIA MSS.

\(^6\) The Church Peace Union: Report of the Directors and the Auditors for the year 1957, 5, 9-10, CRIA MSS; See also The Church Peace Union: Annual Report 1960, 13-14, CRIA MSS.
At the same time, however, Loos included in these same policy discussions an insistence that “we must remain militarily strong for deterrence purposes, in both conventional and nuclear weapons,” as he put it in the Church Peace Union’s 1957 annual report. And three years later, he was warning about “Soviet intentions and Soviet strategy”—the latter may have become less reliant on overt violence than in Stalin’s day, Loos indicated, but the ultimate goal of “an all-Communist world” had, in his view, remained consistent nevertheless. The thinking of Loos in this period, like Atkinson before him, was still very much informed by the liberal Cold War anticommunism that ruled the day.

But, in due course, under the leadership of Loos as executive secretary and, later, president, the organization began to undergo a number of fundamental, long-term transformations. In fact, the Church Peace Union soon revamped not only its operational strategy, but the entire underlying purpose of the organization itself. In the end, it elected to shift away from policy advocacy in favor of a new focus on the study of “the relationship between religious ethics and foreign policy issues,” with the idea of bringing such ethics “into direct confrontation with the complexities of international politics,” according to the Union’s 1959 annual report.

Of course, the “religious ethics” in question would be derived generally from the Judeo-Christian tradition. And, as befitting the broad sweep of that turn of phrase, the CPU also ultimately endeavored in the nineteen sixties to change “decisively the image of the organization from being considered Protestant with an interfaith façade to being

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7 The Church Peace Union: Report of the Directors and the Auditors for the year 1957, 9-10, CRIA MSS.
8 The Church Peace Union: Annual Report 1960, 11, CRIA MSS.
9 The Church Peace Union: Annual Report 1959, 7-8, CRIA MSS.
10 Council on Religion and International Affairs, Annual Report of Director and Auditor, 1961, 8-9, CRIA MSS.
genuinely interfaith,” as Loos himself would later put it. But perhaps the ultimate expression of the organization’s repurposing was simply its change of name—the first since the foundation of the Church Peace Union forty-seven years earlier. In 1961, the group rechristened itself the Council on Religion and International Affairs, a name it would retain until 1986, when it took on its present-day moniker, the Carnegie Council on Ethics and International Affairs.

While the Woodrow Wilson Foundation and the Church Peace Union were moving on to other endeavors, at least one old-line liberal internationalist organization, the American Association for the United Nations, soldiered on. Under the continuing leadership of executive director Clark Eichelberger, the AAUN remained on the fringes of the Cold War Consensus, devoted more, as it was, to the Rooseveltian Wilsonianism of the war years than the newer incarnation that had superseded it in official policy circles. And that was certainly reflected in the public stands taken by the organization and its leadership. It was sometimes critical of U.S. foreign policy decisions; but it was always ready to offer unqualified support for the international body that FDR had championed.

Eichelberger himself remained ever convinced that the United Nations had been “the decisive factor for world peace” in the decades after the end of the Second World War. And this sentiment reflected thinking within the American Association for the United Nations more generally. In a fundraising letter sent out in early December of 1962, for example, Association president Herman W. Steinkraus portrayed the very recent Cuban Missile Crisis as a defining moment for the world body—a moment in

11 Council on Religion and International Affairs, Annual Report, 1966, 12, CRIA MSS
which, “to all Americans, the United Nations took on new depth and meaning. It stood between them and the awful prospect of nuclear war.” Eichelberger certainly agreed with Steinkraus’s glowing assessment. As he would write some eight years later in the pages of his consistently fawning history of the global organization, *UN: The First Twenty-Five Years*:

Let us picture the United States and the Soviet Union deadlocked in the Caribbean without a Security Council where they could appear, and where the hopes of all mankind could be expressed. It is hard to see how one or the other could have pulled back from such a perilous position. Indeed, one could say that if there had been no United Nations the two giants might have confronted each other with disaster.

As the sentiments quoted above suggest, the AAUN’s executive director persisted in regarding the UN as being absolutely central to any system of genuine collective security. That is not to say that he was blind to the organization’s shortcomings, however. To his credit, Eichelberger, like many other liberal internationalists we have already noted, did acknowledge the limited effectiveness of the United Nations as a practical arrangement—as well as the outstanding role of the Soviet Union in creating that state of affairs. But in the end, he could not abandon the Rooseveltian vision of a system of collective security defined in all-encompassing global and legalistic terms.

Nor could Eichelberger abandon his own vision of a soon-to-be “dynamic international society” in which “nations will be so enmeshed in cooperative peaceful efforts that serious political disputes would seldom arise and the threat of war would be unthinkable.” This was his great hope, and he expounded upon it in some detail in *UN: The First Twenty-Five Years*. Indeed, the United Nations was, for him, the central

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14 Eichelberger, 48.
element, the nucleus, of this cooperative future world society—the UN General Assembly especially. Beyond its theoretical ability to develop a body of what he termed “world common law,” Eichelberger envisioned the Assembly ultimately evolving into a full-blown “parliament of mankind,” a global institution in which nations would, as he put it, “deal with the overwhelming problems of peaceful change within the framework of law and parliamentary procedure.” In other words, the United Nations, he thought, would in time take on at least some of the prerogatives of a representative world government.

Despite these grand long-term aspirations, Eichelberger was not prepared to give up on the much more immediate goal of reinvigorating the Security Council as an instrument of world peace, by any means—quite the contrary, in fact. Even into the nineteen-seventies, he somehow remained convinced that, despite its manifest and obvious weaknesses, the council might yet still be made to “fulfill its responsibilities under the Charter,” if only “the Great Powers today were to put aside cold war considerations and take decisions based upon merit.” Of course, given the reality of just how formidable an obstacle “cold war considerations” really posed, let alone the practical difficulties in objectively defining “merit,” it is not surprising that Eichelberger could suggest little by way of a practical strategy that might have actually led us to such a happy state of affairs. Indeed, in the pages of UN: The First Twenty-Five Years, he had not much else to contribute at all on the subject beyond an undoubtedly heartfelt lament that there had been “a retreat from the concept of collective security” after the end of the fighting in Korea, with the result that the UN was, in 1970, playing no effective role in Indochina.15

15 Eichelberger, 10, 16-18, 25-6, 52-3, 147.
Why was the United Nations playing no effective role in Indochina? “Every President since the founding of the UN has expressed the deep commitment of this nation to the purpose of the [United Nations] organization,” Lyndon Johnson once noted. And he was right. Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon in turn all paid lip service to the ideal of the UN and the general principles that it represented—and the American Association for the United Nations was, of course, only too happy to reproduce their praises in its promotional literature.\footnote{“Join the force of reason,” pamphlet, n.d., United Nations Association Manuscripts, Swarthmore College Peace Collection, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania, Box 1 (Hereafter cited as UNA MSS).}

At the same time, however, Eichelberger was by no means mistaken in his perception that the UN was routinely being sidestepped. It was, and this had long been a major concern, as we have already seen. For years, the American Association for the United Nations and its functionaries pushed in vain for increased cooperation between the UN and the American government. And for years, they continued to raise objections in instances where U.S. decision makers were clearly circumventing the world body. Ten years after protesting the Truman Doctrine on precisely these grounds, Eichelberger was doing the same with regard to the Eisenhower Doctrine—a proposal from the administration to provide U.S. armed forces, as well as military and economic assistance, to nations in the Middle East seeking to protect their “independence and integrity” against the spread of “international Communism.” In the midst of the Congressional debates that followed Eisenhower’s proposal, Eichelberger actually appeared personally before the Senate and House Foreign Relations Committees “to urge that nothing be done to bypass the United Nations or to weaken the American position in the organization,” as
he later put it. Indeed, the AAUN itself consistently promoted the idea that U.S. involvement with the United Nations should be made the indispensable cornerstone of American international relations, as it did, for example, in its 1958 statement of policy:

We believe that our Government and the people should accept the idea that the United Nations is the foundation of foreign policy and not an instrument of convenience. This conviction should be expressed by action as well as by words. The United Nations must be used consistently. It must be used in the very beginning to prevent crises from arising as well as a court of last resort.

It was not just the authorities in Washington who were sidestepping the United Nations, however. “Formally speaking, the UN is unable to take on the Vietnam issue for the very simple reason that North Vietnam is not a member of the organization and has steadfastly refused to have anything to do with the world organization,” United Nations correspondent Dr. Louis Halasz wrote in early 1967 in an analysis for International Feature Service—an analysis that was subsequently distributed within the AAUN’s successor institution for informational purposes. Not only that, according to Halasz, “[i]t's main protagonist at the UN, the Soviet Union, accepts this North Vietnamese position and consequently opposes any formal UN dealing with the problem.” But on a more fundamental level, Halasz saw that the real problem with the United Nations was the same essential limitation in the structure of the Security Council that American liberal internationalists had been decrying since 1945: “the UN cannot undertake a peace-making operation unless the great powers wish it to do so, or at least none of the great powers oppose such UN intervention.”

Nevertheless, Eichelberger and the American Association for the United Nations relentlessly pushed for any progress that could be made towards a stronger regime of

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17 Eichelberger, 168, 172.
global collective security. This was especially the case with regard to disarmament—a cause that they were prepared to pursue more aggressively than ever in the late nineteen fifties and early sixties. “The problem of disarmament will not wait,” the organization’s 1958 policy statement insisted. At least, the AAUN was no longer willing to wait:

In the pre-atomic age men were right in believing that collective security should precede disarmament because a nation, no more than an individual, will not give up its guns until there is a court, police and law. But the rising tide of fantastic armaments is such that their very existence makes it impossible to get the political settlements and the collective security necessary to make disarmament possible.20

Not coincidentally, Arthur N. Holcombe, the chairman of the Commission to Study the Organization of Peace, made much the same point in that organization’s twelfth report, *Peaceful Coexistence: A New Challenge to the United Nations*, which was published in June of 1960. In an age of thermonuclear weaponry, disarmament “cannot wait upon the definitive establishment of international justice under law and the development of a proper sense of security,” he wrote, “because the possession of the arms is a principle cause of the sense of insecurity.” Under the circumstances, then, according to this line of reasoning, the goals of security, justice, and disarmament would simply have to be sought concurrently.21 And in the eyes of both AAUN and CSOP, the United Nations was, of course, the instrument through which all three goals could be achieved.

The UN General Assembly passed a ground-breaking resolution on the subject of disarmament on November 20, 1959, and Eichelberger attached a great deal of significance to it: “For the first time in the tedious history of disarmament negotiations the nations have accepted general and complete disarmament under effective

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international control as the final goal,” he later remarked.\(^\text{22}\) And subsequent diplomatic progress looked promising at first. Within the space of just a few years, Soviet-American talks on disarmament had led to the formation of an eighteen-nation UN-affiliated Disarmament Committee. In the context of that committee, American proposals for general disarmament were debated—proposals that Eichelberger found noteworthy for their “strengthening” of “the peacekeeping machinery of the United Nations,” including the formation of a United Nations Peace Observation Corps and an independent United Nations Police Force, as well as expanded, compulsory jurisdiction for the International Court of Justice.\(^\text{23}\) Little, if anything, would actually come from most of these well-meaning proposals, however.

In the meantime, the American Association for the United Nations itself underwent one major change of note—a merger with the U.S. Committee for the UN in 1964 to form the present-day United Nations Association of the United States of America (UNA). In most respects, though, the transformation was actually more cosmetic than real. As per the terms of the merger, the new United Nations Association retained the policies of the old AAUN, as well as its history.\(^\text{24}\) And there would be substantial continuity in terms of organizational leadership as well, including Eichelberger in the position of vice-president—a position he would hold until 1968.

In the operational realm, as well, there was little, if any, apparent change. The merger did not affect the work of the Commission to Study the Organization of Peace, for example, which continued on as a separate, UNA-affiliated research group. Eichelberger, in fact, would guide CSOP for years to come as chairman (1964-1968) and then

\(^{22}\) Eichelberger, 54.  
\(^{23}\) Ibid, 64-5, 67.  
\(^{24}\) Letter from John A. Roosevelt, May 25, 1964, AAUN MSS.
executive director (1968-1974). Nor did the merger interrupt established, long-running AAUN programs in support of the United Nations and its work—the publication and distribution of UN-related literature; the promoting of annual observances of United Nations Day and United Nations Week; the arranging of conferences and public speaking engagements across the country; and the development of UN-themed educational programs and activities for use at both the secondary and undergraduate level.

The United Nations Association also retained the high public profile that the old American Association for the United Nations had enjoyed in its heyday. In the latter half of the nineteen-sixties, Lyndon Johnson, Harry Truman, and Dwight Eisenhower all served as honorary chairmen of the new organization. In fact, on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the founding of the United Nations in 1965, President Johnson and secretary of state Dean Rusk, respectively, asked UNA chairman of the board of directors, Robert S. Benjamin, not only to “coordinate the activities of all Non-Governmental Organizations in a meaningful celebration of that anniversary,” but to assist in making arrangements for a related special White House Conference on International Cooperation, as well. It was yet another token of the continuing high-level prominence of the old association in its brand-new incarnation—as well as a demonstration of the lasting power of Franklin Roosevelt’s Wilsonian vision even during the reign of the Cold War Consensus.

Among all of the various institutional changes taking place within the American peace movement during this period, one of the most notable was the establishment in the

25 “Join the force of reason,” pamphlet, n.d., UNA MSS, Box 1.
26 Letter from Robert S. Benjamin to Adlai E. Stevenson, May 19, 1965, UNA MSS, Box 1; Report to the Secretary of State, Submitted on behalf of the Officers of the United Nations Association of the United States of America, November 1965, UNA MSS.
fall of 1957 of a brand new organization that would soon rise to a position of great
prominence—the National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy (SANE). More so than
any of the extant groups that we have examined up until this point, SANE reflected the
slackening of the “red scare,” the rise of the nuclear threat, and the resurgence of peace
activism that these developments subsequently prompted. And in its own way, too, it
was also very much a “product of Cold War liberalism,” as Milton Katz has usefully
described it. 27 In characterizing the organization in those terms, Katz had in mind
primarily the methods by which it sought to effect political change—lobbying, education,
and public dialogue, as opposed to political radicalism, civil disobedience, and passive
resistance. But both the political agenda and the membership policy that SANE promoted
in its early years clearly reflected the predominance of Wilsonian liberal internationalism
in the realm of U.S. foreign policy decision-making—and American political culture
more generally. Charles DeBenedetti went so far as to explicitly label SANE a base of
operations for peace-seeking liberal internationalists in his comprehensive history of the
movement. 28 And it is through various changes that took place in this organization,
especially, during its first dozen years or so of operation that the demise of the Cold War
Consensus may be observed and tracked.

The early evolution of the National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy affords
us a window into the demise of the Consensus despite the fact that it is impossible to
really describe SANE as a liberal internationalist organization in the strictest sense—this,
despite DeBenedetti’s representation. Not that DeBenedetti was incorrect. He was not.

27 Milton S. Katz, *Ban the Bomb: A History of SANE, the Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy, 1957-1985*
28 Charles DeBenedetti, *The Peace Reform in American History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press,
The situation was simply more complex than that. One of the most remarkable attributes of the new group was the diversity of viewpoints to be found amongst its leadership. According to sociologist Nathan Glazer, SANE was “based on a coalition of two major groupings, both of which had their origins in older issues: the proponents of world government on the one hand and the pacifists on the other.”29 Much more recently, Charles Howlett and Robbie Lieberman described it as “an ad-hoc liberal, nuclear pacifist organization.”30 But these characterizations are also oversimplifications. In truth, SANE’s originators came from a range of wildly-varying political and ideological backgrounds; among them were Franklin Roosevelt-style liberal internationalists, sympathetic atomic scientists, “nuclear pacifists,” and socialists as well as world federalists.

Norman Thomas was among the outstanding leaders of SANE during its earliest, formative years. He had, in fact, been involved in a wide variety of different peace, civil rights, and civil liberties organizations over the course of his very long public career. And he had long taken an interest in issues of nuclear disarmament. Just as importantly, however, his personal political career was at its end by the mid-nineteen fifties. His sixth and final presidential campaign on the Socialist ticket had taken place back in 1948, and by 1955, at the age of 71, he had resigned from all of his official posts in the party. As a result, Thomas was well-positioned to devote his still considerably active twilight years to the cause of peace activism.

At the same time, advocates of world government were indeed extremely well-represented in the National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy, as Glazer correctly

indicated. SANE’s program director, Donald Keys, had been on the staff of the United World Federalists, for example. And other figures affiliated with SANE, such as the playwright Oscar Hammerstein II, co-writer of such musicals as Oklahoma! and The Sound of Music, and Walter Reuther, president of the United Auto Workers and vice-president of the AFL-CIO, had been UWF officers, as well.31

But perhaps the most notable world federalist among SANE’s early leaders was a co-chair of the organization, Norman Cousins, the editor of Saturday Review. Cousins was a former United World Federalists national chairman and honorary president; and he had long taken an interest in both international organization and issues related to weapons of mass destruction. He had been an early public supporter of Franklin Roosevelt’s plans for the United Nations and even served on the board of the Office of War Information during World War II. But upon reading the first press accounts of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, he was moved to write a lengthy editorial for the following edition of the Saturday Review entitled “Modern Man is Obsolete”—a commentary that was widely-reprinted and subsequently expanded by Cousins into a short book under the same title.

The bombing “marked the violent death of one stage of man’s history and the beginning of another… creating a blanket of obsolescence not only over the methods and the products of man but over man himself,” he wrote in the opening passages of that slender volume. What followed was, at least in part, a call for perseverance over what Cousins termed “man’s savagely competitive impulses.” But, even more central to his thesis was his call for a “transformation or adjustment from national man to world man.” The “flat truth,” he argued, was that “the greatest obsolescence of all in the Atomic Age

31 Katz, 30.
is national sovereignty.” With the advent of atomic weapons and the means to deliver them, nation-states could no longer function to maintain the safety of life or property, he was sure. And the new United Nations was wholly inadequate to the task as well, at least as it had been originally constituted.\(^{32}\) Out of sheer necessity, Cousins reasoned, world government was the only answer, whether the peoples of the world were prepared for it or not. And he was even ready with a few suggested readings. The appendix to the book consisted of several excerpts from James Madison’s *The Federalist* nos. 14 and 37, which Cousins thought offered guidance that would be particularly relevant to the task of successfully organizing a new world government.

Alongside these and other devotees of world federalism, liberal internationalists could also certainly be found in the ranks of the National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy. Among the more noteworthy internationalists involved with the launching of the new organization was none other than James T. Shotwell, who, at the age of 83 in 1957, served as one of SANE’s initial national sponsors and subsequently became a member.\(^{33}\) The United Nations Association’s Clark Eichelberger was a national sponsor as well. In fact, his name was among thirty-two men and women later listed in an internal document as “outstanding leaders” in SANE during the organization’s first formative years. Appearing on that same list, as well, was the name of Frank Altschul, long-time vice president of the Council on Foreign Relations and a past president of the Woodrow Wilson Foundation.\(^{34}\)

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\(^{34}\) “Outstanding Leaders in SANE 1957-1963,” SANE MSS, Series A, Box 1.
It also bears mentioning that other prominent SANE leaders were involved in various liberal internationalist organizations as well, in some form or fashion. Norman Cousins, for example, served on the board of directors of the American Association for the United Nations, and then the United Nations Association, in the nineteen sixties. And his successor as co-chair of SANE, H. Stuart Hughes, a Professor of History at Harvard University, had been a member of both the Commission to Study the Organization of Peace and United World Federalists. Even more curious is the public career of Homer A. Jack, a Unitarian minister who would become executive director of SANE in the early sixties. “I try not to be doctrinaire,” he told Joseph Wershba of the New York Post in an interview for the paper published in May of 1961. “I’m a card-carrying member of all the peace organizations—the American Assn. for the UN, Fellowship of Reconciliation, United World Federalists and so on. A citizen of the world has to have an eclectic approach to world peace. We should play the field and not put all our chips on one way of reaching heaven.”35 In his own unique way, it would seem, Jack personified the diversity of intellectual backgrounds and viewpoints represented by all those who comprised SANE’s collective leadership. If nothing else, Jack certainly reminds us that some people, no less than some organizations, simply defy easy categorization.

All the same, the issues championed by the National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy in its first years certainly reflected the organization’s origins as a “product of Cold War liberalism.” On a general level, there was an awareness on the part of SANE’s diverse leadership that the Cold War competition was a serious matter and that America needed to lead the free world in engaging in it. This awareness was mostly

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implicit in its literature; but in some instances, it was quite explicit. The organization, for example, openly recognized the role of foreign aid as a means of combating the superficial seductiveness of the Soviet economic model, thereby making America more competitive vis-à-vis the communists in the undeveloped world.  

At the same time, however, as much as was practicable, the committee advocated cooperative relations with the communist bloc on problems of mutual interest and concern. And one of the earliest such problems was above-ground atomic testing and the potential threat to public health posed by the resulting radioactive fallout. This was the issue that first spurred the foundation of SANE, and the idea of an international nuclear test ban to combat the problem would remain a signature issue for the organization well into the early nineteen sixties, along with the international control of missiles and space satellites. Nuclear proliferation was an early concern, as well. As far back as 1959, SANE had advocated the “[d]enial of nuclear weapons, weapons parts and delivery systems to additional countries pending [the] conclusion of international agreements to control nuclear weapons.” And a policy statement issued in the summer of the following year pointed towards the potential dangers of proliferation as one of a number of justifications for the pursuit of disarmament talks.

Within a few short years of its founding, though, the National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy was already expanding its agenda to address broader issues of war and peace. In fact, the ambitious and far-reaching policy statement that was adopted in

37 Policy Statement, National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy, adopted November 16th, 1959, SANE MSS, Series A, Box 2.
38 “Speaking of Platforms... A SANE Way to Avoid War,” A Policy Statement of the National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy, Summer, 1960, SANE MSS, Series A, Box 2.
November 1959 called for nothing less than “a program for general disarmament and
[the] creation of a world without war,” including:

General disarmament down to police levels with adequate inspection and controls.

The strengthening of the United Nations as an agency for the settlement of disputes and for carrying out the inspection and control functions. This involves recognition that the UN must be inclusive in its membership in order to be fully effective.

Extensive planning for reconversion of economies to a world of peace, and economic development of less fortunate areas of the world.

Reduction of international tensions through political settlements and through mutual withdrawal of armed forces and nuclear weapons from danger areas. 39

Not quite two years later, these same basic ideas—and more besides—were
elaborated on even more fully in a supremely expansive SANE agenda dubbed the
“Peace Race.” According to the October 1961 internal draft memorandum outlining the rationale for the program, the basic idea was that the “Peace Race… should replace the Arms Race as the center of American foreign policy.” In fact, the entire program was intended by SANE to be a means whereby the military dimension of the Cold War confrontation could be deemphasized. Instead, the rivalry with the communist world would take place more on the political, economic, and even psychological level. Ideally, the Cold War should always be waged through peaceful, constructive means as much as possible, they reasoned. And to that end, the “Peace Race” called for nothing less than “a sustained effort” on the part of the United States “to combine industrialization with the development of free societies in a disarmed world.” 40

As the above reference to “free societies” indicates, the program was intended, at least in part, as a solution to the vexing problem of how to oppose communist expansion

39 Policy Statement, National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy, Adopted November 16th 1959, SANE MSS, Series A, Box 2.
around the globe without having to resort to the unfortunate expedient of embracing less-than-savory authoritarian right-wing regimes:

If we attempt to maintain the inequitable status quo, giving support to those in political power so long as they claim to be anticommunist no matter how badly they govern, we shall leave the oppressed people and their rising leaders no alternative but to turn to the communist countries for support.41

As an alternative, SANE promoted the “Peace Race” as “a political effort to make American political and personal freedom secure by making possible for the bulk of humanity a high standard of living that is joined with such freedom.” The goal, in other words, was to spread around the world both economic prosperity and American-style political liberties in the hope that both would take root and become mutually reinforcing. And with that goal in mind, the program emphasized the promotion of “constructive political and economic change” through wealth redistribution and the intervention of the progressive regulatory state, as well as an end to colonialism and feudalism in underdeveloped societies. “This process, carried out at speed, will automatically create allies based upon the loyalty of free men to their own freedom,” according to the early documentation for the proposal.42

The practical problem referenced in the passage quoted above—how best to handle relations with friendly, authoritarian non-communist regimes—was very real, of course. It was a problem that bedeviled U.S. policy throughout the years of the Cold War, as we have already noted. SANE’s “Peace Race” concept essentially sought to address that problem through a program of “intervention of a non-military character in the internal affairs” of other countries, at least in part—and SANE’s

leadership forthrightly acknowledged the fact. Interestingly, the group’s national board was perfectly willing to countenance this form of interference, unlike direct military interventions, which they decidedly frowned upon unless it was done with the “express consent” of the target country’s national government.43

And yet, perhaps ironically, the “Peace Race” program was also clearly intended by its creators to simultaneously advance the cause of self-determination for those peoples who inhabited what would shortly come to be called the “Third World.” That is, the economic aid to be rendered by the United States should ideally promote not only “peaceful social change,” but also ultimately “provide the underdeveloped countries with a chance to evolve their own forms of organization with a minimum of coercion from within and without,” according to the “Peace Race” policy statement.44 The sentiment was sincere, no doubt, although the question of how to square this very desirable goal with the contemplated “intervention of a non-military character” was left unaddressed by the board.

It is a rather startling omission, especially given the sheer size of the non-military “intervention” envisioned by SANE’s leadership. Foreign economic aid should be provided “on a scale far greater than that of existing programs,” the organization’s official 1961-62 policy statement read.45 And this beneficence, they thought, would surely help solve the problem of Third World underdevelopment: “[W]e can help these countries to industrialize even more rapidly if we will recognize the magnitude of the problem and set ourselves to it,” according to another public pronouncement on the

“Peace Race” issued in late 1961. “This is just the kind of problem that the American economy can deal with.”46 Note, again, that SANE’s advocacy was directed towards the promotion of wealth redistribution, especially, and not private-sector trade relations. And the scale of the redistribution ultimately desired is perhaps indicated by the unpublished internal draft memorandum of October 1961, which called for nothing short of a full-scale mobilization of the “unmatched production capabilities” of the American economy for the purposes of providing development aid:

The U.S. alone could underwrite the industrialization of all Asia, Africa, and Latin America totaling 1.7 billion people for between $25 and $50 billion per year. In addition, the vast food reserves and production capability of American agriculture can be put to full use in a direct program to curtail starvation throughout the world.

The annual investment funds for world-wide industrialization amount to about 10 per cent of the U.S. gross national product. An increased output of this size is possible now with the unused labor force and industrial capacity…

It is also significant that the requirements for worldwide industrialization are approximately equal to the present U.S. military budget… [emphasis in original]47

As to how these greatly increased quantities of foreign aid should be delivered to their recipients, SANE literature from the early nineteen-sixties consistently made the point that the United Nations should be utilized as much as possible. Not surprisingly, this position mirrored that of the American Association for the United Nations and, later, the United Nations Association. In fact, AAUN/UNA promotional literature from this time period generally discussed economic development and aid issues only within the context of the ongoing operations of the United Nations and relevant UN-affiliated agencies such as the Food and Agriculture Organization, the International Labor Organization, World Bank, IMF, and UNICEF. And this emphasis on the role of

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government aid and international oversight in the functioning of the world economic system would only continue to grow and build within progressive political circles as the decade of the sixties wore on.

With regard to collective security and disarmament issues, as well, SANE policy statements stressed the centrality of the United Nations, just as did those of the AAUN/UNA. “World disarmament must be accompanied by the establishment of a world security system,” the authors of the 1961-62 “Peace Race” program argued. “This requires a strengthened U.N. to settle political disputes and carry out inspection and control, a World Court whose jurisdiction is accepted without reservation by all nations to settle disputes, and an international police or peace force.” As we have already seen, these were all proposals that various liberal internationalists had been urging, in one form or another, ever since the United Nations was first created—despite the manifest practical difficulties involved. But almost unbelievably, both the American Association for the United Nations and the Commission to Study the Organization of Peace—and now SANE, as well, apparently—were all, at this late date, still pushing the idea of some kind of independent United Nations police force.

SANE’s national board even advocated the idea of the United Nations being given, in due course, “sufficient authority to enact, interpret, and enforce world law to assure world security”—a proposal echoing Eichelberger’s “parliament of mankind.” Indeed, the seriousness with which the idea of a future world government was taken within the ranks of SANE may be gauged by the fact that a merger between that organization and United World Federalists was very nearly executed in the mid-nineteen

sixties. Approval from SANE’s governing board was obtained in November 1964 and all the preparatory work had been completed by that time. The merger was derailed, however, when the United States directly intervened militarily in Vietnam in early 1965, and differences between the two organizations emerged over how to respond to the resulting crisis.49

The influence of world federalism notwithstanding, the “Peace Race” program outlined above, taken as a whole, accorded well with many liberal internationalist ideas and concerns. Under its auspices, SANE advocated the development of an economic system that would bind the world together to promote peace, prosperity, and reform; and it championed political liberty and self-determination, a cooperative regime of global collective security, and a United States that would actively promote those causes in the international arena as well. Insofar as diagnosing the great threat jeopardizing the peace and stability of the world, SANE placed more of an emphasis on the dangers of the arms race and nuclear weapons than the dangers of international communism. And so, in that respect, the group aligned more with the Rooseveltian Wilsonianism that emerged from the Second World War than the Cold War Consensus. But more than that, the means advocated by the organization as a way of achieving its objectives—the United Nations, disarmament, foreign aid—also owed more to the Rooseveltian system than the Consensus.

Nevertheless, SANE had also positioned itself so as to accommodate the Consensus at least to some extent, especially in its acknowledgment—implicit and explicit—of both the importance of prosecuting the Cold War competition and the necessity of minimizing the inherent dangers involved. Balancing those two objectives

49 Katz, 89.
was precisely what the whole “Peace Race” program was ultimately all about. And so the
general outline of SANE’s proposals in the early nineteen sixties reflected, in one way or
another, the extent to which Wilsonianism in all of its various forms had become
ascendant in American political culture writ large.

Beyond the policy proposals it endorsed, the means whereby the National
Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy addressed difficulties revolving around basic issues
of organization and day-to-day operations were also colored by the Consensus. This is
particularly the case with regards to the question of communists within the ranks of
SANE. The matter became a significant public controversy in 1960. And precisely
because of the continuing dominance of the Consensus in the country’s political life at
that point, the question of communist influence was potentially ruinous for the
organization. That, no doubt, accounts for the telling reaction of its leadership under the
circumstances.

In May of 1960, Senator Thomas Dodd, at the time temporarily in charge of the
Senate Internal Security Subcommittee, charged that SANE was a communist-influenced
organization. The factual basis for this charge was thin. Years, later, Lawrence Wittner
would note that “few communists belonged to SANE,” although he also granted that “a
sizeable group of people had joined the organization, particularly in New York, who
reacted favorably to the policies of Communist nations or who thought them worthy of a
special loyalty from ‘progressive’ Americans.”50 In any case, a forceful reaction to the
accusation was forthcoming from Norman Cousins, who actually knew Dodd personally,
oddly enough—the senator was himself a one-time activist affiliated with United World
Federalists. Membership in the Communist Party was “incompatible with association

50 Wittner, 259.
with SANE,” Cousins declared unambiguously. And that sentiment was quickly affirmed by the national board in an official statement that also expressed no small amount of irritation at Dodd’s allegation.

Whatever mixed feelings he may have had later on regarding his role in the affair, Cousins’ personal position at the time was one very much in keeping with concerns he had expressed in the past about the dangers of communist political influence. Nearly two decades earlier, in his wartime defense of the Western democratic political tradition, *The Good Inheritance: The Democratic Chance*, Cousins had taken note of the propensity of the American Communist Party to execute the most astounding and unexpected shifts in policy so as to coincide precisely with the changing positions of the Soviet government. And he had noted, as well, in the pages of that book, how the party could use its influence on other organizations “to be obstructive or disruptive when the interests of the United States and the Soviet Union clash.”51 Indeed, Cousins had privately raised concerns about communist influence within SANE several years before Senator Dodd hurled his politically-motivated allegations, insisting to the organization’s staff in internal correspondence that the group had to “develop a razor-sharp vigilance against the danger of Communist infiltration or control.”52 No doubt, he was acutely aware of how damaging any suggestion of communist influence would be to SANE. And he knew full well that if the young organization was going to survive political criticism from the right and maintain its credibility with the general public, any hint of such political associations had to be squelched.

52 Letter from Norman Cousins to Trevor Thomas, 13 June 1958, SANE MSS, Series B-1, Box 5.
Unfortunately, however, the national committee’s handling of the matter resulted in a real crisis. SANE’s newly announced anticommunist policy may have been entirely necessary if the group was ever going to exert any influence over a political establishment still dominated by the Cold War Consensus. But it did not sit well with influential pacifists like A.J. Muste, who for many years had served as the executive director of the Fellowship of Reconciliation. Interestingly, in the early nineteen-thirties, Muste had enthusiastically embraced Marxism-Leninism himself—that is, at least until 1936, when, in the wake of a personal meeting with Leon Trotsky in Norway, he decided to abandon revolutionary politics altogether and dedicate himself once again to the Christian pacifism of his youth. And so, in 1960, he was hardly an advocate of any kind of “united front” with the American Communist Party—a fact that he was careful to make very clear in a series of articles he wrote criticizing SANE in the pages of *Liberation* magazine. All the same, SANE’s reaction to Senator Dodd’s charges appeared to him, and many other pacifists beside, to be an unprincipled capitulation to McCarthyism. And in the months that followed, large numbers of these alienated pacifists quit SANE in protest, including both Muste and the organization’s chief administrator, Robert Gilmore of the American Friends Service Committee.

Looking back at the affair a dozen years after the fact, Homer Jack would lament that “SANE helped continue what it was supposed to be fighting against: McCarthyism and the Cold War hysteria.” But back in May 1961, almost exactly one year after the onset of the controversy, he was, at least in public, actually very supportive of SANE’s anticommunist policy:

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“If a peace movement is going to be effective, it has to maintain a single standard,” says Jack. “I’ve found out the hard way in my work on race relations and civil liberties that the Communists and their friends try to use these good issues for their own ends.

“In SANE, we’ve been critical of all the atomic powers—not just the U.S. The Communists have two standards: one for the U.S., the other for the USSR. We welcome only people who have a single standard. Therefore, the Communists and their friends are not welcome.”

In fact, Cousins’ anticommunist position remained official policy within the organization for years to come—a testament to both the continuing power of the Cold War Consensus in the early nineteen sixties and the willingness of SANE to accommodate it when it was necessary to do so.

*The Consensus, the Kennedy-Johnson Years, and the Road to Vietnam*

The persistence of the Cold War Consensus never precluded the possibility of dramatic political change sweeping through Washington. Nor did it ever seem to soften the daily rough-and-tumble of partisan struggle between Republicans and Democrats. And so it came to pass that Dwight Eisenhower’s heir apparent, Vice-president Richard M. Nixon, was defeated in the election of 1960, resulting in the ascension of a new Democratic administration under the leadership of John F. Kennedy. Kennedy was the second of nine children fathered by Joseph P. Kennedy, a wealthy Massachusetts businessman who had served as Franklin D. Roosevelt’s ambassador to the United Kingdom from 1938-40. A U.S. Navy veteran, the young JFK dabbled in journalism after the war, but soon turned to politics as a vocation. He served three terms in the U.S. House

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54 Wershba, “A Minster in the ‘Real World’,” in SANE MSS, Series A, Box 1.
before winning election to the Senate from the state of Massachusetts in 1952. And it was from the Senate that he launched his successful campaign for the presidency.

From fairly early on in his political career, John Kennedy established himself as a staunchly anticommunist Cold Warrior who was well at home within the Consensus. In 1949, as Mao Zedong was emerging victorious in the Chinese Civil War, Kennedy took to the floor of the House to decry the influence of communist sympathizers on U.S. foreign policy in Asia. And, as Allen J. Matusow has pointed out, both he and the entire Kennedy family were on very favorable terms with Senator Joseph McCarthy in the early nineteen fifties, with JFK maintaining a “discreet silence” on the subject of McCarthy’s controversial tactics—while his brother Robert served as minority counsel on the infamous Senator’s investigative committee. Nor did Kennedy’s anticommunism abate in his later years. With the enthusiastic support of the national leadership of Americans for Democratic Action, Kennedy ran a presidential campaign in 1960 that stressed the centrality of the Cold War conflict and the need to prosecute that conflict with more obvious vigor than the outgoing Eisenhower administration could apparently muster. And on that score, he was as good as his word. Having hammered Republicans on the campaign trail over the issue of a “missile gap” vis-à-vis the Soviet Union—a gap that both Eisenhower and Kennedy knew to be illusory—JFK initiated a huge new buildup of both nuclear and conventional armaments as president.

But in the wake of Kennedy’s assassination in November of 1963, his vice-president, Lyndon B. Johnson, assumed the presidency. LBJ was actually Kennedy’s senior by almost nine years and a stark contrast in personal image and style—as ungainly

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56 Matusow, 15-16.
and down-to-earth as Kennedy was urbane. But he was just as formidable a politician.
And in his own way, Johnson was as much a product of the Cold War Consensus as
Kennedy had been before him. He had entered into politics as an ardent, Roosevelt-era
New Dealer, beginning a 23-year career on Capitol Hill as a congressman from his native
Texas in 1937 and advancing to the Senate a little over a decade later. By the late
nineteen-fifties, he had risen to the position of Senate Majority Leader—one of the most
powerful ever in the history of that body, in fact. And in that position, he was, again, very
much Senator John F. Kennedy’s senior—that is, until Kennedy walked away with the
Democratic presidential nomination in 1960.

According to John Morton Blum, LBJ consistently defended his foreign policy as
“extensions of the decisions of Kennedy, Eisenhower, Truman, and even sometimes
Roosevelt. Like his advisors, Johnson believed he was following in the steps of his
predecessors, and he did not question the wisdom of their course. Before 1963 relatively
few Americans did.”57 In his years in the Senate, Johnson had generally supported the
foreign polices of both Truman and Eisenhower. And in the 1960 campaign and as vice-
president, he also generally supported Kennedy’s approach to foreign affairs, of course.
In truth, he was prone to favoring a tougher stance vis-à-vis Cuba and had fewer qualms
about dealing with friendly authoritarian regimes. Still, when Kennedy died, LBJ
famously kept on the late president’s entire foreign policy team. The members of that
team, like the Democratic presidents they served in the nineteen-sixties, “were the
inheritors of fifteen years of the cold war,” as Blum points out, “and they shared a

57 John Morton Blum, *The Progressive Presidents: Roosevelt, Wilson, Roosevelt, Johnson* (New York:
confident conviction in the wisdom and beneficence of American intentions and the indispensability of American power and the will to use it.”

As determined as both the Kennedy and Johnson administrations were to carry on the Cold War, though, both made concerted attempts to improve cooperation and set some boundaries on the superpower competition in the early nineteen-sixties. Generally speaking, the stage was set for these efforts by the trends that we have already noted—reworking the landscape of American political culture in this period—the slackening of the “red scare” and the intensification of the nuclear arms race. But they were really driven forward in the wake of a succession of very serious confrontations that shook the world very suddenly—confrontations spurred by: 1) the initiation of construction on the Berlin Wall in August 1961; and 2) the subsequent attempt on the part of the Soviets to station nuclear-capable intermediate-range ballistic missiles in Cuba in late 1962. Both crises were sobering reminders of just how tenuous the peace was between the United States and the Soviet Union through those years. The Cuban Missile Crisis, in particular, is still frequently regarded as the most serious such incident in the entire history of the Cold War. And so efforts were made on a number of different fronts to reduce tensions—efforts that were fully supported by liberal internationalists in the peace movement. Indeed, these efforts demonstrate the extent to which those internationalists could still find common ground with their counterparts in the Washington establishment as the Wilsonian “big tent” endured into the nineteen-sixties.

Disarmament was one such area of common ground. In truth, arms control talks were being publicly promoted with increasing earnestness by liberal internationalists in general through the late nineteen fifties and early sixties. The leadership of the Church

58 Ibid., 183.
Peace Union had indicated that it was favorably disposed towards such efforts, as we have already seen, as was the United Nations Association and the National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy. So, too, was Americans for Democratic Action, if the evidence of its promotion of the pro-disarmament views of Senator Hubert H. Humphrey is to be credited. Humphrey was a founding member of ADA and, in 1959, chairman of a Special Senate Subcommittee on Disarmament. And in a pamphlet published that year by the Union for Democratic Action Educational Fund and distributed by ADA—and bearing the imprimatur of Eleanor Roosevelt’s personal commendation, to boot—he suggested hopefully that a “break in the arms race could reduce the tension that now charges the air between the Western and Soviet blocs.” In fact, it might even “encourage each side to approach outstanding political problems in a more constructive and conciliatory mood,” he thought.

All the same, though, Humphrey abjured unilateral disarmament; and he clearly harbored no illusions about the nation’s enemies:

The United States represents the antithesis of communist totalitarianism and Soviet imperialism. We must be ever mindful that the overriding ambition of the rulers in the Kremlin is to surpass us in all major sectors of human endeavor. The Soviet leaders seek to separate us from other free countries. They want to weaken our alliances and our will and ability to resist aggression. My recent trip to the Soviet Union and my extended visits with Soviet leaders have confirmed that these are Communist objectives.59

“We cannot trust the Soviet Communists,” he had flatly warned several years before. Nevertheless, he was willing to publicly endorse the idea that the country should, at minimum, pursue such arms control “arrangements that do not involve good faith to be

effective and workable, arrangements which are self-enforcing, adequately inspected, and which are mutually advantageous…”

In the immediate wake of the Berlin crisis of 1961, President Kennedy decided to take up the challenge of disarmament. On September 25th of that year, he told the UN General Assembly in a speech that:

Today every inhabitant of this planet must contemplate the day when this planet may no longer be habitable. Every man, woman, and child lives under a nuclear sword of Damocles, hanging by the slenderest of threads, capable of being cut at any moment by accident or miscalculation or by madness. The weapons of war must be abolished before they abolish us.

The very next day, the U.S. Congress passed legislation that would create an independent Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA), “the first such independent agency established by any government,” as an enthusiastically supportive Clark Eichelberger would later note. “Governments have had their departments of national defense, which were concerned with maintaining armaments. No government before had ever established a department to be concerned with disarmament.”

The new ACDA represented, at least in part, the institutionalization of an on-going process of disarmament negotiations that had already been going on in various forms for years. Under the auspices of the UN Disarmament Commission in Geneva, negotiations between the United States, the Soviet Union, and the United Kingdom aimed at reaching an accord on the prohibition of nuclear weapons testing had begun as early as 1958—the year after SANE was established. But it was the 1962 Cuban crisis that really spurred all of the parties involved to reach a final settlement. In August 1963, these same three nuclear powers formally signed the groundbreaking Limited Test Ban Treaty, which

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60 Senator Hubert H. Humphrey, Preface to Staff Study No. 8, June 1957, quoted in “Senator Humphrey Speaks on Disarmament,” pamphlet, n.d., 13-14, ADA MSS.
61 Eichelberger, 66.
forbids the testing of nuclear weapons above ground, under water, or in outer space. Underground nuclear testing, on the other hand, was still permitted under the treaty, largely because no mutually agreeable way could be discovered at the time to verify a ban on the practice. Nevertheless, it was a real milestone—the first agreement ever created to try to curb nuclear weapons development.

Efforts directed towards additional negotiated arms control arrangements continued under Lyndon Johnson’s leadership. And the signature accomplishment of his administration in that field addressed the issue of proliferation. The threatening prospect of nuclear weapons technology spreading across the globe was one that united people all across the political spectrum in the nineteen-fifties and early sixties. And concerns regarding proliferation only tended to become more widespread over time as the still relatively exclusive “nuclear club” slowly but surely began to expand, with Great Britain joining in 1952, followed by France in 1960, and then the People’s Republic of China in 1964. How many more countries around the world might become nuclear weapons states in the future? The controversial nuclear strategist and theoretician Herman Kahn worried that there were “likely to be fifty ‘small’ nations capable of acquiring impressive nuclear weapons systems by the year 2000.”62 As it would turn out, this estimate erred badly on the high side, fortunately. Nevertheless, the fear of it was very real and eminently rational—nuclear weapons were, in fact, becoming more widespread, and, logically, the more widespread they became, the more likely they were to be used at some point. For that very reason, John F. Kennedy had declared shortly before signing the Limited Test Ban Treaty that the existing nuclear weapons states ought to take steps to try and prevent

the spread of such weapons to other countries. And in the wake of Kennedy’s assassination, LBJ took up the cause.

So, too, did the United Nations Association. “While the Limited Test Ban Treaty gave mankind a greater margin of security, the spread of nuclear weapons to additional countries could vastly enlarge the danger of a general nuclear catastrophe,” a UNA-sponsored National Policy Panel warned in 1967. “A non-proliferation treaty,” in contrast, “could, importantly, reduce the danger,” and so the successful negotiation of such a treaty was deemed by the panel to be a matter of some urgency. But beyond even that, the study group also recommended that the powers and capabilities of the UN-affiliated International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) be enhanced in conjunction with such a treaty. And, not at all surprisingly, it suggested that “a new attempt be made to reinforce the general security commitments already contained in the United Nations Charter,” as well.63

For its part, SANE had by that time already compiled a nearly decade-long track record of opposition to nuclear proliferation. With the advent of the “Peace Race” program, the issue did receive less attention from SANE for a period of some years. But it suddenly reappeared in the organization’s Statement of Policy for 1964 as a “primary objective” for near-term arms control efforts.64 And in the years that followed, especially in 1966 and 1967, the proliferation question began receiving more and more extensive treatment in SANE policy documents. An especially healthy dose of skepticism was directed at an abortive American proposal to establish a so-called Multi-Lateral Nuclear Force (MLF) under the auspices of NATO, for example.

64 SANE’s Statement of Policy for 1964, SANE MSS, Series A, Box 2.
As it would happen, the negotiations at Geneva would drag on for more than a
decade before the United States and the Soviet Union finally reached an agreement on the
text of a non-proliferation treaty. The Eisenhower administration had suggested a
measure baring all but the first three nuclear-weapons states from manufacturing or using
such weapons as early as the spring of 1957. But it was only in mid-1968, in the waning
days of the Johnson presidency, that the two superpowers and Great Britain actually
signed a formal agreement and submitted it to the UN General Assembly. That
agreement, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), became international law in
March of 1970—and it remains a cornerstone of institutionalized arms control and
disarmament efforts even today. The treaty enjoins nuclear powers not to help other
nations acquire nuclear weapons; and non-nuclear nations signing the treaty agree to
forsake such weapons, in turn. At the same time, however, the treaty strives to protect the
rights of non-nuclear weapons states to the peaceful access and use of nuclear energy
under safeguard of the IAEA. And it also obligates nuclear weapons states to “pursue
negotiations in good faith” towards the goal of “general and complete disarmament.”

The advent of the NPT was another major milestone in the progress of nuclear
arms control—or so it appeared at the time. Particularly in very recent years, its
effectiveness has increasingly been open to question. But its enactment back in the late
nineteen-sixties certainly encouraged a great many people at the time, Clark Eichelberger
among them, to hope that more ambitious agreements leading toward nuclear

disarmament might become possible as a result. And these, in turn, might even “prompt a revival of the principles of collective security,” Eichelberger wrote optimistically.66

Those grand ambitions were never realized, of course. Instead, American involvement in the Third World would become the defining foreign policy issue of the Kennedy-Johnson years. “The real competition with Communism centers in Asia, Africa, and Latin America,” the leadership of the National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy noted in announcing its 1961 “Peace Race” proposal—a pronouncement that reflected the common wisdom of the time.67 And John F. Kennedy certainly agreed. In a speech he gave in May of that year, he described the Third World himself as being nothing less than “the great battleground for the defense and expansion of freedom today.”

But in the late nineteen-fifties and early sixties, it seemed to many American political leaders that the country was falling behind in the competition. At the 10th annual Roosevelt Day Dinner sponsored by Americans for Democratic Action in New York City on January 31, 1958, Adlai Stevenson told the assembled guests that the United States was “losing the ‘cold war’” as the communists moved towards “the political, economic, and psychological penetration of the backward, underdeveloped areas [of the world]”—areas where, he said, “freedom from external control is new, economies are weak, governments unstable, and the people yearn for material improvement.”68 Senator Hubert Humphrey was similarly concerned. “We can and must do much better than we have been doing” in the Cold War competition in the Third World, he wrote in December of that same year:

66 Eichelberger, 27.
Our policy vis-à-vis the Soviet Union should take a positive direction on several fronts. First, it must vigorously contest the Soviets in the competition for the so-called “uncommitted” world. The world balance of power for the next several decades is now being determined in many different countries stretching in a great arc from Japan to Morocco to South America. The salesmen from the Kremlin, speaking the local languages and peddling wares of great superficial attractiveness, are making a strong bid for influence in this entire area. Too often we assume that the merits of our social system and our ability and desire to aid in building new social systems abroad are self-evident.  

Kennedy, too, was deeply worried about the inroads that the communists were making in the Third World at American expense as he entered into his term of office. 

Nikita Khrushchev only heightened those concerns with his rhetoric. In January 1961 he famously announced that the USSR would lend its support to so-called “wars of national liberation” all around the globe. That pronouncement, in turn, was taken as an indication that the Soviets were going to become even more involved in the Third World themselves in the years to come as a means of challenging US power abroad. By all indications, the Third World battleground was about to heat up—and it did. It was precisely the concern over advancing communist influence that ultimately led the United States into the ongoing war in Vietnam. 

The American war in Vietnam is typically dated from 1965-73. But the history of Southeast Asia first intersected with that of the evolving Wilsonian world order nearly half a century before the first American combat troops arrived. In 1919, some ten thousand delegates representing various non-Western peoples traveled to Paris to plead their cases before the victorious Allied leaders assembled there. One of those delegates, a 29-year old Vietnamese nationalist and political activist inspired by Woodrow Wilson’s ideas on self-determination, even wrote to the American president a note stating that “all subject peoples are filled with hope by the prospect that an era of right and justice is

69 “Senator Humphrey Speaks on Disarmament,” pamphlet, n.d., 4, ADA MSS.
opening to them… in the struggle of civilization against barbarism.”70 The author of that note was Ho Chi Minh. Regrettably, however, Wilson likely never saw that note. Indeed, Ho and the other non-Western delegates were utterly ignored, and the new international order established after the First World War remained one that was very much dominated by primarily European colonial powers.

Under the circumstances, Ho himself became more radicalized politically. While still in Paris, he helped found the French Communist Party in 1920. And in the years that followed, he not only became a polemicist for revolutionary Marxism, he even ventured to Moscow in 1924 to train as a party organizer. Ho subsequently put those skills to work, too, in organizing Vietnamese expatriates in China, Malaya, Siam, and Hong Kong. It was by this means that he laid the foundations for the Communist Party of Indochina, which he established in 1930.

Some fifteen years later, in the aftermath of World War II, Ho Chi Minh and his movement would face another major turning point. Back in 1941, the French colonial administration in Indochina had essentially surrendered the country to the advancing Japanese. In response, Ho organized a communist-led nationalist resistance organization known as the Viet Minh. It was the most effective such organization in that part of the world during the war, in fact. And in the wake of Tokyo’s final surrender in 1945, Ho established a provisional government of his own in the northern Vietnamese city of Hanoi and confidently proclaimed the national independence of Vietnam:

The whole Vietnamese people, animated by a common purpose, are determined to fight to the bitter end against any attempt by the French colonialists to reconquer their country.

We are convinced that the Allied nations which at Tehran and San Francisco have acknowledged the principles of self-determination and equality of nations, will not refuse to acknowledge the independence of Vietnam.\textsuperscript{71}

Ho’s expectations were by no means without foundation. Generally speaking, of course, the aftermath of the Second World War did, in time, usher in a new era of decolonization all across the world as Europe’s old colonial empires wilted away. “The delegates to the San Francisco conference anticipated this awakening,” Clark Eichelberger later wrote with no small degree of pride. “They wrote into the [United Nations] Charter obligations to advance self-determination, self-government and even independence.” Not only that, they set down “procedures for the orderly liquidation of the colonial system” in Chapters XI, XII, and XIII of that document.\textsuperscript{72} These sentiments, as expressed in the Charter, had obviously not escaped Ho Chi Minh’s notice. Moreover, at least through 1943-44, Franklin Roosevelt had made it very clear in Allied diplomatic discussions that he intended to free Indochina from French rule after the war and make it a trust territory under United Nations control until such time as it was deemed fully capable of self-government. But the French opposed the plan, of course, and with friendly British support, Free-French leader Charles De Gaulle successfully prodded FDR into backing away from his commitment to Indochinese trusteeship.\textsuperscript{73} In due course, the Allies together made the fateful decision to hand Vietnam back to the French.

More so than any other major power, France strenuously resisted by any means available the disintegration of their overseas colonial empire. But more importantly for the purposes of the present study, the U.S. government supported the French effort to

\textsuperscript{71} Ho Chi Minh, “The Vietnamese Declaration of Independence,” in Kevin Reilly, \textit{Worlds of History: A Comparative Reader, Volume Two: Since 1400} (Boston: Bedford/ St. Martin’s, 2000), 456.
\textsuperscript{72} Eichelberger, \textit{UN: The First Twenty-Five Years}, 89.
retake Vietnam in the late nineteen-forties. It even largely financed the French war in Indochina from 1950-54—despite misgivings in Washington about the wisdom of renewed French colonialism in Southeast Asia. This was done for a number of different reasons, most of them related to the pursuit of Cold War anti-communism: (1) the need to cultivate French support as America built, first, the postwar United Nations, and then, in the late nineteen-forties, an anti-Soviet coalition in Europe; and (2) communist advances in China and Korea, as well as Ho Chi Minh’s own communist affiliations. Even with American aid, however, French military fortunes in Vietnam steadily declined. And faced with the prospect of having to intervene directly to save the French from military disaster at Dien Bien Phu in May 1954, Dwight Eisenhower considered the available options but finally declined to intercede.

That is not to say that the Eisenhower administration was not concerned about the situation—indeed, it was. “The really important spot is Indochina,” John Foster Dulles had told the president, because “if Indochina goes, and if South Asia goes, it is extremely hard to insulate ourselves against the consequences of that.”74 It was precisely those consequences that Ike himself alluded to when, at a press conference in 1954, he made reference to what would soon become known as the “domino theory”—the idea that if one nation comes under communist control, then other, surrounding nations will likely be similarly subverted. According to Frank Ninkovich, the domino theory was “only the most recent in a long string of metaphorical expressions of the Wilsonian worldview,” essentially a Cold War Consensus-era variation of Wilson’s own preoccupation with “world opinion.” That is, the “domino theory” expressed a concern that a major setback

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74 Executive Sessions of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (Historical Series), 6: 168, quoted in Ninkovich, 191.
in the Cold War, such as the loss of Indochina, would necessarily entail a psychological
defeat that could undermine the foundations of collective security not only in Asia, but all
across the world. It would be a shattering blow to the credibility and prestige of the
United States—and American credibility and prestige were, in this view, among the
essential bonding agents holding the entire Western alliance together.\(^{75}\)

In any case, the French effort to reestablish themselves in power once again in
Southeast Asia was frustrated. And a subsequent political settlement worked out in
Geneva in 1954 “temporarily” partitioned Vietnam along the 17\(^{th}\) parallel for
administrative purposes, leaving Ho and his Viet Minh in control north of that line, while
an American-sponsored non-communist regime under the leadership of Ngo Dinh Diem
was created in the South. Diem was a one-time interior minister under French colonial
rule; he was a devout Catholic, a staunch anti-communist, and a well-known Vietnamese
nationalist. Unfortunately, he was also an authoritarian elitist who suppressed political
dissent while favoring the landowner’s interests at the expense of the peasantry.
Nevertheless, the Eisenhower administration threw its support—and $1 billion in mostly
military aid—to Diem between 1954 and 1961. In the absence of a legitimate liberal-
democratic alternative, the administration came to the conclusion that “the best and
perhaps only chance” to contain communism in Southeast Asia was “to back Diem
unconditionally on the gamble that he can succeed [emphasis in original].”\(^{76}\)

Unfortunately for U.S. policymakers, he did not succeed. While Ho liquidated
thousands of political dissidents, built a large, reasonably well-equipped army, and
organized a stable government in Hanoi totally committed to reunifying the country

\(^{75}\) Ninkovich, 183, 192.
\(^{76}\) Unsigned Memo, 11 May 1955, Dulles Papers, Subject Series, Princeton University, box 9, quoted in
Ninkovich, 193.
under its banner, Diem’s much less-effective regime in the South produced a level of corruption and oppressiveness that soon created a favorable atmosphere for revolution. After 1956, a popular insurgency slowly began to take hold in South Vietnam, and by 1959, the North was fully supporting it. At Hanoi’s direction, these southern revolutionaries founded a communist-dominated National Liberation Front in 1960—an organization that would come to be called the “Viet Cong” (VC), for Vietnam Communist, by its opponents. And in that same year, 1960, they initiated full-scale military operations in the South aimed at toppling Diem.

From the perspective of Washington decision-makers, no less than those in Saigon, the subsequent progress made by the communists toward that goal was truly worrisome. Indeed, during the years John F. Kennedy occupied the White House, the political and military situation in South Vietnam only grew steadily worse. In an attempt to reverse the tide, JFK vastly increased the number of U.S. military advisors in the country, raising the level from 800 men in early 1961 to 16,000 by late 1963. But at the same time, the administration also realized that Diem’s repressive, corrupt, and inept government had itself become a major liability. And so, with U.S. complicity, a coup by the South Vietnamese military deposed him on November 1, 1963. Ngo Dinh Diem, the man that Eisenhower had gambled on to succeed in making his country a bulwark against communism, was murdered after having been taken into custody by his own troops.

In an even more shocking turn of events, Kennedy himself was assassinated scarcely three weeks after Diem met his untimely fate. And in the years that followed, Lyndon B. Johnson took the policy of expanded U.S. support for Saigon that he had inherited from Kennedy, and, in turn, he expanded it much further still, eventually
transforming it into an utterly open-ended commitment, in fact. Even so, the communists continued to make progress against a succession of ineffectual and badly divided post-Diem governments in South Vietnam. And so, finally, in 1965, faced with the choice of either directly intervening in the conflict or losing all of Vietnam, Johnson made the choice that Eisenhower had drawn back from eleven years before—intervention. In their day, Wilson, Roosevelt, and Truman had all embarked on war on behalf of a Wilsonian world order. Now LBJ would follow in their path.

In an address at Johns Hopkins University in April of that year, 1965, Johnson set out his views on the Vietnam conflict and the necessity of American intervention in it: “Tonight Americans and Asians are dying for a world where each people may choose its own path to change… We fight because we must fight if we are to live in a world where every country can shape its own destiny. And only in such a world will our own freedom be finally secure.” The president went on to characterize North Vietnam as an aggressor that had “attacked the independent nation of South Vietnam,” backed by a malevolent Communist China bent on subverting freedom and promoting violence all across Asia. In contrast, Johnson explained the administration’s policy goals in scrupulously benevolent terms: “Our objective is the independence of South Vietnam, and its freedom from attack. We want nothing for ourselves—only that the people of South Vietnam be allowed to guide their own country in their own way.” It would be a South Vietnam “free from outside interference—tied to no alliance—a military base for no other country,” LBJ insisted. In its own way, the speech was a model of Cold War Consensus-era American foreign policy thinking—anticommunism linked to a very traditional Wilsonian regard

for self-determination, and undergirded by a United States actively engaged in defending the world order that these values represented.

*The War and the Breakdown of Consensus*

As late as the mid-nineteen sixties, the liberal Cold War Consensus still dominated the commanding heights of American political culture, uniting “the nation’s political, economic, and intellectual elites” in support of the “global containment” of communism, according to Iwan W. Morgan. But over the course of only a few short years in the latter-half of the decade, that Consensus would rapidly unravel. And that utterly unexpected and unforeseen development was in no small part due to American military involvement in Vietnam.  

78 Godfrey Hodgson has noted that opposition to the war became the “organizing principle” around which all the popular “doubts and disillusionments…and all the deeper discontents” of the nineteen sixties would coalesce. And out of those discontents would spring “one great rebellion” against what would soon popularly come to be referred to simply as the “Establishment.”  

The demise of the Consensus was foreshadowed by the changes in policy positions that the National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy executed during the period of the American war. The organization never took a leadership role in the anti-Vietnam protest movement as it had on the nuclear test ban.  

80 Indeed, Vietnam would be regarded by some anti-nuclear activists as something of a distraction from the issues that

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80 Katz, 94.
really concerned them. But the shooting war, and America’s involvement in it, could not be ignored. And as early as mid-1962, SANE was already voicing strong criticisms of U.S. involvement. “The United States may be preparing the way for another ‘Korea’ in South Vietnam,” a two-page policy paper issued in June of that year began.\footnote{National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy, “Policy Paper on Southeast Asia,” June 27, 1962, 1, SANE MSS, Series A, Box 2.} What followed was a critique of American policy—along with a proposed solution to the situation—that the organization would further elaborate on but not substantially alter or revise in subsequent statements for years to come.

In no uncertain terms, SANE raised the question of how defending South Vietnam promoted the cause of democratic self-determination:

Once again the U.S. is supporting the status quo in Asia in the face of a revolutionary tide. Once again the U.S. is trying to turn back this tide with machine guns and aircraft, without so much as asking the local inhabitants what they want and how they hope to get it. To call this effort the defense of the ‘free world’ is to make a mockery of the values we hope to defend. The Diem regime has no more in common with freedom than that of Ho Chi Minh in North Vietnam, without even the advantage of holding out some promise of a better future for the peasants.\footnote{Ibid.}

The committee, apparently, had not embraced the anticommunism of the Cold War Consensus to the extent that it was willing to abide friendly, authoritarian U.S. client-states. That had been clear enough from the details of the “Peace Race” program that had been adopted by SANE only seven months before, with its insistence on independent economic development and the fostering of liberty and democracy abroad. But the June 1962 Policy Paper on Southeast Asia established rather emphatically that this was indeed the case. It also made it very clear that, in the opinion of SANE’s national board, the Diem regime had to go if the situation in Vietnam were ever going to be retrieved.

Indeed, the South Vietnamese government was so anathema to SANE that a subsequent
statement issued in late September 1963 advocated the abandonment of the country to the communists in the absence of significant internal reforms.\(^{83}\)

Coupled with this attack on American support for the government in Saigon was a broader critique of containment policy as it was being applied to the case of South Vietnam. The 1962 policy paper made it clear that SANE’s leadership was dubious of the prospects for containing communism along the Chinese periphery through the use of “young and feeble nations with poor social and economic conditions”—nations like South Vietnam—as proxies. They were critical of what they saw as a tendency on the part of the United States to rely on military alliances to conduct the Cold War competition in any case, as we have already noted. But beyond that, they questioned the extent to which the situation in South Vietnam should even be considered as an adjunct of the Cold War. In other words, was there another dimension to the conflict that U.S. decision-makers were missing because of an excessively narrow focus on the communist threat? SANE’s answer was essentially yes. On the one hand, they granted that the conflict was “a ‘war of liberation,’ as the communists define it, or a political-military-economic struggle to bring about a Communist regime in a colonial or formerly-colonial country.” Nevertheless, the authorities in Washington were confusing “‘international communism’ and Asian movements for political and economic change,” according to the 1962 paper. And “[o]ur refusal or inability to support the forces of change in Asia,” its authors concluded, only served to “undermine the security of both the Asian and American peoples.”\(^{84}\)

\(^{83}\) National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy, “Policy Statement on South Vietnam,” September 27, 1963, 2, SANE MSS, Series A, Box 2.
\(^{84}\) National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy, “Policy Paper on Southeast Asia,” June 27, 1962, 1-2, SANE MSS, Series A, Box 2.
This criticism certainly had some merit. American political leaders were, in fact, so preoccupied by the global struggle to contain international communism that they had missed the local context—the nationalistic and anti-colonial dimensions of the war unfolding in Southeast Asia. As SANE’s original “Peace Race” policy statement noted, nationalism was a powerful influence in newly-emerging post-colonial Third World nations and symbolic of their status as independent entities. And whatever its other attributes, Ho’s communist movement was a popular one, with Ho himself being undoubtedly the country’s most prominent and successful nationalist leader. “To many Vietnamese,” his movement “reflects their aspirations for a better life,” as a 1963 SANE policy statement noted very simply. Also neglected was “the historic and deep-seated anti-Chinese” character of Vietnamese nationalism—a factor that would militate against Beijing exerting too much influence over even a communist-dominated Vietnam, in the estimation of SANE’s leadership. The failure to take these factors into consideration would prove to be a hindrance to the formulation of a successful American politico-military strategy for the region.

But how might the situation be remedied? The initial goal that SANE advocated was the creation of “a South Vietnam protected from political or military interference from the Communist world or the West.” That is, South Vietnam should not only be neutral, but utterly isolated—quarantined, as it were, from the Cold War competition. In order to achieve that goal, at least over the short term, SANE recommended in 1962 a

solution modeled closely on the diplomacy that had resulted in a cease-fire in an on-going civil war in neighboring Laos just the year before. A conference would be convened that included the governments of both North and South Vietnam, as well as the United States and China. And at this conference, the participants would consider: “(1) creating the framework for increased contacts between North and South Vietnam; and (2) prohibiting the shipment of arms, military supplies, and men across the borders between North and South Vietnam and Laos”—said prohibition to be ensured by on-site inspection and monitoring by an independent International Control Commission. Such an arrangement was, at best, only a short-term fix, and SANE’s policy paper on the subject openly acknowledged the fact. The only true long-term solution, according to the document, was “an over-all political settlement with the rulers of Mainland China.”89 The exact nature of such a comprehensive settlement or what provisions it might entail was left totally unexplained, however.

As it would happen, the aforementioned deal struck in Laos broke down in 1963, inaugurating a decade-long period of warfare in that country. But that did not stop SANE from continuing to hold up the diplomacy that had been undertaken there as a model to be emulated. Through 1964 and beyond, the organization advocated the same basic negotiated settlement outlined above, adding only the suggestion of at least exploring “the possibility of eventual reunification under conditions of neutrality” and “based on a formula permitting the Vietnamese people themselves to work out their own political and economic system following internationally supervised elections for a new government.”

The long-term goal recommended by SANE had now become “a neutralized North and

South Vietnam, either as separate or reunified states.”

This solution, staff members Homer A. Jack and Donald Keys felt, was “the most hopeful alternative to the dilemma facing American policy-makers: withdrawal from the Vietnamese war or its escalation.”

But the war was escalated. And as the war became “Americanized” in 1965, and the scale of the fighting vastly increased, additional, heretofore unsuspected fractures in the Cold War Consensus immediately emerged. Some of these fractures were readily apparent, while others were hidden from public view—at least temporarily. But the speed with which they emerged is astonishing. They began surfacing as early as February of 1965, when the first sustained U.S. air campaign over North Vietnam was set into motion. In response, both the New Republic magazine and Americans for Democratic Action publicly condemned the administration’s policy. And liberal intellectuals affiliated with the ADA—foreign policy specialist Hans Morgenthau, theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, economist John Kenneth Galbraith, and historian Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.—all came to oppose the war while it was still in its comparatively early stages, much to the astonishment of LBJ. For his part, “Johnson was perplexed by the criticism,” Allen Matusow would later write, “since he correctly believed that he was merely applying in Vietnam the doctrine of containment so recently espoused by the liberals themselves. He did not grasp that the doctrine had suddenly fallen from fashion.”

Had it suddenly fallen from fashion? And if so, why? For early antiwar liberals, according to Matusow, the war was “a mistake of policy deriving from obsolete

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91 Memorandum from Homer A. Jack and Donald Keys Re: Revised Policy Statement of Southeast Asia, May 19, 1964, SANE MSS, Series A, Box 2.
92 New Republic (vol. 152, February 20, 1965), 5-6; ADA World (March 1965), 1, both cited in Matusow, 377.
93 Matusow, 377.
assumptions about international Communism.” The era of monolithic world communism had come to an end by the nineteen-sixties with the advent of a rancorous Sino-Soviet split, obviating the need to resist all communist advances everywhere. True, many liberals still considered China a power that needed to be contained. But it did not necessarily follow from that premise that the war in Southeast Asia was at all necessary. That war was fundamentally a civil war, many internationalists argued, and not simply a straight-forward example of territorial aggression by one state against another. By this line of reasoning, it was not actually containment doctrine itself that was suddenly being questioned in 1965 so much as the application of it by the administration in this particular instance. Nevertheless, as Matusow quite rightly suggests, the intervention in Vietnam, once having been effected, was “a mistake not easily remedied.” There was a general consensus among liberals that unilateral American withdrawal was not the answer; instead, they felt that only a negotiated settlement including the Vietcong could achieve U.S. policy goals while simultaneously bringing a lasting peace to the region.94

The policy positions taken by SANE were well within the mainstream of this early liberal opposition to the war, as described by Matusow. The criticism of U.S. containment policy that SANE had put forward in 1962 was rooted in the essential applicability of the doctrine in Southeast Asia. Then, in a new policy paper dated November 15, 1964, we see the first reference to the “tangled situation in South Vietnam” as “basically a civil war in which the North Vietnamese intervened on the side of the Viet Cong guerrilla movement and the U.S. has intervened on the side of the government in Saigon.” And in that same paper we also see an explicit rejection of unilateral withdrawal—an option that, in SANE’s estimation, “would make the entire

94 Matusow, 378-9.
population [of South Vietnam] the hostage of the Viet Cong and provoke strong opposition within the U.S.”  

By August of 1965, the organization had also warmed to the idea of including the Viet cong as a principal party to any negotiated settlement of the war. The year after that, they were even openly pushing for a new provisional government and free elections in South Vietnam in which the VC would be welcome to participate—all in the interests of “self-determination.”

In the meantime, doubts about the war had emerged within the upper ranks of the Democratic Party itself, and these also foreshadowed the looming breakdown of the Consensus. As far back as 1965, a number of Senators, including George McGovern, Robert Kennedy, and Eugene McCarthy, worried privately about Johnson’s war policy, although they initially drew back from publicly opposing it. For many of these men, just as in the case of many liberal intellectuals, opposition to the war was at first largely motivated by pragmatic considerations. Erstwhile supporters of containment, they harbored doubts as to whether the strategic significance of Southeast Asia was actually worth the cost of a major war.  

Behind the scenes, the rift even began appearing inside with White House, as in the case of the gradual disillusionment of secretary of defense Robert McNamara, one of the principle architects of U.S. policy in Vietnam going back to the earliest days of the Kennedy administration. Dissention within the Johnson White House also came from Hubert Humphrey, who had become LBJ’s vice-president in 1965. In that year, he had been one of the few men within the administration to oppose an

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97 National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy, Statement of Policy, 1966, 16, SANE MSS, Series A, Box 2.
98 Matusow, 380.; Morgan, 32.
escalation of the war, even if only privately. Nevertheless, Humphrey still allowed LBJ to pressure him into supporting the war—at least publicly—and the vice-president was soon dutifully throwing himself into that task.99

Even as it produced doubts within the Washington establishment that would soon threaten the dominance of the Cold War Consensus, the process of “Americanizing” the war in Vietnam simultaneously drove the peace movement towards increasing radicalization. The National Committee for a SANE Nuclear Policy was by no means on the leading edge of that trend, to be sure, but it was hardly immune. And as a result, the organization began moving even further away from accommodation with the Consensus. Looking at the evolution of SANE’s policy positions through the middle portion of the decade, there are, for example, clear indications of growing doubts about containment policy beyond its application in the specific circumstances of Southeast Asia. “The time has come for the U.S. to replace its outmoded assumption of the need for a tightly-knit military alliance (with West Germany at its core) to deter a Soviet attack on Western Europe,” the group suddenly announced in its 1965 statement of policy. As an alternative, SANE suggested a policy of “‘Europeanization’”—a supposedly neutral “all-European” security system guaranteed jointly by the United States and the Soviet Union.100 With regard to the ongoing fighting in Vietnam, meanwhile, the rhetoric issued by SANE, even in 1965, began taking on an increasingly hostile tone:

Indeed, it has by now become apparent from official U.S. statements, as well as actions, that rather than being primarily concerned about democracy and freedom in South Vietnam, the U.S. is primarily interested in denying South Vietnam to the communists regardless of self-determination, regardless of the cost to the South Vietnamese, regardless of the repressive measures employed by its client government, and regardless of the cost to the U.S. and to world peace…

99 Matusow, 404-5.; Morgan, 54.
100 SANE’s Statement of Policy for 1965, 4, SANE MSS, Series A, Box 2.
The U.S. experience in Vietnam should underscore the futility and danger of trying to play “world policeman” and should lead the U.S. to renewed concentration on support of the United Nations and development of the instrumentalities of world law. By its intervention in Southeast Asia, without resort to the United Nations, the U.S. has stood in violation of both its United Nations Charter obligations and the spirit of the 1954 Geneva Agreement.\textsuperscript{101}

As time went on, the organization’s antiwar pronouncements only became more forceful. A SANE pronouncement on “Self-determination for South Vietnam” in April 1966, for example, elaborated at length on the subject of how American “violations of self-determination have led to the present situation”:

American policy in Vietnam has been based, from the beginning, on a consistent unwillingness to consider the wishes of the South Vietnamese majority. U.S. policy in Southeast Asia has been principally concerned with “containing China” through a barrier of military alliances. In pursuit of this policy, the U.S. helped subsidize a colonial war waged by France against Ho Chi Minh’s Communist-led nationalists. The present bankruptcy of American policies in Vietnam is directly traceable to U.S. refusal to abide by the verdict of that first Vietnam war in which the French were defeated and Western “presence” brought to an end. The abuses of the U.S.-installed Diem government, which reimposed a brutal and repressive feudal regime and triggered the guerrilla revolt, and its refusal at U.S. behest to go through with the scheduled 1956 unification elections led directly to the resurrection of the war. The regimes which followed Diem in Saigon, while less repressive, had just as little support in the countryside where four-fifths of the people live.

In pursuing its policy goals, the one living reality which constitutes the strongest force against Chinese expansion—Vietnamese nationalism—was thoroughly ignored. And the Geneva Accords of 1954, which attempted to create a neutral and reunified Vietnam, were trampled underfoot.\textsuperscript{102}

In a statement to the World Conference against A and H Bombs on the 21\textsuperscript{st} anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima that same year, SANE executive director Donald Keys was equally blunt: “It is with heavy heart that I turn to speak of my country’s actions in Vietnam, which are illegal by every tenet of international law, contrary to the United

\textsuperscript{102} National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy, “Self-determination for South Vietnam,” April 19, 1966, 1-2, SANE MSS, Series A, Box 2.
Nations Charter, immoral in the outrageous use of power against a small and helpless nation, and utterly mistaken in its objectives…”

Even at this juncture, though, the national organization still could not recommend unilateral withdrawal; that would “hardly be a responsible course of action” for a country that bears “the major responsibility for the current state of affairs,” according to the 1966 statement on Vietnamese self-determination. Instead, SANE officially continued to favor de-escalation of the fighting coupled with a negotiated settlement with the Vietcong—a settlement that would, in their view, lead ultimately to a pluralistic, self-governing Vietnam.104 Among local and state SANE chapters, on the other hand, sentiment in favor of immediately removing U.S. combat forces was already growing. And that sentiment could not be ignored indefinitely by the national headquarters in Washington. It would not be until June of 1969, however, that SANE’s national board belatedly passed a measure asking that unilateral withdrawals begin if a negotiated peace had not been achieved by September of that year.105

While the criticisms of the Vietnam War voiced by the National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy escalated and became more urgent and hostile over time, consistencies in those criticisms can be observed. The anticommunist animus of the Cold War Consensus was clearly not a significant factor in the organization’s thinking on Vietnam policy at any time. Rather than waging the Cold War in Southeast Asia, the primary goal for SANE was always military de-escalation leading to an end to the fighting. In order to affect that result, it advocated for multilateral negotiations, as well as

105 Katz, 112.
a larger role for the United Nations and respect for the norms of international law more generally. But even more important as a foundation for peace in the reckoning of the group’s leadership was the promotion of national, democratic self-determination. This basic principle was a consistent theme in SANE’s policy statements from the very beginning. And it serves as yet another reminder of the lingering influence of at least some elements of Wilsonian ideology within the peace movement—the Wilsonianism of the Roosevelt era especially. Still, within the ranks of SANE the level of radicalization reached a point where both Donald Keys and Norman Cousins felt compelled to quit the organization in 1967 over the issue of associations with what Keys later referred to as the “revolutionary purposes of America’s far left.”

In truth, the nation as a whole only became further and further polarized as the war dragged on. Even within the Johnson administration and the Washington political establishment, support for the war started to fade away at an increasingly rapid pace. After secretary of defense Robert McNamara finally resigned his post in February 1968, his replacement at the Pentagon, the supposedly more “hawkish” Clark Clifford, also soon became skeptical of the effort and began urging a gradual de-escalation of the war, just as McNamara had been doing. And in the wake of the Tet offensive, Johnson also lost the support of the so-called “wise men”—an ad-hoc advisory committee of elder Democratic Party statesmen who had served in the administrations of Franklin Roosevelt, Harry Truman, and John Kennedy. Dean Acheson summed up the new, post-Tet consensus among his colleagues when he opined that the U.S. could now “no longer do the job we set out to do in the time we have left and we must begin to take steps to

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disengage.” In their view, the goal of an independent non-communist South Vietnam had, by March 1968, simply become unattainable.\(^\text{107}\)

The ongoing polarization of the nation’s politics inevitably influenced the looming 1968 presidential elections, of course—and not to the advantage of the incumbent. Even in late 1967, a full scale revolt against LBJ was already in the offing. In September of that year, the national board of Americans for Democratic Action offered to back whichever presidential candidate offered “the best prospect for a settlement of the Vietnam conflict”—a pronouncement that could only be interpreted as a rejection of Johnson’s prospective reelection bid.\(^\text{108}\) The National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy, for its part, had adopted a similar statement the previous June.\(^\text{109}\)

So who might mount a successful challenge to Johnson? In January of 1968, SANE endorsed the antiwar candidacy of Minnesota Senator Eugene McCarthy by a unanimous vote of its board. The move was something of a milestone—it was the very first time the organization had ever issued such a political endorsement. But by 1968, Senator Robert Kennedy had also clearly moved beyond “the confines of the liberal consensus,” as Iwan Morgan put it, having come to the conclusion that the war had to be terminated if progress were to be made against the problems of racism and poverty in America.\(^\text{110}\) And SANE warmly welcomed RFK’s parallel pursuit of the Democratic Party’s presidential nomination as a “complimentary” effort that would help achieve the goal of ending the war and “changing the thrust of American foreign policy.”\(^\text{111}\)

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\(^{108}\) Matusow, 389.

\(^{109}\) Katz, 109.

\(^{110}\) Morgan, 53.

Hubert Humphrey, on the other hand, was deemed “unacceptable” by SANE in April. Among those who opposed the war in Vietnam, that sentiment was quite widespread, in truth. Not that it mattered—the vice-president became the Democratic standard-bearer in 1968 despite such qualms after LBJ decided not to seek re-election. Interestingly enough, however, as a presidential candidate he actually cut loose from his previous public support for Johnson’s war policies and instead ran explicitly against them. The gesture was not enough to forestall a loss at the polls in the end. But Humphrey’s public turn was as clear an indication as any that the collapse of the Cold War Consensus was now virtually complete. SANE’s hostility to Humphrey, meanwhile, was yet another indication that the Consensus was finished as an influence of any kind within the peace movement.

Conclusion

The winner of the presidential election in 1968, Richard M. Nixon, had first come to national prominence in the early 1950s in connection with the infamous Alger Hiss case. But while a staunch anticommunist, he was also a pragmatist. And his influential National Security Advisor, Henry A. Kissinger, was a confirmed foreign policy realist who disdained Wilsonian “idealism.” It is not surprising, therefore, that the elevation of Nixon to the White House, coming as it did on the heels of the rather dramatic demise of the Cold War Consensus, ushered in a new era in American foreign policy—an era in

which Wilsonianism would be marginalized, if only temporarily, in much the same manner as it had been after the election of Warren G. Harding in 1920.

The Cold War Consensus disappeared as a force on the political left in the wake of the Vietnam War, not only among those still engaged in the peace movement, but within the bulk of Democratic Party more generally. Liberal Democrats, Iwan Morgan later noted, “remained in favor of an active US role in world affairs, but rejected militarism and interventionism in favor of a more cooperative internationalism that emphasized peace, arms control, environmental protection and Third World aid.”113 To the extent that any form of Wilsonianism still survived on this end of the American political spectrum, it was a rump form of Franklin D. Roosevelt’s older formulation, albeit one largely shorn of its more free-trade elements in favor of an enlarged emphasis on the role of the regulatory state at home and the United Nations abroad. Nevertheless, it was still an intellectual force—especially now that it had emerged from the very long shadow of the Consensus. The tensions between these two conceptions of Wilsonianism, the Roosevelt formulation and the Cold War Consensus, had simmered through the nineteen fifties and sixties. But now, at least among political liberals, elements of FDR’s vision were now ascendant once again.

And yet the Cold War Consensus was by no means entirely dead. Although clearly no longer the “consensus” as that term is normally defined, adherents amongst many Republicans and conservative Democrats remained faithful to the creed114—“Scoop” Jackson and Ronald Reagan being notable exponents, for example. And so the Consensus would make something of a comeback in the nineteen eighties as a core

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113 Morgan, 85-86.
114 Ibid, 85.
doctrine of America’s political right—setting the stage for a renewed conflict with Roosevelt’s formulation that would last at least until the end of the Cold War itself at the end of the decade.

But why did the Vietnam War result in the demise of the Cold War Consensus? What accounts for its fragility in the first place? Frank Ninkovich’s suggestion that Wilsonian “crisis internationalism” had become a spent force as a result of simply having been rendered routine—that might very well be at least part of the answer. But through the changes that took place within the peace movement in the nineteen fifties and sixties in terms of organization, personnel, and prescribed policy positions, the process that resulted in the demise of the Consensus and the Wilsonian “big tent” can be charted, thus allowing us to deduce another important part of the puzzle.

The present account of the process whereby the Consensus broke down suggests that a very significant factor shaping events was the continuing influence of the Rooseveltian worldview. Broadly speaking, the influence of Wilsonianism within the American peace movement actually waned during this period of time, as organizations like the Woodrow Wilson Foundation and the Church Peace Union moved on to endeavors not related to political activism. But elements of Roosevelt-era thinking certainly survived, and even thrived, as the movement revived in a major way as a result of the nuclear arms race and the gradual abatement of the red scare. This can be seen, for example, in the continuing efforts of the American Association for the United Nations and its successor organization, the United Nations Association, to promote the UN as an instrument of global collective security and economic development. The early programs and policies advocated by the National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy also
reflected such thinking in many different ways, emphasizing as it did national democratic self-determination, economic development by means of the regulatory state, multilateral diplomacy and international agreements on arms control and disarmament, and an end to the increasingly “militarized” Cold War confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union.

The Limited Test-Ban Treaty and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty both point to the fact that, even at the height of the Cold War, Roosevelt’s liberal internationalism was hardly irrelevant to the conduct of American foreign policy. At the same time, however, they also demonstrate that such superpower agreements were by no means inconsistent with the new, post-World War II era Wilsonianism. For all the differences between the Cold War Consensus and the Rooseveltian Wilsonianism that had come before it, there were significant areas of commonality where the advocates of either perspective could find agreement. And so, Wilsonianism survived as a politically-viable “big tent” well into the nineteen sixties.

For better or for worse, that big tent would not survive the trial of the Vietnam War, though. Within a shockingly short period of time—just a few short years—the Consensus disintegrated. And the early evolution of the National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy, especially, foreshadowed the process whereby the final collapse took place in the nineteen sixties.

As a leading organization spearheading the revitalized peace movement, SANE sought to accommodate the Cold War Consensus, at least initially. It adopted an explicitly anticommmunist membership policy and sought to elevate the effectiveness of the United States in the Cold War competition by various means, even as it offered its
criticisms of how the competition was being conducted. But even before the war in Vietnam was “Americanized” in 1965, the organization began moving further away from the Consensus as a result of the direction being taken by U.S. policy in Southeast Asia. SANE always opposed the war. But especially as the fighting dragged on late into the decade, its opposition became increasingly strident—even radicalized. The criticism of the conflict as a violation of Vietnamese self-determination escalated. Questions about the utility and validity of viewing the war through the lens of the Cold War were raised with insistence. And in the end, the policy of containment itself was brought into question. Before Lyndon Johnson had even left the White House, SANE had already completely abandoned the Consensus. And that, in and of itself, was a good indication that the Consensus had indeed lost its purchase.

Notes on Peace Historiography

From a historiographical viewpoint, we encounter one last time in this chapter the surprising lack of engagement that exists between the bodies of work produced by peace scholars, on the one hand, and historians of U.S. foreign policy, on the other. In the previous chapter, we noted how the divide between these two distinct sets of literature, already very substantial where treatments of pre-1945 history are concerned, becomes even wider once the narrative moves on to the early, formative years of the Cold War. And for the span of time that is of interest here, namely the late nineteen-fifties and sixties, the gap remains quite sizeable—more than sizeable enough for the various limitations and drawbacks in the relevant literature identified in previous chapters to retain their salience.
On a number of different occasions thus far, the present author has suggested that writing peace history from a vantage point outside the interpretive frameworks that dominate the discipline, i.e., Progressive-Revisionism and antiwar pacifism, focusing instead on liberal internationalists while also drawing on insights from the scholarship of foreign policy specialists, would yield dramatically different perspectives on the subject matter being examined. And it is precisely that dynamic which has resulted in the storyline woven in the current chapter diverging quite radically from that which peace historians would typically employ. The narrative related above is one of inexorable decline; that more commonly found in peace scholarship for the period under review is one of rebirth and renaissance—albeit with a major detour along the way.

The standard narrative generally proceeds as follows: propelled by a twin assault on America’s “military implements for mass destruction” and “its elaborate system of white supremacy,” the peace movement “underwent a revival” beginning in the late nineteen fifties, as Lawrence Wittner remarks in Rebels Against War.115 And so, steadily building on its successes in the years that followed, the movement had, by the early sixties, reestablished itself as “a significant social movement” and “a powerful force in American life,” to quote Wittner’s assessment.116 Charles DeBenedetti agreed: “Driven by a combination of feminists, students, and intellectuals, the resurgent peace reform made some promising strides until 1965,” he writes in the pages of The Peace Reform in American History. But at that point “expanding U.S. involvement in the Indochinese War forced peace seekers into antiwar activism and diverted them from their first concerns

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116 Ibid., 257, 276.
with the arms race and institutionalized injustice.‖\textsuperscript{117} Even so, the Vietnam War protest movement was “the most effective anti-war movement in U.S. history,” as Charles F Howlett and Robbie Lieberman are very pleased to note in \textit{A History of the American Peace Movement from Colonial Times to the Present}. In fact, Howlett and Lieberman argue that the “anti-war movement became institutionalized as a result of Vietnam,” with foundations being put down during that era that have endured until the present day. \textsuperscript{118}

DeBenedetti, in his treatment of the anti-Vietnam War movement, discusses a larger critique of the conflict that merits pointing out here because it serves to highlight the extent to which the standard narrative favors the Progressive-Revisionist perspective. The antiwar protesters “did not in the end stop the bloodletting” in Southeast Asia:

But they moderated its reach. And they convincingly identified the war as the logical—and not accidental—result of Washington’s commitment to global stability through military deterrence. They exposed the notion that peace could be achieved through war as the ultimate illusion of Cold War America.\textsuperscript{119}

And because this narrative favors the Progressive-Revisionist and antiwar pacifist interpretative frameworks, peace historians once again tend to marginalize liberal internationalists. Howlett and Lieberman break down the movement during this era into two broad branches: (1) relatively conservative “nuclear pacifists” who focused on issues related to nuclear war; and (2) more impatient “radical pacifists” who “were opposed to all wars and pushed for major societal reform.”\textsuperscript{120} This is the same basic structure that Wittner had presented in his earlier work.\textsuperscript{121} DeBenedetti, by way of contrast, wrote of the antiwar movement having assumed by the mid-sixties “a lasting triangularity”

\textsuperscript{117} DeBenedetti, xv.
\textsuperscript{119} DeBenedetti, xvi.
\textsuperscript{120} Howlett and Lieberman, 346.
\textsuperscript{121} Wittner, 257.
deriving from “the anti-imperialist cadres of the sectarian (Old and New) left, the radical pacifist proponents of revolutionary nonviolence, and the string of peace liberals that stretched from senatorial critics to Quaker activists.”\textsuperscript{122} Of course, beyond these general categories, it should be pointed out that all acknowledge the remarkable diversity of interests that coalesced around the popular campaign against the Vietnam War. Still, the fact remains that all of the relevant historical accounts produced by these peace scholars highlight first and foremost the efforts of anti-nuclear activists, anti-Vietnam War protesters, and, to a remarkable extent, various social reformers pursuing issues such as civil rights and women’s liberation. “A close look at American racism, poverty, and repression,” Wittner wrote, helped sixties-era peace activists “rediscover the insight of an earlier generation of radicals and reformers: that the real enemy is at home.”\textsuperscript{123} Liberal internationalism, on the other hand, remains only a very peripheral concern at best in this standard peace history narrative—a deficiency remedied by writing history from outside the discipline’s dominant interpretive frameworks and drawing on the scholarship of foreign policy specialists.

\textsuperscript{122} DeBenedetti, 171-2.  
\textsuperscript{123} Wittner, 278-9.
Conclusion

Diverging Wilsonianisms

The overall objective of this study is to add to our understanding of American foreign policy in the twentieth century through an examination of the domestic political and ideological context in which it was formulated. Two central questions, in particular, serve as jumping off points for the present analysis: what did Wilsonianism mean? And how was the influence of Wilsonian ideas perpetuated over the many decades that have elapsed since Wilson’s own day? In answer to those questions, the present author argued: (1) Wilsonianism can be distilled down to a basic set of interrelated precepts: the imminent threat to international order; democratic self-determination, collective security, an integrated world economy, and American exceptionalism; (2) that these interrelated precepts are ambiguous and contingent—they have been defined in different ways by different people over the course of decades, often in response to changing circumstances; and (3) the end result of that inherent ambiguity and contingency has been a series of different, sometimes competing interpretations of Wilsonian internationalism—diverging Wilsonianisms, as they have been termed here.

That the interrelated precepts that together comprise Wilsonianism are ambiguous and contingent—that they have been defined in different ways by different people over time in response to changing circumstances—is a point that is not well developed in the literature. And for that very reason, historians have not previously explored in any thorough and systematic way the distinct schools of thought into which Wilsonian
internationalism may be subdivided. This line of analysis, therefore, represents a unique contribution to the scholarship on the subject.

No less than three related but distinct schools of thought have developed under the Wilsonian “big tent”: Wilson’s original formulation; Rooseveltian Wilsonianism; and the Cold War Consensus. Liberal internationalism originated as a response to the First World War. In conjunction with internationalists from the peace movement, Woodrow Wilson formulated and promoted the first iteration of Wilsonianism—and, in a number of ways, planted the seeds of future conflict over its interpretation. But the legacy he left behind endured in no small part due to liberal internationalists in the peace movement and the efforts they directed towards realizing the grand aspirations they had shared with Wilson—both during his presidency and in the years that immediately followed. Wilson’s own thinking focused on world organization, the rule of law, the free-flow of trade goods, and national democratic self-determination—at least for Europeans. But even during that early time frame, alternative interpretations that will become more prominent later were already being set down, either by word of by deed—the necessity of armed force as an adjunct of collective security and the progressive regulatory state as an adjunct of an integrated world economy, most significantly.

Wilson’s vision was reinvented by FDR and liberal internationalists during the World War II-era in a revised but still decidedly progressive form. These revisions, in turn, were rooted in a number of alternative interpretations of several essential Wilsonian precepts—alternative interpretations that date back as far as Wilson’s time, and which were subsequently embraced by liberal internationalists as a result of their experience of two great global wars and the international crises that had gripped the world in the
interim. As to the imminent danger hanging over the world, more emphasis was placed on the long-term danger of war itself as a threat; and efforts to create an open world economy shifted to give greater weight to international organization and regulation. In these respects, Rooseveltian Wilsonianism was even more progressive than Wilson’s original iteration. In other respects, however, the new formulation was more ambiguous. Collective security continued to emphasize global organization and the rule of law, as it did in Wilson’s day. But a much stronger element of peace enforcement was introduced all the same. Meanwhile, the pursuit of national democratic self-determination continued, as well, although the importance of democracy was somewhat deemphasized in the mix by the administration—even as liberal internationalists outside the government were having increasing doubts about nationalism.

With the advent of the Cold War, Roosevelt’s Wilsonian world order was overtaken by events. Under those circumstances, a new liberal Cold War Consensus rooted in Wilsonian ideals was quickly forged. In its pursuit of an open world economy, the Consensus continued to give a heavy emphasis to international institutions alongside expanding trade; in this, at least, there is continuity with Rooseveltian Wilsonianism. American exceptionalism also continued to be a unifying force, although the basis for exceptionalism was shifting away from a sense of historical and religious destiny and more towards a sense of duty, or obligation, owing to America’s preeminent position of power in the world. Beyond that, however, the consensus was a good deal more conservative in many respects. With regard to imminent dangers to the international system, the postwar Consensus returned to Wilson’s focus on the threat posed by illiberal political systems—especially those of the communist variety. Anticommunism was a
hallmark of the consensus, defining not only the threat to world order, but also how national democratic self-determination, collective security, and even free trade would be promoted, as well. Collective security was transformed in an especially dramatic fashion, with the previous emphasis on world organization and the rule of law supplanted—especially in actual practice—by a system of regional and bilateral military alliances.

Devotees of these two reinterpretations clashed with one another, although the Cold War Consensus achieved dominance in the years after 1945. Wilsonian internationalists were, for the most part, generally supportive—or, at least, accommodating—of the foreign policy Consensus in its early years. Some were noticeably reluctant to part with aspects of the more progressive Wilsonian formulations of the Roosevelt era, however, especially in the field of collective security. Indeed, the unsuspected fragility of the Consensus in the nineteen sixties was, at least in part, a result of the continued influence of the Rooseveltian worldview. Thus did the Cold War Consensus very rapidly unravel under the circumstances of the at least until that dominance was shattered by the Vietnam War.

In exploring the ultimate meaning of Wilsonianism and how the influence of Wilsonian ideas was perpetuated, this dissertation focuses on liberal internationalists from the American peace movement, the organizations they created, and the political leaders they sought to influence. It has, therefore, been a social history of ideas that is concerned not only with Wilsonian worldviews, but also the interrelationships of the elites who championed them. It is through a study of these internationalists, in fact, that we come to a better understanding of Wilsonian precepts, their evolution over time, and the means whereby their influence was sustained.
The history of twentieth century liberal internationalist peace activism in the United States is one that has been treated with relative neglect, and even periodic hostility, by dedicated peace historians. U.S. foreign policy historians, meanwhile, have generally not made use of peace history in their treatments of the subject of Wilsonianism—or any other subject, for that matter. By elevating the liberal internationalist wing of the modern peace movement as a worthy subject in its own right and highlighting the role it played in the emergence of diverging Wilsonian ideologies, the present study expands our understanding of how the movement shaped the conduct of American international relations in the last century. This, again, represents a unique contribution to the subject in terms of both history and historiography.

By bringing together and thereby contributing to the two sets of literature—that written by historians of U.S. foreign policy, on the one hand, and historians of the peace movement, on the other—the dissertation helps to remedy a number of fundamental shortcomings inherent to both. Most significantly, works of peace history, as epitomized by the scholarship of Charles DeBenedetti, Lawrence Wittner, and Charles F. Howlett, suffer from a lack of diversity in applied interpretive frameworks. The pacifist anti-war perspective is overwhelmingly dominant in these works, as is the progressive-revisionist outlook more broadly. The progressive school of thought, in particular, views American society as fundamentally immoral and in need of radical change; it sees America itself as an imperialistic and expansionistic nation. And it views war, poverty, and racism as resulting directly from the workings of the capitalist system that they associate with contemporary America. Pacifism, meanwhile, contributes to peace history scholarship the parochial view that non-pacifists are not true peace seekers. The dominance of these
perspectives is related to the desire of peace historians to create a “usable past” to promote political agendas in the here and now—a pursuit that threatens the status of the discipline as an unbiased source of knowledge. Indeed, such a lack of diversity can result in insularity, parochialism, and “groupthink,” issues that place limitations on the quality of analysis produced by scholars. It also accounts for why liberal internationalists have been comparatively neglected in peace history literature despite the marked influence they have had in shaping twentieth century historical events.

Bringing in new perspectives from foreign policy history is a means towards the end of addressing this weakness. The result is a more balanced account of twentieth century U.S. foreign relations history that illuminates the successes, as well as the failures, of both American policy and those who have sought to reform it. The resulting account is one that properly recognizes and appreciates the role that liberal internationalists from the peace movement played in shaping the history of the era—while also often showing the relationships between various elements of the peace movement in a new light. Indeed, writing peace history from a vantage point outside the interpretive frameworks that dominate the discipline, focusing instead on liberal internationalists while also drawing on insights from the scholarship of foreign policy specialists, yields dramatically different perspectives on the subject. Such an approach, if embraced by scholars more generally, might even encourage new interest in the field of peace history on the part of those who have remained outside it.

The analysis conducted in the previous chapters of this study illustrates some of the possibilities opened by this new line of approach. In Chapter One, for example, we saw that Charles DeBenedetti treated conservatives, liberal internationalists, and church
groups as discreet entities that were frequently in conflict with one another. By shifting
the emphasis from progressive pacifism to Wilsonian liberal internationalism, on the
other hand, the present study shows the relationships between these groups in a new
light—one in which the cooperative efforts that they engaged in become much more
important in shaping political events.

Chapters Two, Three, and Four, meanwhile, highlight how the lack of diversity in
the field of peace history strongly influences the narratives that peace scholars craft for
the periods of time covered in those chapters—the period leading up to and during World
War II; the immediate postwar era; and the time frame spanning the late nineteen fifties
and sixties. In each case, the dominant narratives leave little to no room for liberal
internationalists; indeed, those narratives retain their coherence only by marginalizing or
outright excluding such internationalists. The present study, in contrast, in approaching
peace history from outside the perspectives that presently dominate it and drawing on
insights from the scholarship of foreign policy specialists, affords us some very different
perspectives on the same material.

As for the foreign policy literature pertaining to Wilsonianism—the other relevant
body of scholarship—it is sizeable, diverse, and very complex, so much so that it defies
easy break down and categorization. There are four basic interpretive frameworks to be
found in this literature, including the progressive-revisionism of historians like William
Appleman Williams, Lloyd C. Gardner, and Emily Rosenberg—the perspective that
overwhelmingly dominates the field of peace history. But the other three perspectives
contending in the field have yielded important insights, as well, and are equally worthy of
consideration. The realism epitomized by George F. Kennan, which focuses on traditional
nation-state diplomacy, highlights rational self-interest and stresses grand strategy and balance of power politics. The more recent neo-realism/post-revisionism of Lloyd Ambrosius, Amos Perlmutter, and Tony Smith offers a new realist perspective that also incorporates and takes into account various issues of concern to revisionists. And the cultural approach of scholars as different as Michael Hunt and Frank Ninkovich generally explores the connections between domestic and transnational cultural influences and the foreign policies of national governments. These other perspectives, which have so enlivened international relations scholarship over the course of the last half-century, may do the same for peace history, too, in the ways suggested above.

But there are weaknesses in the foreign policy literature insofar as its treatment of Wilsonianism is concerned: (1) a lack of contingency; and (2) a lack of systematic treatment, i.e., emphasizing only particular elements of the Wilsonian creed instead of dealing with the whole as an integrated system. With regard to the former, the point is by no means entirely lost on foreign policy historians. It is often acknowledged by them, in fact—at least in principle. In the details of their analysis, however, this awareness does not always translate into definite form. On the latter point, meanwhile, the present study has highlighted a number of notable examples. Tony Smith, for one, very heavily stresses the Wilsonian promotion of global democracy. And Frank Ninkovich, too, focuses on what he takes to be certain singular aspects of Wilsonian thought; as we have seen, his Wilsonianism is a “crisis internationalism” that promotes the ultimate triumph of world opinion as a solution to the world’s problems. Unfortunately, these shortcomings periodically lead foreign policy historians astray, as when, for example, Ninkovich bizarrely concludes that: (1) Franklin Roosevelt had presided over what became the
demise of Wilsonianism by the end of the Second World War; and (2) U.S. foreign policy in the post-World War II era was characterized primarily by unilateralism and an abandonment of collective security. Amos Perlmutter’s historical account of Wilsonianism in the early years of the Cold War, like that offered by Ninkovich, also periodically suffers from a certain rigidity in the way various Wilsonian ideals are framed. He argues, for instance, that the ideal of collective security was “defeated” in the wake of the Second World War.

The problem with these analyses is that they define Wilsonianism too narrowly on a number of different levels, both in terms of the ideals that comprise the creed and how those principles are themselves understood. Treating Wilsonianism instead as a tightly-woven system of related ideas—and acknowledging the contingency and ambiguity of those ideas—is key to grounding our understanding of Wilsonian internationalism upon a solid foundation. It is imperative, as well, in ultimately explaining both the adaptability of Wilsonianism and its lasting influence. And bringing in the peace movement as a worthy subject of study for foreign policy historians is a means towards that end insofar as it allows us to view the evolution of diverging Wilsonian traditions as they have grown and changed over time.
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