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World War I and peace : the development and rise of the peace process in early twentieth century United States

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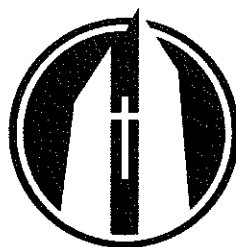
GEORGE FOX UNIVERSITY

WORLD WAR I AND PEACE:
THE DEVELOPMENT AND RISE OF THE PEACE PROCESS IN EARLY TWENTIETH
CENTURY UNITED STATES

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
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We, the undersigned, certify that we have read this thesis and approve it as adequate in scope and quality for the degree of Master of Arts in Theological Studies.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the rise and formation of organized peace movements directly after the ending of the First World War. Focusing on the year 1919, I have simplified the idea of a peace movement to a group or movement that desired a time without war or warlike activities. This basic model has allowed me to concentrate on three distinct processes for attaining peace: political, pacifist, and isolationist. By looking at these three processes individually, I highlight the impact that these processes and society had on each other, while commenting on the interconnected nature of the processes to one another. The year studied in this thesis also includes the expansion of voting rights to women, the rise of socialism internationally, and the idea of national sovereignty, all of which contribute in separate, yet connected, ways with the peace processes. By looking at the peace processes and these social changes together, I provide an account of the beginning of the peace movement at large with processes that are unified under the concept of peace. I do so using both primary sources from those who worked for peace first hand, as well as the secondary sources providing a commentary of events. This thesis does not follow the perceived ideas of the traditional peace movement. I challenge the notion that, at this time, there was a formal movement towards peace. Instead, by looking at the individual processes, I submit that the resulting actions done by those in 1919, who are working within a specific process, were instrumental in laying the foundations for future peace discussions.

INTRODUCTION

As we look back over the short history of the United States of America, one begins to see that this country was formed through many bloody conflicts. Through this lens, one also begins to see that war and conflict almost become natural while peace is something that one needs to strive for. This is clearly seen in the beginning of the 20th century, a time when this country was drawn into several international conflicts that affected its well being. Conflict, violence, inequality, and instability were abundant during this time, while concepts like peace and nonviolence were slowly entering into the vocabulary of those in the United States.

There were several organizations that were created to combat this growing escalation of war and conflict. These groups were unified only in one ideal: peace. How one defines and obtains peace differed within the various groups. Many thought that peace was simply defined as a lack of conflict, while others defined peace as an ideal, which if practiced would lead to a utopian state. As one can see, how a person or a society defines and obtains peace is a topic of great debate. This debate over peace is seen mostly in times of conflict. This would mean that many would popularly define peace as something that is in opposition to conflict, which seems to be only one facet of what is largely defined as peace. However, within these groups struggling for a type of peace, there seemed to be two ideals that dominated their definitions and actions: pacifism and isolationism.

These ideals led to various groups who stood against what was becoming an established policy of violence and hate. The trend that began to take shape was that large groups of people would start to come together seeking fellowship with one another. These groups, as different as

they seemed, were all drawn together to try and persuade the United States at large to reject war and warlike policies. These groups all loosely sought a form of peace. As such, they would be labeled as peace groups. These peace groups began to move away from old world policies and towards achievable peace. This development would eventually blossom into a movement, one that would drastically change and adapt to the growing challenges of obtaining peace. This thesis is aimed at discussing this formation and development of an established peace movement in the shadow of war on a worldwide stage. With that said, I will focus on these peace movements that can be categorized by three processes: pacifist, isolationist and political. This thesis will look at these three processes of the larger peace movement and examine them in light of international conflict that, at the time, had never been seen before.

A Word on Assumptions

First, there are a few assumptions and ideas that will need to be shared up front due to the immediacy of the impact each brings to the discussion. The definition of peace is broad and complicated. For this thesis, I will stick to the base assumption that peace is a time without conflict. I am not trying to define the moral nature of peace. For this thesis I am trying to see how particular groups furthered the goals of finding a peaceful nation. For those who were working within these structures, they were not interested in discussing the tenets of peace, but rather finding ways actively to change the way it was sought. In many ways this included reminding people that peace was an option.

Also, in limiting the scope of peace, I thereby broaden the scope of what is constituted as a peace movement. In doing so, I will inevitably exclude other ideas of peace and their formation into a peace movement. The reasoning behind the three that I picked is simple. These three movements have far reaching ramifications to later developments of peace in the United States.

It is not to say that other peace movements, such as civil disobedience, had a greater or lesser impact. However, for the scope of this thesis, and the space allowed, I have to narrow down the options of what to discuss in these three processes.

Moreover, if I use the simplified idea of peace, which is a time without conflict, then this can grow to mean many different ideas. This idea, however, does not go into great depth as to how far, if at all, a leader, society, or movement should go to find peace. As such, the three processes I have chosen are simply connected by their ideas of achieving peace. As it will be discussed at length throughout this thesis, this idea of how to achieve peace will come into direct opposition between the three processes. This tension between the processes is what elevated the formation of actual groups, and causing a movement of people in the United States to have a general outcry in favor of peace solutions, rather than war.

From this, it is important to note that for this thesis, I carry a base assumption that war and conflict are apart of human nature, while peace is something that one must work for. This assumption is not intended to sound groundbreaking or original. As stated before, with the narrow scope of this thesis, I cannot use journals or books to prove this point, so I must rely on what I perceive to be a brief survey of history narrates. To state plainly: war and conflict are more natural human responses to problems facing the United States during this era, while peace was something that many wanted, but no one knew how to obtain. To further the point of assumptions and perceptions, Howard Zinn explains how they are necessary to the historian and how they are properly used.

In his book, *The Politics of History*, Howard Zinn reminds the reader that history carries meaning two ways.¹ The first concept of meaning is found out of the reader's control, and ultimately humanity's as well. Zinn reminds the reader that the actual past has affected this present situation that humanity currently lives in. There was a World War that brought about a significant amount of death, and that fact we cannot change. The second way one can define history, according to Zinn, is that humanity's reiteration of the past affects our current situation. Historians can choose to define World War I as a glorious battle that united a nation while others can choose to see World War I as a senseless waste of life and money. "There is no inherently true story to World War I if some absolute, objective past is sought."² To this end, the only question raised is which version is more true to which purpose.

With the idea of perception from Zinn fresh in my mind, much of my reading and research shows that war and conflict is much easier an option than peace and resolution. War can show the strength of a nation and prove to people that their nation should be feared the most. With morally questionable tactics and low value on the human life, those seeking power will do anything to obtain it. However, those seeking peace are limited by their high moral stance and the willingness to lose quite a bit to gain very little.

As I stated earlier, the purpose of these assumptions are not to point to a new, groundbreaking idea. The reason I am sharing these assumptions is due to their impact on how I report these groups and the authors I choose to feature. This thesis is focused on the survey of peace groups and formation of a peace movement that would grow into a powerful force later in the twentieth century.

¹ Howard Zinn, *The Politics of History*, 2nd ed. (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1990).

² Zinn, *Politics of History*, 275.

I fully understand that the reader might not agree with these assumptions. These assumptions reflect the result of the time and energy spent on researching this topic. These assumptions are mine, and while they may be shared with other scholars, they do not represent the absolute truth.

Thesis Statement

For this thesis, I plan on examining and discussing the foundation of the peace movement by looking at three aspects of peace-seeking in the shadow of World War I. My primary goal for this thesis is looking at activities and movements in the year 1919. Although to gain better perspective I will, at times, have to go outside this pivotal year, the main focus is to present a snapshot of certain groups or ideas in this year. To do this, I will focus my discussion on three different peace processes. The first chapter is focused on the political idea of peace, as emphasized by Woodrow Wilson and his attempts to create world peace through diplomatic deliberation and treaties. While this will serve as a discussion into the political aspects of obtaining peace, this chapter will also serve as a brief introduction of the climate of the world at this time. As such, what is written in this chapter will continue to be recounted for the remainder of the thesis. 1919 was an influential year for the formation of the peace movements, and the peace discussions that occurred at the Paris Peace Conference were recounted and debated within the United States.

The second chapter is focused on the pacifist process for peace. In this chapter, I will define pacifism and how I will use it in the thesis. I will do this because pacifism is a term that has meant many things to many people, thus giving it a broad meaning. I will also stick with the meaning I perceive to best typify the type of pacifism of this time. After defining pacifism, I will describe the process of pacifism in 1919. Continuing on, I will go on into the third chapter,

focusing on the isolationist process of peace. It seems that isolationism and pacifism are on separate ends of the peace spectrum. In this third chapter, I will detail why this is so, and also define isolationism. I will continue this third chapter with the process of pacifism in 1919 and comment on the popularity of this idea, specifically in contrast with pacifism.

Although the first chapter is seemingly set aside, it is important to note the difference between the political process for peace, and the other two processes, pacifism and isolationism. While all three are all unique in there own right, the political process is vastly different then the others, due to being centered on one person's thoughts, compared to mass movements of people who tried to have their voices be heard. This unique discrepancy between the processes is only one, although it is a major enough difference that it should be noted. While all three have the same focus on achieving peace, they are so radically different in their ideas and praxis that the tension that they create will generate discussion for many years.

CHAPTER 1: THE POLITICAL PROCESS OF PEACE

The year is 1919 and the Great War has ended. The President of the United States of America, Woodrow Wilson, is trying to push his ideas of peace in Europe. Throughout the world, however, the aftermath of war was a struggle for national unity and social change.³ Wilson was already on a boat, the USS George Washington, headed to Paris to participate in a peace conference. With him was a document that he thought could change how the world viewed peace. Prior to his departure, Wilson had written out and drafted the precursor to the League of Nations.⁴ Wilson had high hopes that this document and the ideas contained within would revolutionize the discussion of peace. However, there were many people in the United States that did not approve of the President handling the peace talks himself. These issues will play an integral part of trying to forge peace in the political realm. Trying to establish peace within the political process was difficult and time consuming. Even if people generally accepted your ideas and policies, it took more maneuvering to get them to vote for your ideas. These ideas will all be presented at length within this chapter.

To this point, many thought that the President would in fact harm the peace talks and jeopardize the safety of the United States. The back and forth discussions of this idea for peace

³ Martin Gilbert, *A History of the Twentieth Century* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1997), 535.

⁴ David Hunter Miller, "The Making of the League of Nations" in *What Really Happened at Paris: The Story of the Peace Conference, 1918-1919*, ed. Edward Mandell House and Charles Seymour (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1921), 402. This article further alludes to several different variations of drafts. Miller himself alludes to at least five drafts, with himself as apart of one. He also alludes to drafts written or formed by Colonel House, and at least two British versions.

would ultimately lead to the United States failing to be an active participant in world peace. Through this Chapter, I will examine the politics of peace by looking at the Wilsonian idea of peace and how the United States eventually rejected it. To do this, I will examine the events of the Presidents trip to the Paris Peace Conference and the reaction of the United States to the conference. I will wrap up this chapter by further explaining the political side of peace.

Wilson's Idealism

The United States faced a choice of whether or not to partake in the Great War. The political climate of the war itself was beginning to change and the end was in sight before the United States decided to enter the war.⁵ The purpose for entering the war was clear to Wilson, although actually entering the war was a problem for him. Wilson was considered to be an isolationist, which will be discussed more in depth in chapter three. Indeed, Wilson had a tangible vision for obtaining true world peace, which he initially called his Fourteen Points. In short, the Fourteen Points could be divided into two sections. The first was how exactly this new world peace should be achieved. With articles that center on ideas such as open covenants and weapon reduction, this was an open call for a democratic peace and laid out the foundations for how to achieve that peace. The second section was centered on specific nations and people that would be affected by this peace. Specifically, Wilson had focused on eight nations that were directly affected by the war. Wilson thought that these words and ideas would usher in a new world peace.

⁵ While this can be a debated idea, Roger Chickering in his book *Imperial Germany and the Great War, 1914-1918* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1998), among other authors, show evidence that this fact is hard to deny. See specifically Chapter 6 in his book.

Wilson, sensing that this was the time for him to introduce his ideas for peace, asked the Senate to declare war. Using the most powerful weapon in his arsenal, Wilson gave a speech that stirred the emotions of the Senate and the people of the United States. Wilson was granted his entry into war, and by extension, was granted the opportunity to make world peace.

However, Wilson's ideas of war ruffled a few feathers. Wilson believed in peace without victory.⁶ Victory would simply continue the cycle of war by giving one side power. Wilson's thought was leaning toward a democratic peace, which was something Wilson believed that nations could maintain. To his credit, Wilson went into war with this idea always at the forefront of his discussions. However, the main allies of the United States, the British and the French, were not happy with his call for peace without victory. It could be viewed that all they wanted was land and money from the Germans.⁷ Land and money were the only way for the Allies to have a feeling of achieving something. The land would be viewed as a prize, while the money was needed for paying the bills that the war had ran up. Wilson, however, denied this thought process. As will be seen, Wilson believed that his ideas and beliefs would simply win people over. Wilson was a fierce negotiator and had a way with words that always seemed to stir emotion in those who heard him. It would turn out that Wilson's idealism was not enough to win people to his cause, which will be discussed at length throughout this chapter.

In the United States, many were skeptical of Wilson's ideas and if they would work or not. Specifically, there was distrust in Wilson's decision to go to Europe and participate. Before

⁶ The idea of peace without victory was coined by Wilson himself. It was delivered in a speech in 1917 in which Wilson defined the traditional idea of victory itself would doom peace in the worldwide context. Later Wilson also gave another speech in which he laid out his Fourteen Points, which was based of the idea of peace without victory. These speeches can be found in Mario DiNunzio, *Woodrow Wilson: Essential Writings and Speeches of the Scholar-President* (New York: New York University Press, 2006).

⁷ This thought can be easily defended with their actions during and after the peace conference, and will be discussed at greater length later in this chapter.

Wilson, no sitting President had left the shores of the United States. Since there was no precedence for a sitting President to leave the safety of the United States, it was a logical outcome to think that the country would simply stop while he was away. The Constitution of the United States does not provide any transfer of power while the President is away. This caused much of the fear surrounding the President leaving, as there would be no authority figure during his absence. While the President leaving the country is a common occurrence today, and was done when Franklin Delano Roosevelt left during and after World War II, Wilson was a pioneer and had to deal with the backlash of leaving the country without a sitting President.

It seemed that Wilson was stuck between two sides of the argument, with neither side wanting him to travel to Europe. Those who at least agreed with what he was doing did not appreciate his political style. Those who did not agree with Wilson felt that he was not explaining his reasoning fully, or at least to the degree many would like. This disagreement and the issues that followed will be discussed later.

Adding to that, many people were worried that Wilson would only have one vote at this Peace Conference, something that would significantly weaken his ability to speak to the conscience of America.⁸ Frank Cobb, the editor of the *New York World*, was one person who believed this point. Cobb was famous for supporting Wilson while editor of the *World*. So, to have someone who thought so highly of Wilson's ideas state that Wilson should stay home was difficult for Wilson to hear. However, Cobb was in Paris before the President and realized that the political landscape of Europe was much different than the landscape of the United States. Cobb had realized that, while many of the common people of France and Britain wanted to see Wilson, those who were in power wanted Wilson to stay in the United States.

⁸ Thomas Fleming, *The Illusion of Victory* (New York: Basic Books, 2003), 310. Citing Frank Cobb.

Colonel House, who was Wilson's closest friend and advisor, had agreed with Cobb. Wilson responded to House by stating that it was "universally expected and generally desired here (in the United States) that I should attend the conference."⁹ This was an example of how Wilson began to ignore political realities. As stated before, many people had reservations about the current President leaving the United States for several reasons, chief among them being the lack of any authority figure when the President left the country. However, in the same response to Colonel House, Wilson said something that emphasized the disconnect that had started to form between Wilson and the political state of the United States. In this response, Wilson had stated that the idea of him staying behind while others met and discussed his ideas of world peace "upsets every plan that we made."¹⁰ The "we" that Wilson is referring to is not to Colonel House, but probably his wife, Edith Galt Wilson.¹¹ If true, it paints a damning portrait of the mindset of Wilson. This is an important note since how Wilson handles the remainder of the peace deliberations in Paris speaks to a similar mindset.

*Peace versus Politics*¹²

Wilson had it firmly set that he would go to Paris. There were few who could change his mind on this issue, if any at all. However, his rashness on this issue caused a stir, and made Wilson a few enemies in the process. Many prominent Republican figures were upset with how Wilson had handled this decision. Many felt as though Wilson had not explained in enough detail

⁹ Edward Mandell House, *The Intimate Papers of Colonel House*, ed. by Charles Seymour (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1928), 4:210.

¹⁰ Ibid., 212.

¹¹ Fleming, *The Illusion of Victory*, 310. Fleming gives a sound argument pointing to Edith Galt Wilson being the "we." I have not found any other account of this discussion. However, I can follow Fleming's thought process and reasoning for the topic.

¹² There are a number of commentaries on this subject, many offering ideas on what Wilson could have done better. For further information, see Thomas A. Bailey, *Wilson and the Peacemakers* (New York: Macmillan, 1947), 97.

why he was going. Former President Theodore “Teddy” Roosevelt told the press at the time, “President Wilson has not given the slightest explanation for his trip abroad.”¹³ He also stated, “Our Allies, our enemies, and Mr. Wilson himself should understand that Mr. Wilson has no authority to speak for the American people at this time.”¹⁴

The problems culminated when Wilson picked his delegation that he would take with him to Paris. Many of Wilson’s advisors, Joseph Tumulty being the most known, knew that selecting this delegation would be the key to regain many Republicans to Wilson’s idea of peace. Tumulty was instrumental in trying to find members of the delegation that could not only contribute to the peace talks but also appease the Republican desire for a voice. Tumulty chose Elihu Root. Root seemed perfect for the delegation. He was the Secretary of War under President McKinley and the Secretary of State under President Roosevelt. Adding to his credentials, Root was a winner of a Nobel Peace Prize for improving the United States’ relations with Latin America and Japan. Tumulty also knew that Root was a public supporter of Wilson’s ideas for peace, and what would later be known as the League of Nations.¹⁵ On paper, Root seemed like the best fit for the delegation. However, Wilson dismissed Root on the premise that Root was too conservative.¹⁶

The Attorney General at the time, Thomas Gregory, also had ideas as to who to appoint to the peace delegation. Gregory agreed that Root was the best choice, but also included former President William Howard Taft, another vocal supporter of Wilson.¹⁷ Along with Root and Taft,

¹³ Ann Hagedorn, *Savage Peace, Hope and Fear in America, 1919* (New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2007), 21. Quoting Former President Roosevelt.

¹⁴ William E. Leuchtenburg, *The Perils of Prosperity, 1914-1932* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 52.

¹⁵ John Morton Blum, *Joe Tumulty and the Wilson Era* (New Haven, CT: Shoe String Press, 1961), 170.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Taft was the founder of The League to Enforce Peace, which also advocated for an international body to help with the founding and maintaining peace. This was not the last time

Gregory listed four other prominent Republicans for Wilson to choose from. Wilson, however, rejected all of Gregory's appointments.¹⁸ Instead, Wilson chose Colonel House, which in reality was not too surprising. House was already in France and had something to contribute to the peace discussions. However, this decision affected Colonel House more than anyone else. House was a known dignitary, and a trusted official, but was best suited as friend and confidant to Wilson. To place House in the spot that he did, as a member of the peace delegation, Wilson lost the opportunity to take along someone "whose political standing would have reassured the country."¹⁹

Wilson's decisions on the remaining delegates made little sense to anybody at the time. Wilson chose his Secretary of State Robert Lansing. Lansing was not fit for the job, as he had no experience in either peace talks or as a foreign dignitary. It was due to this lack of experience that Lansing was selected to be Secretary of State to begin with. House viewed himself as the unofficial Secretary of State and was comfortable with letting Lansing "remain content with the trappings of his office."²⁰ To this point, it was obvious that Wilson simply invited Lansing for show. Lansing did however bring quite a bit to the table after the peace discussions. Lansing was very vocal about Wilson and his ideas of peace, and wrote extensively about it.

Wilson did listen to his advisors on one point. He appointed one Republican to the peace delegation, Henry White. White had quite a bit of diplomatic experience, but was never a major part of the political scene with the Republican Party. Wilson now had his delegation set. However, there were little outside of Wilson's personal camp that approved of this delegation.

that Taft would come into discussion with trying to help Wilson with his forging of international peace.

¹⁸ Seymour, *The Intimate Papers of Colonel House*, 4:223-225.

¹⁹ Bailey, *Wilson and the Peacemakers*, 90.

²⁰ Daniel M. Smith, *Robert Lansing and American Neutrality, 1914-1917* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1958), 71.

George Harvey, the editor of *Harper's Weekly*, was one such person that did not agree with Wilson's decisions, and began to produce weekly criticisms of the President. This was unique simply because Harvey was a vocal supporter of Wilson and his ideas before this delegation was formed. Harvey had famously placed Wilson's choices for the peace delegation into an edition of his scathing reviews of Wilson's actions. What was stated by this review was that Wilson had appointed himself four times.²¹

The Peace Talks

On January 18, 1919 the talks for the Paris Peace Conference finally began. Wilson had already been in Europe for over a month. He arrived by boat on December 13, 1918 and had been touring around Europe for quite a while. At every stop, there were crowds of Europeans who hailed him as a savior. The Italians dubbed him the god of peace.²²

The time had finally come for Wilson to set out his proposal for the League of Nations to the world. Wilson also knew that there were several people, and to some extent countries, that did not agree with his ideas. He knew that he would be in for a fight if he wanted his ideas to be fully realized. On January 25, Wilson broke through and won approval to create the League of Nations. Although Wilson finally got what he had been lobbying for, it came at a price. The day before the League of Nations was approved, many members of the peace council had demanded

²¹ The fourth was General Tasker Bliss. Wilson, Lansing, House, and Bliss all represented the Executive Branch, or Wilson himself, while White had no real affiliation. This is a well-documented commentary and review. It is found in both Fleming's *Illusion of Victory* and Bailey's *Wilson and the Peacemakers*.

²² This was one sample of praise Wilson received. In Paris, Wilson was welcomed with a banner that said, "Honor Wilson the Just." For more information as to the praised he received, Fleming has a significant recounting of events in *Illusion of Victory*, and also look to Marvin Perry, ed., *Western Civilization: Ideas, Politics, And Society -From 1600*, 9th ed. (Florence KY: Wadsworth Publishing, 2008), and David Cortright, *Peace, A History of Movements and Ideas* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008). For pictures of the event, there is an Internet exhibit put on by the Woodrow Wilson House.

land that had previously been under German control.²³ Wilson was faced with a growing problem as he realized that he was the only person in the room who did not want to see annexations as part of the peace agreement. Wilson remained strong on this point, believing that it would show a fundamental lack of faith in the League. However, he was the only one who saw it this way. After mounting pressure from the British, Wilson finally acquiesced and allowed the peace talks to include annexations. Within the first week of the League of Nations, Wilson's ideas of self-determination and stopping annexations were starting to slip away from realization.

Wilson tried to stay positive, thinking that the newly formed League of Nations would eventually right all the wrongs that this peace conference had so far committed. It was now on his shoulders to draft a covenant to the League of Nations. However, Wilson had committed to returning to the United States on February 14 so that he could meet one last time with Congress before it adjourned for the summer. That gave Wilson and the peace delegates only two weeks to draft a constitution for the League. This delegation had the benefit of having three previous drafts of the covenant, one written by Wilson, another by Colonel House, and one from the British.²⁴ As the days went by, Wilson was piecing together separate drafts for the League of Nations covenant and the benefit of forming the covenant to his liking. However, a proposal from the quiet Japanese delegate forced Wilson into a corner.

The Japanese noted that Wilson and the League were recognizing the equality of all nations, large or small. The Japanese delegate had hoped to add in an amendment stating that the

²³ Ray Stannard Baker, *Woodrow Wilson and the World Settlement* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1923), 1:256-259. Baker further notes that, in all, the British, French, Japanese, and Italians took over approximately 1,132,000 square miles and some seventeen million people by the end of the discussions.

²⁴ This was noted above. See David Hunter Miller, "The Making of the League of Nations" in *What Really Happened at Paris: The Story of the Peace Conference, 1918-1919* ed. Edward Mandell House and Charles Seymour (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1921), 402.

League would recognize the equality of all races.²⁵ Although Wilson had initially approved the idea, the British scoffed at it and turned down the proposal. However, when it came to the Japanese's request of equal treatment for all races, Wilson was silent and allowed the British to flat out reject the idea.²⁶ It was February 14 and Wilson read the covenant word for word to the delegates at the peace conference. Wilson's dream had been realized. However, when Wilson returned home to the United States, he was not met as a hero to all. He quickly found out that his overly-zealous attitude for establishing the League of Nations would make it impossible for it to be fully realized.

Although the events described above happened within a two-month span, the effects of this peace conference would be far reaching and would greatly affect the world in just a few years. There were many who took part in forming the covenant of the League of Nations who wanted harsh punishments for Germany. By accepting these punishments, harsh or not, Wilson allowed the ideas that fueled his passion for peace to be forgotten. Wilson sacrificed these ideas for a foundation of a League that would fight for peace. However, these sacrifices, like self-governance and peace without victory, were fundamental points that Wilson had believed to be true. This raises the question, is this new League that Wilson is fighting for really representative of what Wilson actually believes?

The Fight for Peace in America

When Wilson returned to the United States, he realized that there were still lingering voices that did not approve of the peace conference in Paris. Wilson tried to rally support for his

²⁵ Ray Stannard Baker, *What Wilson Did at Paris* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday Page & Co., 1920), 95.

²⁶ The reasoning was based off of the view the British had of themselves. If all nations were recognized as equal, then the British colonies would have the right to say that they did not need the protection of Britain anymore, due to them being equals with Britain.

cause, but there was little to be found. Despite the gloomy outlook on the President's ideas for a League of Nations, all was not lost. Wilson still had a chance to rally support. He had agreed to meet with former President Taft and publicly discuss the League at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York.²⁷ Taft seemed willing to forgive the President on not choosing him and was giving Wilson the opportunity to speak in a friendly environment about his League to a room full of supporters. However, Wilson's passion would get the better of him again.

Taft was the best chance for Wilson to regain a voice in the Senate. Taft had been the head of a bipartisan organization, The League to Enforce Peace, since 1915. This organization was also pushing for an international organization, which resembled Wilson's League. Taft had also endorsed the covenant for the League of Nations. Wilson had the opportunity to make up for the wrongs he had done when he burnt the Republicans with his passion and ideas. Taft opened this discussion defending all of Wilson's points for the League of Nations.²⁸ Taft then stated that Henry Cabot Lodge, who was a vocal opponent to Wilson and the League, also had great ideas about revisions to the Covenant that could be discussed at a later time.²⁹ Fleming states that if Wilson had followed suit, the fight against his League might have ended that night. Instead Wilson lashed out at Taft and several other Republican leaders, further widening the gap between Wilson and the Senate.³⁰ However, that is not the picture that Burton portrays, when he states that Wilson voiced approval of Taft's "clear and admirable" explanation of the covenant.³¹

²⁷ This section is inspired from David H. Burton's book *Taft, Wilson, and World Order*. See also Fleming, *Illusion of Victory* for an opposing side to this issue.

²⁸ David H. Burton, *Taft, Wilson, and World Order* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 2003), 112.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Fleming, *Illusion of Victory*, 348.

³¹ Burton, *Taft, Wilson, and World Order*, 113.

Wilson continued by reminding the audience that self-determination and equality between nations were also important to the political peace process.

What is most alarming is that Wilson stated that the citizens of the United States had proven that they were willing to die for this idea.³² Although there was contempt to this at the time, it showed how out of touch Wilson really was then. His plans and hopes had blinded him from reason. This gathering in New York would be the last chance for Wilson to try and close the gap and end the arguing.

Redefining Peace

By the time Wilson returned to Europe in March, the discussion points had shifted. Colonel House, who remained behind in Wilson's absence, painted a grave picture for Wilson. Both the French and the British were seeking to finalize a peace treaty with Germany before finalizing a League of Nations, to which House agreed. House, along with several British and American soldiers, was noticing the horrible effect of war and the rapid starvation epidemic that had hit Germany. Germany was not alone; several nations that had attended the initial peace conference in Paris were also facing starvation. While this issue falls outside this thesis, what is important to note here is that to Wilson founding the League seemed more important than feeding the hungry.³³

By the time the peace talks resumed, the British and the French seemed to have the upper hand in all the discussions. The Senate not backing Wilson evidences this simple fact. If Wilson wanted to argue any point, it was simple for the British and French to state that they would

³² Cited in both Burton, *Taft, Wilson, and World Order*, 113 and Fleming, *Illusion of Victory*, 348. Both seem to point to using the fallen as a little over dramatic, to say the least.

³³ Although the blockade was eventually opened, and food was provided to the Germans, it was more of Herbert Hoover's work than Wilson's. Others, such as Oskar Cohn and Emil Barth, were also vocal on ending the blockade.

simply oppose the Senate's reservations about the League, thereby forcing Wilson to choose between harmony within the League or fighting on both sides of him. Wilson, again, chose the League and would be faced with more setbacks to his ideas of worldwide peace. When the British stated that the United States would have to stop its naval ship building programs or else they would vote to separate the peace treaty with Germany from the League of Nations, Wilson begrudgingly agreed.³⁴ This trend would continue for the rest of the peace conference. Wilson was a defeated man. By the end of the discussions, no one could tell the covenant of the League of Nations was founded on the basis of Wilson's Fourteen Points. This would mark an end between Wilson's ideas of peace and usher in an era of blame shifting and power grabbing, which would come to be the powerful nations ideas for peace.

Failed Peace?

By the time that Germany was handed the peace treaty, Wilson seemed to be a changed man. His idea of peace without victory was shattered. Once the treaty was delivered to the United States, many of Wilson's former supporters had lost confidence in him.³⁵ What was becoming clear was the man that fought so hard to get his points heard in the United States and abroad was searching for his ideas to simply be heard and validated. Once validation eluded him, he was just interested in closing the deal and returning home.

³⁴ Klaus Schwabe, *Woodrow Wilson, Revolutionary Germany, and Peacemaking, 1918-1919: Missionary Diplomacy and the Realities of Power* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 176. See Also, Fleming, *Illusion of Victory*, 354.

³⁵ Especially those who had been vocal supporters of the League like House, Herbert Hoover, and Taft.

At this point, all was not lost for Wilson. The Germans still wished for his brand of peace, stating that they would sign a treaty if it more resembled Wilson's fourteen points.³⁶ However, Wilson did not have the same passion that once fueled his drive to end wars. When Germany began to debate the Treaty of Versailles, the peace conference participants debated the idea of occupying Germany until they accepted the peace treaty. With twenty-four hours until the Allied deadline for signing the treaty left, Wilson took the last step in his fall from grace. Wilson seemingly stated that if the Germans did not sign the treaty, the blockade that was established to restrict food for German civilians would be reimposed.³⁷ It is interesting to note the wording of this debate about the blockade. There are several sources out there that paint the picture that Wilson himself wanted to impose the blockade. Writers like Martin Gilbert and Thomas Fleming write about this act in such a way that Wilson himself had the idea to reimpose the blockade as a means to have Germany sign the Treaty. However, Klaus Schwabe notes that Wilson simply stated to the British, whom Schwabe says was the party responsible for wanting to reimpose the blockade, that it could be used as a last option. Since Schwabe cites the *Foreign Relations of the United States, Papers*, which directly quotes the leaders of the peace conference, it is hard to argue against his point. However, this does not render views of the other authors wrong. If Gilbert and Fleming believe that Wilson considering the idea of a blockade was violating the original ideas of peace without victory, which is not flatly stated in either example, then it could be considered by these authors that Wilson was just as guilty as if he were the one imposing the blockade himself. Either way, the Germans were eventually muscled into signing a peace treaty, which is sadly ironic.

³⁶ Schwabe, *Woodrow Wilson, Revolutionary Germany, and Peacemaking, 1918-1919*, 109-112.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 386-388.

Wilson sent a message back to the United States with the news of Germany's signing. The note received quite a bit of attention and was later published in many newspapers. The New York Times published the entire note, which in part said that this was "a severe treaty in the duties and penalties that it imposes upon Germany, but it is severe only because the great wrongs done by Germany are to be righted and repaired."³⁸ This was the language Wilson fought so hard to eliminate from the peace conference. That being said, Tumulty reported to Wilson that this was being viewed in a distinctly popular manner. While that may have been the popular sentiment at the time, the Senators of the United States were vocal about the harshness that was pervasive throughout the treaty. Senator Robert La Follette of Wisconsin had summed up the Senate's position when he stated that the treaty was "a spoils grabbing compact of greed and hate."³⁹

When Wilson finally spoke to the Senate asking them to ratify the League of Nations, he was facing an uphill climb. As it will be discussed in later chapters, there were few voices of the peace movements that agreed with Wilson. Not only did he have the Senate against him, but also several other groups who did not agree with Wilson's ideas for peace.

However, it is important to note here that Wilson was a hurting man, physically and more than likely emotionally. Despite all the compromises that he had conceded in Europe, it can be said that Wilson just lost the political game that he had attempted to play. The stubbornness of his desire to be known and remembered for bringing world peace wore too much on him. While these desires were ultimately his downfall, it has to be said that he came back this final time exhausted from the political fighting he had on both sides of him. While some may say

³⁸ "Wilson Says Treaty Will Furnish the Charter for a New Order of Affairs in the World," *New York Times*, June 29, 1919.

³⁹ David A. Horowitz, *Beyond Left & Right: Insurgency and the Establishment* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 34.

exhausted, others wonder if Wilson suffered a stroke while in Europe. It is known and generally accepted that Wilson went through times of ill health while in Europe.⁴⁰

There has to be a part of Wilson that knew that he had in some way failed. He had to have some awareness of the brutality of the language in the treaty. Despite this, the façade that Wilson put up in front of Congress was all too evident. During his speech, Wilson again referred to Germany as a monster in need of chains.⁴¹ Wilson had to know that the treaty the Germans signed was too harsh and too far from his original ideals.

At this point, Wilson had lost much of the support that he had when left for Paris. During his time in Europe, the United States was without a leader. The shift from wartime to peacetime had created some unique problems that were in need of creative leadership to help solve. Racial issues and work shortages were rampant during this time. A sitting President would have been able to stop, or at least bring serious attention to, these issues before they were out of control. Instead, his mind was still in Paris and his heart was still trying to defend what had become the League of Nations.

It was finally time for the Senate to discuss entry into the League of Nations. The first speaker was a renowned liberal senator, George Norris. Norris had backed Wilson from the beginning. When it was Norris' time to speak, however, he rose and began what would become a three-day attack on the peace treaty and the League itself. Norris cited that the greed that was rampant throughout the peace conference and the treaty was blatant and wrong.⁴² This was not the start that Wilson had hoped for. This was one of the most liberal members of the Senate and

⁴⁰ Gene Smith does an excellent job with this topic in *When The Cheering Stopped: The Last Years of Woodrow Wilson* (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1964). Also, a more detailed look is found in Edwin A. Weinstein, *Woodrow Wilson: A Medical and Psychological Biography* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981).

⁴¹ Fleming, *The Illusion of Victory*, 393.

⁴² Ibid.

he was flat out rejecting all the work Wilson had done. The words that Norris said must have cut deep into Wilson's soul.

This all culminated with many of Wilson's trusted advisors leaving his side. Secretary of State Lansing and several other members of Wilson's own, hand chosen peace delegation repeatedly attacked the peace treaty and the League of Nations.⁴³ This was a crushing blow to Wilson. The very men that he had been fighting with for several months for world peace were turning against him. The President had decided to take his points to the people of the United States in the form of a cross-country speaking tour. The thought was that if the President could sway the people to back him, the Senate would have to follow. When the few trusted advisors he had left asked the President not to attempt such a speaking tour, Wilson responded that he would not turn back now at the bleak outlook of the tour, just as the soldiers he sent to Europe did not turn back.⁴⁴ Wilson was comparing a speaking tour to the thousands of deaths that he, as commander in chief, was ultimately responsible for. The soldiers who gave their lives under the promise of world peace were now being mentioned as equals with a President going on a cross-country tour to speak to the people of the United States. Wilson was beginning to lose control.

During this tour, Wilson took an aggressive stance against many ethnic communities, specifically the Irish and German emigrants in the United States. In many of the speeches, Wilson began to attack those who were either part Irish or German stating that "any man who carries a hyphen about him carries a dagger which he is ready to plunge into the vitals of the

⁴³ Lansing probably had the most damning critique of Wilson. See Robert Lansing, *The Big Four and Others of the Peace Conference* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1921). Also see Edward Mandell House and Charles Seymour, eds., *What Really Happened at Paris: The Story of the Peace Conference, 1918-1919* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1921) which is comprised of period articles referring to this subject.

⁴⁴ Cary T. Grayson, *Woodrow Wilson: An Intimate Memoir*, 2nd ed. (Dulles, VA: Potomac Books Inc., 1977), 95.

republic.”⁴⁵ What is appalling was that many of the deaths from the United States’ participation in the war were from those who were foreign born. While this issue will be discussed in chapter three, for now it is important to note that the specific ethnic communities that Wilson was lashing out against ultimately agreed with Wilson more than any other group in the United States. These groups were largely isolationist based, and although they ultimately disagreed with Wilson in his stance with Germany, they had backed Wilson for most of the war. Wilson also began attacking the very people who he sent to Europe to protect his interests. Wilson was a shadow of the man that he was when he left for Europe in early 1919. Wilson’s drive to be in the right fueled a man to then turn on any political figure who opposed him.

On November 19, the Senate voted on whether or not to ratify the treaty. Before the Senate voted, Wilson wrote to the Democratic Party that he would be recording how the Senators vote for the purpose of almost punishing those who did not vote with him.⁴⁶ When Senator Lodge commenced the vote on ratifying the treaty with some reservations and changes, the Democrats in the Senate were asked to vote, by Wilson, to not ratify the treaty. The vote was fifty-five to thirty-nine in favor of not ratifying the treaty. When the vote came up a second time for the Senate, this time with the treaty like it was with no changes, the Senate again voted no. Many Republicans in the Senate voted yes to a treaty that had reservations to it while the Democrats were seeking to ratify the treaty as it was.⁴⁷ So, there was a stalemate. Lodge had

⁴⁵ John B. Duff, *The Politics of Revenge: The Ethnic Opposition to the Peace Policies of Woodrow Wilson* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1964), 180. Quoting a speech he gave in Pueblo, CO.

⁴⁶ Bailey, *Wilson and the Peacemakers*, 399.

⁴⁷ This is ultimately outside the scope of this thesis, but the Senate was split pretty evenly. There were quite a few who would vote one way or the other no matter what, meaning that there were people who would vote no every time the vote came up no matter what. These people were called irreconcilables. What hinged many of the voters was that the treaty for the League of Nations was essentially good, but many people did not agree with one item or another.

stated several times that if Wilson would simply concede that there were some issues within the treaty that many of the Senators on the floor did not approve of, the treaty would be ratified and the United States would join the League of Nations.⁴⁸

Many of the issues of the people who had disagreed with the treaty, were similar issues that Wilson himself did not want in the treaty. Specifically, many Senators pushed back against the perception of the United States losing its sovereignty and the reality that many Allied nations were receiving more land. Wilson had not wanted there to be any land or people being used as leverage to weaken Germany before the peace conference, so why was he so insistent on it now? Wilson remained defiant throughout the fight to ratify the treaty. Even when it was reported by several sources that the Allies would accept the treaty with the reservations of Lodge, Wilson still fought.⁴⁹ This was the time for Wilson to enact the changes that would make the peace treaty look more like his Fourteen Points. Lodge's reservations looked a lot closer to Wilson's original ideas than did the current peace treaty.⁵⁰ Yet, Wilson's ego would not allow him to admit that he was wrong at one point in time. Lodge had followed suit and had made several compromises himself. Wilson was deaf to this cry. Wilson wanted the League on his terms. The League was his idea and to have so many with a hand invested in the League would have greatly damaged his ego.

⁴⁸ Edward Mandell House, "The Versailles Peace in Retrospect," in *What Really Happened at Paris: The Story of the Peace Conference, 1918-1919*, ed. Edward Mandell House and Charles Seymour (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1921), 424. Also Bailey, *Wilson and the Peacemakers*, 205.

⁴⁹ Schwabe, *Woodrow Wilson, Revolutionary Germany, and Peacemaking, 1918-1919*, 238.

⁵⁰ These ideas are stated in several different works. History has seem to prove that with a little bit of discussion and less of the political banter, something that was an imperfect balance between sides would have been passed.

Conclusion

With the election of 1920, the chances of Congress ratifying the peace treaty were gone. Warren G. Harding was elected to the office of the President of the United States. Harding promptly went into action settling a peace treaty with Germany. This was a drastic change in relations with the rest of Europe. France and Britain were waiting for the United States to ratify the treaty so they could move forward with the reparations and the rest of the spoils of war.⁵¹ Wilson's dream was crushed. Wilson had spent nearly all of his energy in trying to forge a worldwide peace that would last. However, when Harding took office, he stated that, from the results of the recent election, joining the League of Nations would be a betrayal of the deliberate expression of the voters.⁵² Harding believed that it was time for a fresh start, something that was loudly urged by Senator Lodge. Despite Lodge's reservations with the League, and all his work to ratify the peace treaty with several changes, it seemed as though Lodge was simply done trying to cater to politics. Lodge stated, "The one thing that, in my judgment, would be impossible to do, would be to join the league on theory of making it over."⁵³ The lack of the public's reaction to this might lend it some credibility. So, what was the downfall in attempting worldwide peace? It is easy to point the finger solely at Wilson. Before I discuss this point, it is important to note something that might change the opinion of a few people.

Wilson was deathly ill by the end of the peace discussion in the United States. This was a man that spent every waking moment in Paris discussing peace. He had a battle on every side.

⁵¹ Thomas A. Bailey, *Woodrow Wilson and the Lost Peace* (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith Publishers Inc., 1978), 239-240. Bailey also points out that Wilson originally did not know how much the reparations would be.

⁵² Robert K. Murray, *The Harding Era: Warren G. Harding and His Administration* (Newtown, CT: American Political Biography Press, 2000), 136.

⁵³ John Cooper, *Breaking the Heart of the World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 397.

The people that he had sworn to serve, those in the United States, did not agree with Wilson involving himself in the world's problems, let alone leaving the country. The British and the French wanted significant penalties on Germany for their participation in the war. The Germans, and many other smaller nations, saw Wilson as a savior who was speaking for their needs. The pressure that Wilson felt must have been tremendous. Due to these stresses, and other mitigating factors, Wilson suffered at least one stroke during this attempt at world peace. However, this was hidden to the public at the time, due in large part to Edith Galt Wilson and Admiral Cary Grayson, who was Wilson's personal doctor. For several months, Edith Galt Wilson was largely running the country while Wilson himself was recovering in bed at the White House. Although many tried to speak with Wilson, Edith Galt Wilson turned them away. This infuriated several members of Wilson's Cabinet, causing some of them to resign. The most popular resignation came from then Secretary of State Robert Lansing.⁵⁴

When Lansing resigned, it was met with disbelief. Lansing's resignation had proved that even those closest to Wilson were tired of the strong façade that Wilson had put up. The questions of Wilson effectively running the country began to be heard throughout the United States. If Lansing, who had put up with Wilson's disrespect for the entirety of working as the Secretary of State, had left, then what was the President really like behind closed doors?

Although it is a known fact that the President was deathly ill today, back in 1919, the decision

⁵⁴ There are claims that Edith Galt Wilson was basically running the country and making political decisions while Woodrow Wilson was healing. There are other claims are that Edith Galt Wilson was simply protecting her husband. To be honest, both seem logical and possible. To assert that one idea is right and the other wrong is almost impossible, as it comes down to an educated guess. Thomas Fleming in *The Illusion of Victory* spends a significant amount of time with this subject and quotes notes from Edith Galt Wilson, as well as the personal notes from Wilson's doctor, Admiral Cary T. Grayson. Another author, Phyllis Lee Levin devotes significant time to this topic as well. For more information, see Phyllis Lee Levin *Edith and Woodrow: The Wilson White House* (New York: Scribner, 2001), specifically section four.

was made to hide his illnesses from the world. By doing so, Wilson and everyone who made that decision was now going against the Constitution. Either way, when Lansing left, people started to question Wilson and his health. History has since shown us that Wilson was seriously ill. The stroke paralyzed his left side and made it so Wilson could barely keep a line of thought. The President was in no condition to discuss peace.

Again, it is easy to point to Wilson as the reason that the peace treaty failed. However, it is important to note that he was not the only reason that the peace treaty was never ratified. The political game that was played did not help Wilson. Although Wilson did not do himself any favors by being as brash as he was, those on the Republican side of the conversation did not afford Wilson much room either. It seems that the Republicans were focused on making things hard on Wilson rather than trying to secure world peace. The Republicans refusing to ratify any bill that came to them is evidence this, adding to that, the use of the League of Nations as a tool for their elections.⁵⁵ Would all of the Senates action not have been done if Wilson had appointed a Republican Senator to his peace delegation? Or, if Wilson had agreed with Taft when they met at Carnegie Hall? It is impossible to say.

I believe, however, that forging peace in the manner that Wilson had attempted to do was flawed from the beginning. Wilson believed that this treaty would end the old world era of small groups of selfish people to rule others under the guise of well thought out excuses. What Wilson did not realize was that it was in a room with a small group of men that divided up half of Germany's land and forced the German government to pay a ridiculous sum of money, while all

⁵⁵ Joseph Martin Hernon, *Profiles in Character: Hubris and Heroism in the U.S. Senate, 1789-1990* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1997). Specifically, Hernon details this in depth within two chapters covering 1900-1940.

the while enforcing a blockade that knowingly starved German civilians, including children, for over half the peace talks.

There are authors that think that Wilson did no wrong and that the Treaty of Versailles, and more specifically the League of Nations, would have worked. In the book, *The Versailles Settlement*, contributor Paul Birdsall lays out several key ideas as to why the League of Nations would have worked, “The defection of the United States destroyed the Anglo-American preponderance which alone could have stabilized Europe.”⁵⁶ He also states that Wilson is largely misunderstood as well, “(Wilson) spoke too much the language of idealism and self-sacrifice and too little the plain language of a genuine community.”⁵⁷ It is easy to point the finger at Wilson’s failure and state that it was the cause of World War II.⁵⁸ While Birdsall agrees with this idea, in some form, he does so without pointing the finger to Wilson and placing blame on him.

I would like to further highlight something that Birdsall pointed out. The idea of (genuine) community that Birdsall spoke of raises an interesting discussion point, something that I find enhanced by the work of Miguel De La Torre. Miguel De La Torre in his book *Doing Christian Ethics from the Margins* proposes a simple idea that I believe to be crucial to discussions like this.⁵⁹ De La Torre states that one person should not try and establish an ethic because it will only focus on that person’s culture. In doing this, that person becomes someone in a powerful position. That power is what infects the person’s ideas and will further oppression.

⁵⁶ Paul Birdsall, “Versailles Twenty Years After – A Defense,” in *The Versailles Settlement: Was It Foredoomed to Failure?* ed. Ivo J. Lederer (Boston: D. C. Heath, 1960), 27.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 24.

⁵⁸ Antony Lentin, “‘Appeasement’ at the Paris Peace Conference,” in *The Paris Peace Conference, 1919: Peace without Victory?* (New York: Palgrave, 2001). This is just one of many articles stating that the peace conference was remembered justly, as an avenue for war.

⁵⁹ Although De La Torre is not a political historian, the simple truths that he shares in this book could be applied to almost any endeavor. I personally believe that the model that De La Torre presents is helpful for this discussion, as it would have easily helped Wilson achieve his goals of peace.

De La Torre says, “Those with power impose their constructs of morality upon the rest of culture.”⁶⁰ Wilson’s dream to establish a world peace came from Wilson himself. Although it is important to note that Wilson had at one point believed that those without a voice, in this case the smaller nations that would eventually be split up and put under control of the Allied powers, should not be punished because of the actions of Germany. However, it was Wilson’s desire to be known for enacting world peace that ultimately proved to be his downfall. Wilson was worried more about his ideas than the hopes of the world. De La Torre continues to say that the only way to do Christian ethics effectively is to not have one person in power, but instead a community of like-minded people that covers the spectrum of those that are being spoken for. It would have been almost impossible for Wilson to do this with the people that were in the Senate. However, there were many Irish-Americans that were very interested in seeing a worldwide peace, as it meant that Ireland would be its own independent nation. However, as mentioned before, and will be mentioned later as well, when nations that were not white European nations offered something to be discussed, Wilson was all too ready to let those ideas die a quick death.

As previously discussed, Wilson could have had a peace treaty ratified several times with minimal effort, but chose to hold tight to his ideas. I have brought up the idea of Wilson’s ego getting in the way of this dream becoming a reality. However, there are some historians that also believe that Wilson was unsympathetic to the nations and nationalities that were not privileged, white nations. The Japanese are an example, as are the Irish. The contempt he showed these people on the tours around the United States to promote the League of Nations might prove that. If that were the case, then Wilson would not have been the best person to speak of world peace.

⁶⁰ Miguel De La Torre, *Doing Christian Ethics from the Margins* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004), 32.

CHAPTER 2: THE PACIFIST PROCESS OF PEACE

The idea of pacifism has gone through many changes throughout the years. That said, during the time of World War I and after, pacifism was the chief expression of the peace movement. Charles DeBenedetti states that this was “the most dynamic peace movement in American history.”⁶¹ However, the term pacifist was applied narrowly, and incorrectly, to all who rejected warfare and violence.⁶² During this time, the pacifists felt especially vulnerable when isolated from fellow citizens, due in large part from the stigma they received by rejecting what became the national past time of war. The public favor towards the war was intense, and supporting the war became a deep sense of national pride. Pacifists began to come together and create small societies of like-minded people for fellowship and discussion. These societies, although Christian in their inspiration, were not limited to traditions with a heritage of peace or nonresistance.⁶³ These societies were the foundation of the larger movement that created this dynamic change in pacifism. Several of these societies would spring up and, through their fellowship, begin the discussion for change and reform.

In this chapter, I will discuss the radical formation and changes to pacifism during this time. Before I do so, I will dispel a commonly held myth about pacifism before paying special attention to the immediate history before this time and its formation to pacifism. I will also,

⁶¹ Charles DeBenedetti, *The Peace Reform in American History* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1984), 108.

⁶² Charles Chatfield and Ruzanna Ilukhina, eds., *Peace/Mir: An Anthology of Historical Alternatives to War* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1994), 160.

⁶³ Ibid.

define pacifism as I will use it for the rest of this thesis. As it will hopefully become clear, it is difficult to define pacifism without cross-labeling several other groups. I will continue with the history immediately after World War I and how the rise of this new idea pacifism eventually led to a modern definition of pacifism. Finally, I will address the reality and trends of pacifism and how it failed to remain within culture as a dominant force for peace.

The Pacifism Myth

It is important to have a consistent definition of pacifism for this thesis. Pacifism can mean many things and has been defined in several different ways throughout the years, especially during the transformational period of World War I. To assume that it means one thing to one person is unfair to label all pacifists as such. For example, pacifism is generally defined as a religious term, or at least something that is practiced by a specific set of religious people.⁶⁴ While religious groups may have initially coined the term pacifism, or at least practiced the tenets of pacifism before it was named such, it is unfair to label all those who believe pacifism as religious, let alone one specific brand of religion.

There are many early Christian traditions that held a pacifist ideal. However, a common misconception, one that is continuously depicted, is that these traditions were, in themselves, pacifist. Pacifism was not introduced into the English language until the early nineteenth century.⁶⁵ Historically, this came after the start of the peace church traditions, including the

⁶⁴ See David L. Clough, and Brian Stiltner, *Faith and Force: A Christian Debate about War* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2007) for a comprehensive look at pacifism from a religious standpoint. One idea that the authors go through is comparing pacifism to a just war theory within the traditional Christian context. The authors comment on several ideas and debates that Christians have on this topic, being pacifism, just war, and the concept and idea of a holy war.

⁶⁵ Andrew Alexandra, "Political Pacifism," *Social Theory and Practice* 29, no. 4 (2003), and Jenny Teichmann, *Pacifism and the Just War* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986) both speak to this idea.

Society of Friends and the Mennonites. Pacifism itself is derived from Latin, and it literally means, “peace between states.”⁶⁶ What has become a popular tendency is to assign the early peace churches retroactively with the modern term pacifism.

When looked at with the original idea in mind, pacifism was chiefly thought of at its inception as a political idea. The original definition in the Oxford English Dictionary stated that pacifism was “the doctrine or belief that it is possible and desirable to settle international disputes by peaceful means.”⁶⁷ Taken in that context, pacifism was chiefly concerned with establishing peace between international states rather than with people in their personal lives.

Since its original idea, pacifism has gone through many different changes and has since become more of a movement than it was originally intended to be. Many of those who originally adopted the ideas of pacifism were Christians in the United States.⁶⁸ Due to this, pacifism evolved to encompass several other beliefs than simply peace between states. Many pacifists also believed in social change and hence adopted several additional tenets. Soon it became true that pacifists believed not only in peace between states, but many other concepts as well.

The beginning of the change happened before World War I. There was a significant amount of pacifists who had opposed the war before the United States’ involvement. After the United States entered the war, the pacifists were accused as being sympathizers and a group that would not support a war that, at the time, was believed to end all wars. This particular thought will be discussed at length later. Note that pacifists were hated just as much as the socialists and

⁶⁶ Teichmann, *Pacifism and the Just War*, 1.

⁶⁷ Andrew Alexandra, “Political Pacifism,” 590.

⁶⁸ Devere Allen, ed., *The Fight for Peace* (New York: Macmillan, 1930), see specifically chapter 2, “The Religious Urge to Peace.” Also, for an overview of his work, see Barbara E. Addison “Pragmatic Pacifist: Devere Allen and the Interwar Peace Movement, 1918-1940,” *Peace & Change* 29, no. 1 (2004).

the communists, which was a difficult stigma to lose. However, this change caused pacifism to be defined in a few different ways.

Pacifism Defined

As discussed in the earlier section, pacifism began to change and evolve due to the nature of those who encountered it around the time of the First World War. It could no longer be looked at as a simple request to find solutions peaceably to aggravated states. With many of the early pacifists being Christians, pacifism began to acquire many of the traits of these Christian groups. That, however, was not the only change that pacifism faced. In this section, I will detail the growth of pacifism and define how I will use it for the remainder of this thesis.

Pacifism had been split into two distinct directions. The first was based on many of the pacifists' beliefs, while the other remained within the context of people's social surroundings. As such, I will explore three facets of pacifism in order to come to a definition that I believe will be useful. Charles Howlett and Glen Zeitzer state that "each peace effort must be defined with respect to the specific issues and choices that engineered it."⁶⁹ With this idea in mind, I will treat the three forms of pacifism that I will mention here as different movements that arose out of a common foundation. These ideas, as separate as they may be, constitute a measuring spectrum of pacifism.

Before the start of World War I, there was a small group of pacifists, as proven by the establishment of the American Peace Society in 1828. As such, pre-World War I pacifists were largely considered political idealists or those motivated by obedience to a particular religious idea. Those motivated by religion, in the strictest sense, could not be named pacifists. This

⁶⁹ Charles Howlett and Glen Zeitzer, *The American Peace Movement: History and Historiography* (Washington D.C.: American Historical Association, 1985), 6.

introduces the idea of political pacifism.⁷⁰ Political pacifism at this time was learning to deal with a growing enemy: the institutionalization of war and violence. While this realization may have affected various pacifists of all natures, the difficulty with the political pacifists and facing this concept was the basic difference that these pacifists do not necessarily need to believe in the same concept of peace as other pacifists. These pacifists were largely opposed to an international war for war's sake.⁷¹ The institution of war and violence, to the political pacifist, is a paradox. Humanity has been centered on its survival for thousands of years. Much time has been spent recording and ordering genealogies and oral traditions to be passed down to the next generation. For the political pacifist, it is confusing that such a race would "choose war as the instrument to preserve our existence."⁷² It is, then, the institution of war, especially during this time, that the political pacifists oppose. It follows that the peace that this pacifist would desire would not be the absence of war, but the dissolution of the institution of war.⁷³ The result of this work would be the establishment of a new institution, an institution of peace.

With the beginning of the War and the United States' entrance into it in 1917, many pacifists shifted their idea of political pacifism to a more moral idea. Also at this time, there was a widespread distrust of the United States entering World War I. Many who were not pacifists started to be attracted to pacifist beliefs due to their disdain for war. This brought along more people than had ever considered pacifism before. Many of those who had labeled themselves

⁷⁰ Albert Einstein and Bertrand Russell are both key examples of this idea. Although they are largely known for their work in regards to World War II, their ideas for a political pacifism aptly apply here.

⁷¹ Bertrand Russell adds a key distinction here. While he is a full proponent for political pacifism, he also believes in a relative political pacifism. In his article "The Future of Pacifism," he states that "very few wars are worth fighting, and that the evils of war are almost always greater than they seem to excited populations at the moment when war breaks out." Bertrand Russell, "The Future of Pacifism," *The American Scholar* 13, (1943): 8.

⁷² Howlett and Zeitzer, *The American Peace Movement*, 1.

⁷³ Alexandra, "Political Pacifism," 590.

pacifists were Christians in the United States. This moral idea will be labeled here absolute pacifism.⁷⁴ Absolute pacifism is pacifism in its perfected state. The absolute pacifist universally rejects war and violence. This idea combined the political pacifists desire for peace between states and added to it Christian tradition and thought. What developed was a universal moral that could not be changed. To this end, these absolute pacifists believed that war is always wrong. Thomas Merton states that absolute pacifism “demands a solid metaphysical basis both in being and in God.”⁷⁵ At the core of this issue is the idea that absolute pacifism is the general definition of pacifism that all adhere to. While it is true that there were several believers in this facet of pacifism, it only perpetuates the idea that pacifism is a universal idea that remains rigid and unchanging. There were plenty of people who believed that war is wrong that did not necessarily believe in absolute pacifism. At the time of the war, many believed that this would be the war to end all wars. Therefore, it would be wise to participate and, through the following peace discussions in Paris, establish a better peace that could last for generations to come. There were still significant followers of this absolute pacifism during and after World War I, despite the undertaking that it required. Even Gandhi understood the sheer difficulty of absolute pacifism. In his autobiography, Gandhi wrote that “man cannot for a moment live without consciously or unconsciously committing outward himsa (violence).”⁷⁶

⁷⁴ While there are authors who talk of an absolute pacifism, at the time of their writing, it seems as if they did not label it as such. The distinction here is that many authors, such as Leo Tolstoy and Thomas Merton, write simply about their strong ideas about pacifism and what should include. For comparative reasons, it has been labeled as absolute.

⁷⁵ Thomas Merton, *Thomas Merton on Peace* (New York: McCall Publishing Company, 1971), 209.

⁷⁶ Mohandas K. Gandhi, *Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments with Truth* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993), 439.

Particular, or personal, pacifism is a modern definition of pacifism that has been retroactively given to many pacifists during this time.⁷⁷ It is an interesting concept to try and define, largely because it has several definitions. The key theme of this definition, the one idea that is important to remember here, lies with the idea that pacifism is a personal moral choice and asks who is obligated by pacifism.⁷⁸ There are many professions that are assumed to be pacifist, mainly those within the Christian church, for example a pastor. While these professions have a perceived duty to be pacifist, the particular pacifist stops the line of thinking with herself or himself. The particular pacifist considers whether pacifism is morally necessary or merely morally permitted.⁷⁹ While the idea of a pastor is a suitable example, another far-reaching example is the idea of conscientious objector. The conscientious objector may make a decision about his or her own personal belief on pacifism, either based on vocation or a personal conviction, that does not necessarily apply to others. A key distinction rests with an eye towards tolerance. With the idea of tolerance towards others, the particular pacifist would allow others to

⁷⁷ Similar to the absolute pacifists. The opposing answer is the Universalist position of pacifism. Universalists believe that if it was generally accepted that war is wrong, then everyone should be a pacifist. I see no distinction between this or absolute pacifism.

⁷⁸ Andrew Fiala, *The Just War Myth: The Moral Illusions of War* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2007), 170. While this is the outworking of his thoughts, more information can be found in Andrew Fiala, *Practical Pacifism* (New York: Algora Press, 2004).

⁷⁹ Kenneth W. Kemp, "Personal Pacifism," *Theological Studies* 56, no. 1 (1995) is centered on this discussion. He goes in depth to speak of three different variants of personal pacifism.

have their own opinion without condemnation.⁸⁰ As such, the personal pacifists were not largely involved with the traditional movements.⁸¹

Finally, after the end of the World War I, there began another change to the idea of pacifism. Liberal pacifism began to overtake the common ideas of pacifism and would eventually change the view of pacifism forever. This will be explained in greater detail later, but it is important to note here the rapid transformation of the idea of pacifism in such a short time.

Through this lens, I will try to find a balance in order to define pacifism for this thesis. I have been attempting to show that there is no single way to define pacifism. During this time of change and growth during World War I, pacifism covered a broad number of people and beliefs. However, these groups do have one common thread, peace. While these groups may arrive at this desire differently, the point remains that pacifists desired peace. For this thesis, I will use the term pacifism to refer to a group of people who desire peace between international states and who would do so without accepting the institution of violence. Without retroactively labeling these groups, this broad definition is trying to tie the groups together under the pacifist label while keeping them as separated as possible. The key for this definition is concerned equally with the aspect of obtaining peace as it is on not accepting the institution of war and violence. As I wrote before, the hope of finding peace is what connects all pacifists. With the second half of the definition, though, I propose that pacifists during this time were also concerned with ending

⁸⁰ See also Kantian ideas for perpetual theories in Brian Orend, *War and International Justice: A Kantian Perspective* (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2000). Also, for a more wide range of history, see Bertrand Russell's thoughts on toleration in *British Broadcasting Corporation, Ideas and Beliefs of the Victorians: An Historic Revaluation of the Victorian Age* (London: Sylvan Press, 1949).

⁸¹ If conscientious objection is not counted. The logical outpouring of the personal pacifists is, at this time, either centrist pacifists, which will be considered later, or conscientious objectors. For this thesis, I did not include the conscientious objectors, so this lies outside the scope of research.

the need for war. Although some groups thought that participating in a war was the best way to stop future war, the end goal for these pacifists was ending war by any means necessary.

This definition is different then the more broadly accepted definitions that have come before it. Charles Chatfield has labeled pacifists as “those who worked for peace and refused sanction of any war.”⁸² The difference between my definition and Chatfield’s is that I write that pacifists were against the institution of war, while Chatfield states that pacifists refused the sanction of war. Sanction, in my opinion, is defined simply not to endorse. There is enough evidence that pacifists were working on changing the education of peace during this time, something that will be reviewed in detail later.⁸³ To do this is more than simply not to endorse.

The Look of Pacifism in 1919

For all intents and purposes, the above definition of pacifism covers all the pacifist groups of this time. However, there began to be a split even from the normal pacifist idea. While many, if not all, pacifists believed in peace between international states and disapproved of the institution of violence, still others took it further. The modern pacifist movement originated during and after World War I as “activists faced realities of industrialization of War and social reform.”⁸⁴ These activists were the first to combine a radical social critique with a pacifist commitment. The radical social critique was due in large part to the rise of socialism in the United States. With socialism reaching an apex in the United States at this time, many pacifists

⁸² Charles Chatfield, *For Peace and Justice: Pacifism in America, 1914-1941* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973), 4.

⁸³ For a more detailed view, see Gavriel Salomon and Baruch Nevo, eds., *Peace Education: The Concept, Principles, and Practices around the World* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2002) and Herbert Read, *Education for Peace* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1949).

⁸⁴ Charles DeBenedetti, *Origins of the Modern American Peace Movement, 1915-1929* (Millwood, NY: KTO Press, 1978), i.

began to sympathize with the socialists' work. These new liberal pacifists,⁸⁵ many coming from several religious traditions that simply agreed with the socialist's agenda, began adopting several tenets that were not previously thought of as pacifist.⁸⁶ Likewise, within the "progressive coalition of socialists and laborers," a pacifist critique grew to challenge the war on moral grounds.⁸⁷ Pacifists began to identify the war less as a social sin, as had previously been thought, than as a symptom of "systematic social injustice."⁸⁸ After 1915, a coherent pacifist critique arose that perceived peace as a reform that resided in the non-violent resolution of violence and social injustice.⁸⁹

However, as the liberal pacifist movement grew, the pacifist movements that were founded before the start of the war still had a strong voice. At the time, this pre war pacifist movement considered themselves simply as pacifists within the pronounced peace reform. Unlike their liberal counterparts, these centrist pacifist groups were better suited as the avenues for the pacifist's message. Resisting the occasional strong urge to agree with the liberal pacifists, these centrist pacifist groups were instrumental in publicizing the pacifist message. This is most prominently seen in the religious and women pacifist groups that characterized the motivations of the messages. Women's suffrage was an issue that brought the voices of several pacifist women to the forefront of the movement. When pacifist women spoke on the issue, women across the United States were sympathetic to the message simply because of who was speaking

⁸⁵ The term "liberal" here refers to the rise of the progressive movement that was also directly affected by World War I.

⁸⁶ For example workers rights and racial equality.

⁸⁷ DeBenedetti, *Origins of the Modern Peace Movement*, 83.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ For a more detailed discussion, look to Charles F. Howlett and Robbie Lieberman *A History of the American Peace Movement From Colonial Times to the Present* (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2008). Look specifically to the section "Opposition to World War I and Birth of the Modern Peace Movement" in chapter 3.

it.⁹⁰ The same trend can be traced back to the religious centrist pacifists who would speak in their places of worship. Thus, this message of pacifism would reach more people than if the same pacifist message came from a more liberal social agenda.⁹¹ Although the differences seem minor in comparison, it is important to realize the impact of both groups of pacifists.

A different realization is the growth of the pacifist movement at large during this time. At first, pacifists were regarded as unpatriotic. While this delineation never faded from use, what did end up growing was the respect that pacifists received. In short, people feared the pacifists and their reforms.⁹² Soon, the pacifists realized it as well. Pacifists began to grasp that what made them feared was not their objection to war and violence, but their objection to authority.⁹³ Rooted in the socialist tradition and ideas, a lack of trust for those in power came easily for the pacifists. One example is seen with regards to Woodrow Wilson and his attempts at peace through the political process. It was, in fact, the appearance to the pacifists that it was Woodrow Wilson's sole decision to go to war in the first place. While this is not true, the perception was still there. With many pacifists gaining more and more listeners each day, the fear was that this message of antiestablishment would run wild and the United States government would be overthrown by the socialists. Instead of embracing this discovery of overthrowing the government, the pacifists instead "devised a new ethic that looked for the implications of war as

⁹⁰ For more information, see Barbara Steinson, *American Women's Activism in World War I* (New York: Garland, 1982) and Harriet Hyman Alonso, *Peace as a Women's Issue: A History of the U.S. Movement for World Peace and Women's Rights* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1993).

⁹¹ Frances H. Early, *A World without War: How U.S. Feminists and Pacifists Resisted World War I* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1997), 16. For a more detailed look for this idea, see chapter 7: "Creating a Peace Culture."

⁹² This is in large part due to their close relationship with the socialist movement. People were afraid that socialism would ruin the country.

⁹³ Charles Howlett, *History of the American Peace Movement 1890-2000* (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2005), 73.

a method and related the instrument to its objective.”⁹⁴ In short, war must be judged by what it does because that is inseparable from what it is for.

Pacifist Groups and their Impact on the Peace Movement

Jane Addams, the founder of the Hull House in Chicago and the winner of the Nobel Peace Prize 1931, stated that it was more difficult to be known as a pacifist in 1919 than it was during the war.⁹⁵ Although many pacifist groups celebrated such growth during the war, the communist scare and the rise of fear in socialism made it difficult to do any peace work.⁹⁶ The rise in national pride that resulted from the perceived victory in the First World War caused patriotic citizens in the United States to be more vocal about their distain for the unknown, especially in the case of socialism.

Although the pacifists of this time led the way for social reform, it was not easy. Adding to the presumed stigmas that followed the pacifists, the task of changing the growing institutionalization of war and violence was not an easy one. Although pacifists tried to change the perception of the need for war, they were met with distrust and the perception of victory that was done through the direct actions of United States. During this time, several citizens thought that the United States played an integral role in securing victory for democracy in World War I. Throughout the war, newspapers and other media had portrayed the Germans and their allies as evil. These same media sources also portrayed the British and the French as weak. Due to this, when the United States entered the war and seemingly secured victory, those who were not pacifist celebrated. When pacifist groups would then ask for disarmament, or any other request,

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Chatfield, *For Peace and Justice*, 93.

⁹⁶ For more information, see Christy Jo Snider, “Patriots and Pacifists: the Rhetorical Debate about Peace, Patriotism, and Internationalism, 1914-1930,” *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 8, no. 1 (2005).

they were seen as radicals. The pacifists not only had to fight off the stigma of being radical, they also had to try and prove their points to a disapproving public. However, this would not stop the pacifists from trying to enact the social change that they sought.

As stated before, the American Peace Society (APS) was the first real peace organization. It was established in 1827.⁹⁷ However, this was not the same type of organization that had begun to appear during and after the First World War. The APS was focused on the political idea that had preceded it. The goal was, in short, to find a way to peaceably dissolve tension between states. What this society did was lay a foundation for pacifists to come together based on similar ideas and organizing a group for fellowship. This society, although not influential in its reforms, was important to the development to the modern pacifist groups.⁹⁸

The desire for fellowship grew and several other peace groups began to form. Groups like the National Council for Prevention of War (NCPW) were formed as an umbrella group that was viewed as a coordinator of the peace movement at large. While this group focused on making friends in the Senate and peacefully propagating the message of pacifism to the people of the United States, the much smaller pacifist groups around the country fueled this group.

Frederick Libby was the founder of the NCPW. Libby had founded the NCPW with the focal point being to “build peace through the construction of an overwhelming popular consensus against war.”⁹⁹ Libby also knew that there were several liberal pacifists who wanted more than his aim. That was acceptable for him, as he knew that the liberal pacifists were better

⁹⁷ The New York Peace Society was established in 1815, which was the parent group to the American Peace Society. This merger with other smaller regional peace groups was the first of its kind in the United States.

⁹⁸ I offer a tough critique here. Although the APS did publish a weekly periodical, *Advocate of Peace*, the APS was surprisingly silent throughout this time.

⁹⁹ Charles DeBenedetti, *Peace Reform in American History* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1980), 113.

at designing the strategies for pacifist reform, while centrist pacifists “directed the great mass of workers.”¹⁰⁰ While the NCPW remained more to the center of the pacifist movement, the more liberal National Peace Conference (NPC) was an established pacifist group and ultimately began competing with the NCPW. Although these groups agreed on several issues, the difference between the liberal pacifism of the NPC and the centrist pacifism of the NCPW was the glaring difference between these groups. This is seen in the groups that fed into these umbrella organizations. The Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR), which included several intellectuals that wielded significant influence, and religious groups, primarily the Society of Friends, were the driving forces that fed the NCPW. Groups like the War Resisters League (WRL) and the Fellowship for a Christian Social Order (FCO) remained loyal to the NPC.¹⁰¹

The FCO, which was equally searching for a way to obtain peace and try to help mediate several labor conflicts in the United States, was an extension of FOR that had moved into trying to help with the growing problems within the United States. While trying to reform the institutionalization of war and find lasting peace, many pacifist groups split on matters closer to home. The centrist pacifists were largely focused on the current, international disputes and trying to find peace. While the liberal pacifists were focused on that as well, there was a key group of pacifists that were focused on the industrial labor disputes in the United States. The FCO was one key group that spearheaded this reform and assumed an active role in several labor disputes.

It is important to note that these pacifist groups were not mutually exclusive. Although there was a difference in centrist pacifism and liberal pacifism, many members of each group would meet and discuss strategies and ideas for furthering the reform. The overlapping

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ For more information on these particular peace groups, see John Whiteclay Chambers II, ed., *The Eagle and the Dove: The American Peace Movement and United States Foreign Policy*, 2nd ed. (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1991).

memberships facilitated movements within the larger organized groups. This was done because of the overlap between peace groups on ideas such as disarmament and other campaigns. As such, when there was a meeting to discuss an issue, numerous people from varying different groups would meet and formulate an idea that they then brought to the table to their larger, more organized groups. From there, the larger groups would implement the new ideas within their ideological framework. The result was that a small idea would then grow into several large ideas, depending on the group implementing it.

After Woodrow Wilson sent the United States to war, the pacifist ideals were put to the test. With Woodrow Wilson's partaking in a peace conference in Paris, a conference that would hopefully establish an institution of peace known as the League of Nations, the pacifists in the United States were split. There were some pacifists that were in favor of the war as a means to end war for good.¹⁰² These reformers thought that World War I was truly a war to end all wars. To label them as pacifists is tricky as it goes against the idea that pacifists were against war and violence. Yet, one can understand the draw to this line of thinking. If this war was truly the war to end all wars, then it is a necessity to fight to secure an everlasting peace. Other pacifists would reject this idea and hope for a more civil solution to appear. However, there was no solution that magically appeared, and the pacifists were forced into a corner, of sorts: follow Wilson and disagree with his tactics, or reject Wilson's idea for peace reform entirely and attempt to seek another solution. There was no easy solution to this problem, and many pacifists, both liberal and centrist, fell on both sides of the coin.

For those who believed Wilson was doing right, however, there was an initial optimism. Many pinned their hopes to Wilson and, in turn, prayed for the best. However, these pacifists

¹⁰² Specifically the political pacifists mentioned earlier. For an account, see "Political Pacifism" by Andrew Alexandra.

were shocked, and eventually let down, by Wilson's work in Paris. The League of Nations was flawed to these pacifists.¹⁰³ Yet, despite this flaw, there were pacifists that were willing to work towards a unified idea of peace, and saw that the League of Nations was the best vehicle to do so, if not the only one available. Peace, for these groups, comes through nonviolent action against hunger and injustice. Then there were the sentiments best summed up by Oswald Garrison Villard, editor of *The Nation*, who attacked aspects of the Treaty of Versailles, and further stated that "the League (of Nations) is an alliance of victor states."¹⁰⁴ While many pacifists argued for both sides for the League of Nations, some wanting to scrap it while others wanting it reformed, it was all for not when the Senate voted against the United States ratifying the League of Nations covenant.

Women in the Pacifist Reform

As I stated at the end of the previous section, women were a central piece in the pacifist movement. Not only did they provide mass audiences, but they also brought the availability for differing views to the pacifist discussion. Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) was "probably the most influential US women's group."¹⁰⁵ In fact, women's groups all around the country were starting and becoming more influential to pacifism in the United States. Other groups, such as the Women's Peace Society (WPS) and the Women's Peace Union (WPU), were also influential to the pacifist movement.

Tracy Mygatt, Frances Witherspoon, and Jessie Wallace Hughan founded the WRL in the United States. The WRL was initially an international group founded to join nonviolent resisters

¹⁰³ Specifically with the reparation requests and the transition of land and peoples. This was against the pacifist's ideas for peace, as it further oppressed people in a variety of ways.

¹⁰⁴ DeBenedetti, *The Peace Reform in American History*, 111.

¹⁰⁵ Cecelia Lynch, *Beyond Appeasement* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), 32.

in public pledges against participation in future wars. However, when the WRL chapter was founded in the United States, the aim was not simply in making pledges, but aimed at “the abolition of war” and “the construction of a global society upon the transnational values of democratic socialism.”¹⁰⁶

The reasons for women joining the pacifist cause are debated. Charles DeBenedetti believes that women joining the pacifist movement were the simplest outworking of the maternal instinct.¹⁰⁷ He also believes that women were simply looking for something to strengthen the unity of the women’s movement, which was threatening to fraction without such a unifying issue.¹⁰⁸ Whatever the reasons, the vigor that women brought to the pacifist reform in the United States was helpful in bridging and healing the pacifist reforms that were in danger of splintering.¹⁰⁹ Ultimately, there was too much division in the woman’s pacifist movement to replicate the victory of women’s suffrage.¹¹⁰ That being said, the role women had played in the pacifist movement was unquestionable. The fresh voice and ideas that women had helped further the pacifist cause, and the loyalty that women had with each other brought the pacifist message further than anything that came before it.

¹⁰⁶ Charles Chatfield, *International War Resistance Through World War II* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1975), 22.

¹⁰⁷ DeBenedetti, *The Peace Reform in American History*, 114. However, he has no citations or notes as to why he says this. Books such as Frances H. Early, *A World without War: How U.S. Feminists and Pacifists Resisted World War I* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1997), Mari Jo Buhle, *Women and American Socialism, 1870-1920* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1983), or Harriet Hyman Alonso, *Peace as a Women’s Issue: A History of the U.S. Movement for World Peace and Women’s Rights* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1993) do not bring up this issue, or even elude to it.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. While DeBenedetti has interesting thoughts as to why women had initially joined the pacifist cause, he does not devalue their commitment or their value to the cause.

¹¹⁰ The same can be said for most of the pacifist movements, not solely to this particular movement.

Small Victory

While searching for reform, the pacifists were thrust into the spotlight during the immediate time after World War I. This time in the spotlight was a small victory for pacifism. While reform may or may not have happened, the simple fact that pacifists were at the forefront of people's minds would play a pivotal role in the formation of the pacifist reform later in the twentieth century.

The pacifist reform was probably most prevalent was during the Presidency of Warren G. Harding. After Harding took over the office of the Presidency in 1921, pacifists convinced him to take some action for disarmament. While not the greatest reform possible at this time, the simple fact that Harding was willing to listen and react was cause for great celebration for the pacifists. In 1921, the same year Harding took over for Wilson, leaders of the several prominent nations from all over the world arrived in Washington D. C. and began to work on a new "security framework in the Pacific that would lead to naval arms reduction."¹¹¹ This was the first tangible success for pacifist reform in the United States.

Conclusion

The rise of pacifism was varied and erratic at times, yet focused on establishing peace as an institution, one that would some day replace the institution of war. In the shadows of the First World War, pacifism had to change from a political idea to something that would initiate change. To do so, pacifists relied on Christian norms and socialist philosophy hopefully to initiate change within several people. Yet, the pacifist's ideals were resisted and they were ultimately blamed for the Second World War.¹¹² While deciding whether or not this was true is not in the parameters of

¹¹¹ Ibid. 112

¹¹² As dramatic as it may sound, pacifism was blamed for the perceived appeasement that had led to the Second World War. For a current critique, see Stephen Goode, "Great Powers Paid

this thesis, it is impossible to ignore the criticisms that were laid against the pacifists. Walter Lippmann wrote that “the preachment and practice of pacifists... were a cause of the (Second) World War”¹¹³ and E.H. Carr admonished the peace movements¹¹⁴ for preventing rearmament and subsequent attacks on a defenseless United States.¹¹⁵

Ultimately, in many ways, these authors are right. While the pacifists might not have been the direct cause of World War II, they did not prevent it. The pacifists failed in their attempts to establish peace and prevent war, although it was not for a lack of trying. I have detailed the struggles of the pacifists in getting their message across. Many assumed that the pacifists were sympathizers to an evil Germany, while others were blinded by the fear that socialism and communism, two movements that the pacifists were tied to by association, were going to take over the leadership of the United States and ruin the country so loved by these patriots. Fair or not, this is what the pacifists faced during this time. Ultimately, it led to a silencing of the pacifists. Howlett and Zeitzer point out that there was no homogeneous search for peace in the United States until 1941.¹¹⁶ However, the foundations that the pacifists had laid down for those peace movements are easy to trace. The pacifist movement, which was directly

Price for ‘Peace’: History Shows That the Pacifist Movement of the 1930’s Ultimately Helped to Usher in the Horror of World War II by Allowing Rogue Nations to Rise to Power Unabated,” *Insight on the News*, 2003.

¹¹³ Walter Lippmann, *U.S. Foreign Policy: Shield of the Republic* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1943), 53.

¹¹⁴ Note that it was not just the pacifists, but all those who were willing to seek peace as an alternative to war. Carr assumes that it was the peace reformers, even those who directly opposed physical interactions to try an initiate reform, which was the cause of preventing rearmament.

¹¹⁵ Ironically, Carr wrote this book, 1939, before the Attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941. For his views, look to E. H. Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919-1929* (New York: Perennial, 2001).

¹¹⁶ Howlett and Zeitzer, *The American Peace Movement*, 28.

affected by World War I, gave us three things that would characterize peace movements for years to come.

First, organized peace groups, while different in several ways, formed and discussed issues in fellowship of each other. Although several different pacifist groups were created, they believed in how to go about change in differing ways. Instead of proving why the other was wrong, they joined together, under the banner of peace, and attempted to enact reforms. Second, the movement created a foundation of how to establish reform within the pacifist ideals. To seek a world without an institution of violence, one should not resort to violence. The pacifists in the United States understood this, and so did pacifists around the world. Finally, pacifists realized a need to change society. Whether it was simply to change the institution of war, or a greater need for change in labor and human rights, the pacifists became multidimensional and sought to make reforms for the greatest number of people. While many may argue that the pacifists ultimately failed in promoting peace and abolishing war, they did not fail in establishing a blueprint, of sorts, that will be vital to the peace movements in World War II, and later in the Vietnam War.

CHAPTER 3: THE ISOLATIONIST PROCESS OF PEACE

World War I drastically changed how people perceived, and acted towards, war. This was no different for the citizens of the United States. The result of participating in the war changed public opinion of foreign relations. As such, isolationism grew to become a distinctive force in the United States. All the peace movements were drastically affected in 1919, and isolationism was no different.

Isolationism continued to grow to become a powerful idea in the United States before World War II. With its roots dating back to the foundation of the United States, isolationism can be thought of as one of the oldest peace movements in the United States. The idea of labeling isolationism as a peace movement might be troubling for some. However, the isolationists sought a form of peace for the United States, and isolationism became a popular movement to which many ascribed. This chapter will specifically look at the history and formation of isolationism, while paying special interest to how World War I affected the ideas and beliefs of this movement. To begin, I will define isolationism and explain how I will use it in this thesis. Then, I will discuss the formation of isolationism and the changes that occurred leading up to World War I. These changes are necessary to the definition of isolationism as they signify the willingness of some to bend the rules of isolationism in their favor.

I will then discuss the idea of isolationism as a peace movement. Many scholars and authors typically do not think of isolationism as a traditional peace movement. For this thesis, I will assume that it is a part of the peace movements in this era and explain why. The next section

will focus on the look of isolationism in 1919, highlighting the growth of isolationism as a predominate idea for peace in the United States. Finally, I will conclude this chapter with a look at the rise of isolationism and compare that to the decline of other peace movements, specifically pacifism, and comment on the change of peace ideals.

Isolationism Defined

For the remainder of this thesis, I will define isolationism as the purposeful working of the United States not to entangle itself in European affairs of warfare,¹¹⁷ and if it is needed, engage in discussion by setting an example of its policy with its actions.¹¹⁸ The second half of this definition is important due to the nature of the isolationists themselves. At this point in time, there was not an organized movement of groups to point to until after the scope of this thesis. So, the isolationists were so defined at this time solely by their beliefs. As will be explained later, these beliefs are what muddled the water between what isolationism was in 1919, and whether or not it can be so defined as a peace movement.

Compared to other peace movements, such as pacifism, isolationism in 1919 is simple to define. That being said, the idea of what isolationism was and how it came to be in 1919 can be just as difficult to describe as any other peace movement. Therefore, isolationism has simply been defined as a “complete lack of intercourse with any other nation.”¹¹⁹ While this is a somewhat dated definition, it highlights the unique stance of the separation the isolationists

¹¹⁷ While other areas could be included, for example economic affairs and political treaties, the idea of peace that the isolation process focuses on is simply the absence of war unless provoked.

¹¹⁸ For the scope of this thesis, it is important to note European affairs. This, however, was not labeled to simply be a stand solely against European ideas or beliefs. While there was a strong distrust with Europe that fueled the ideas of isolation, one could say that this definition could be labeled to other groups as well.

¹¹⁹ Ralph H. Smuckler, “Region of Isolationism,” *American Political Science Association* 47, no. 2 (1953): 389.

wanted from every other nation. All isolationists accepted this understanding.¹²⁰ Where many differ is in how far isolationism should go, not necessarily what it is.

At the turn of the twentieth century, isolationism was thought of more as a general guideline than a rigid position, meaning that it was assumed by many to be accepted as a simple truth. Isolationism is an old institution within the United States. While the political term was not used until the mid-nineteenth century, the idea of isolationism can be traced back to the founders of the United States. It is important to briefly look at the development of isolationism in the United States to grasp the identity that defined isolationism up to, and through, 1919.

John Adams, who would become the second President of the United States, seems to be the first to publicly state what would later be labeled as isolationism when, in 1775, he wrote that the United States should “maintain an entire neutrality in all future European wars.”¹²¹ More famously, however, George Washington emphasized in his farewell address in 1796 that the United States would best be suited to “steer clear of permanent alliances” and that the United States “may safely trust to temporary alliances for extraordinary emergencies.”¹²² It seems that Washington borrowed the ideas of “steering clear” from Thomas Paine, who wrote in his 1776 pamphlet, *Common Sense*: “It is the true interest of America to steer clear of European contentions.”¹²³ Finally, Thomas Jefferson, in his First Inaugural Address, presents the same

¹²⁰ With the advancement of internationalism, which will be covered later in this chapter, this comes into debate. However, the point should remain that an isolationist believed in isolation from other nations.

¹²¹ *Works of John Adams, Vol II*, ed. Charles Francis Adams (Boston: Little Brown and Co., 1865), 505.

¹²² George Washington, *George Washington's Farewell Address* (Bedford, MA: Applewood Books, 1999), 30.

¹²³ Eric Foner, ed., *Thomas Paine: Collected Writings* (New York: Literary Classics of the United States, 1995), 78.

message: “Honest friendship with all nations, entangling alliances with none.”¹²⁴ While the founders never used the word isolation, the general theme that prevails from their writings is that the United States should not be concerned with Europe, but instead be focused inwardly.

While the founders of the United States put this idea into words, the concept of isolationism goes back even further, to the very colonists that first arrived in what would later become the United States. Basic geographical influences shaped these colonists perceptions regarding a simple idea of isolationism. With the crude maps that were issued to them, the colonists saw the Atlantic Ocean as a natural barrier that “God Himself had intended to divide the globe into separate spheres.”¹²⁵ This division from Europe was seen as a blessing, separating the colonists from the old ways of war and corruption. From the very arrival of the original colonists, an isolationist idea was realized and promoted simply by the freedoms that the colonists enjoyed. Whether or not this basic idea of isolationism was further defined by religious undertones is not the primary thrust of this thesis.¹²⁶

There are certain aspects to isolationism that can be further defined. Aspects such as non-intervention and freedom are two such aspects. These aspects are inherent to the definition of isolationism. The logical outcome of non-entanglement is non-intervention. If the United States is not looking to become entangled in the affairs of Europe, then it will not intervene in a conflict. The idea of freedom, as limited as it may be, centers on the thought that all nations

¹²⁴ Edward S. Ellis, *Thomas Jefferson: A Character Sketch* (Fairfield, IA: 1st World Library, 2004), 5. Also, it is important to note that the theme of entangling alliances is a commonly used phrase throughout the history of isolationism.

¹²⁵ Selig Alder, *The Isolationist Impulse* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press Group, 1974), 10.

¹²⁶ What I mean here is that the theory of whether or not the original colonists saw the Atlantic as a God given barrier, as Alder states, is not the thrust of this thesis. However, it is difficult to think the religious undertones of the colonists did not in some way contribute to the overall idea of isolationism at the time.

should be afforded the same ideas of freedom that the United States promotes. This will soon become a debate centered on democracy.

Isolationism Begins to Evolve

With all these early notions of isolationism, it is easy to forget the simple outworking of isolationism: the opposition of the United States to commit to another state. While reasons may change from one person to another, it was generally accepted that isolation from Europe and the old traditions of war and corruption were, in some way, ideal.¹²⁷

From humble beginnings, isolationism became intertwined with patriotic undertones. It could be considered a national stance, albeit an informal stance. The United States saw itself as “a perpetual haven from the troubles and disputes that are found in the Old World.”¹²⁸ This national pride is what will characterize the isolationist movement late into the twentieth century. With the strong roots of the original colonists and the founders of the United States, isolationism formed a strong, almost underground, following. While the isolationists lacked a formal movement, the very idea of isolationism seemed to be a core belief for the United States up to, and through, World War I.

However, it was this patriotic twist to isolationism that began to change it. There began a movement to push on the constraints of what was considered to be traditional isolationism. A prime example was the growing focus on international business.¹²⁹ Many business leaders were

¹²⁷ This is a simple logical outcome of the isolationist position up to this point. With the Revolutionary War just ending, distrust, and possible hatred, of the British fanned the isolation flames. Since there was no other major international conflict until World War I, this position remained largely unchanged.

¹²⁸ John C. Chalberg, ed., *Isolationism: Opposing Viewpoints* (Farmington Hills, MI: Greenhaven Press, 1994), 10.

¹²⁹ Alexander Deconde, ed., *Isolation and Security: Ideas and Interests in Twentieth-Century American Foreign Policy* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1957), 96.

looking to reclaim the prosperity afforded them when the colonies were under British rule.¹³⁰ To be sure, the original isolationist standpoint never stated anything about foreign trade and commerce. Isolationism itself never meant total economic self-sufficiency. Foreign trade was but one example of a new generation in the United States trying to find their place in an isolationist tradition. Likewise, isolationism also never meant cutting off social or cultural independence either. Nonetheless, social and cultural independence was cut off for many in the United States.

As is most always the case, the following generations of isolationists never really lived up to the goal of the ideal isolation that the United States strove to meet. While the United States was excited about a fresh start away from the evils of the old world, it did not take long for those evils to arrive in the United States.¹³¹ The United States eventually migrated out west, displacing several Native peoples from their lands. The United States waged wars within its borders over political issues such as the rights of slaves. The United States also became an imperialist nation when it invaded the Philippines. Still, isolationism survived based on its premise of non-intervention of foreign wars and a refusal to enter into alliances. Thus, isolationism went from celebrating freedom and independence to preserving the independence of the chosen people.

Isolationism as a Peace Movement

Not many peace movement scholars have defined isolationism as a peace movement. The reasoning seems to be that isolationism is a political principle that is not concerned with social change. Although scholars do not explicitly state that a peace movement is defined as encompassing social change, they also do not define the peace movements without the ideas of

¹³⁰Eric A. Nordlinger, *Isolationism Reconfigured: American Foreign Policy for a New Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 87.

¹³¹ I primarily mean imperialism, the idea of extending a country's rule over another country. However, the wars and land grabs that the United States were apart of at this time is similar to the history of Western Civilizations.

social change. With the focus on alliances and foreign trade, isolationism says little about achieving peace on a large scale. The isolationist scholars seem to promote the theory that isolationists, in fact, were established members of the peace movement of this time. While it is true that isolationists worked counteractively towards similar social agendas as many of the other peace movements, isolationists in fact reasoned for peace. It was a peace based on tradition, but peace still.¹³²

Before the outbreak of war, it was possible for the isolationist to entertain the ideas of non-entanglement, universal liberty, and world peace equally. Non-entanglement and liberty were foundational to the isolationist's doctrine. Where they differed on ideas of peace, be it world or local, was directly connected to their ideas of liberty. Isolationists frequently advocated for United States' leadership "in the promotion of peace, provided that we (United States) limit our efforts to moral suasion and scrupulously avoid commitments for coercive action to allay or punish aggression."¹³³

Within this lens, it is easy to see how isolationists can be considered part of the peace movement at large before World War I. However, as much as the isolationists believed this to be true, the actions done by the United States speaks to a different history. As noted earlier, the isolationists promoted the thought of universal liberty to other nations that were being intimidated or had particular injustices done to them.¹³⁴ However, the isolationists did not afford

¹³² Meaning that the isolationists were not heavily involved with social agendas. The isolationists, whether or not they agreed with social positions of the time, worked out of the isolationist idea when they did so. Counteractively to the Pacifists, who were deeply involved in reforming social problems of the time, the isolationists were concerned with peace and neutrality of the United States.

¹³³ Alder, *The Isolationist Impulse*, 28

¹³⁴ For further reading, see David Brody's "The Changing Interpretive Structure of American Foreign Policy," in *Twentieth-Century American Foreign Policy* ed. John Braeman, Robert H. Bremner (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1971). Specifically pages 28-

the same liberties to many inside the United States. While that may be the reason many peace scholars did not include the isolationists as a peace movement, there were no real distinctions made. It is clear that peace movement scholars of the past have not included isolationism as part of their discussion of peace.

There is something that could be said for the lack of movement that typified the isolationist process of this time. As stated before, there was no unified isolationist movement before World War I. There were no prominent isolationist groups, or any isolationist thinkers after James Monroe.¹³⁵ It was an assumed position for many years. At the outset of the war, a more rounded isolationist position formed, and many isolationist writers and thinkers emerged. Yet, despite this emergence, it is still not considered a legitimate peace movement.

While it may have differed in its approach, the isolationist position sought peace for the unilateral United States, unless directly attacked. The isolationist position started as a beacon for freedom, but lost its shine over time. While a majority of peace movements seek something more than just peace, centered on some form of social action, isolationists focused on preservation of values put forth by the founders of the country.¹³⁶

Isolationism in 1919

In many ways, World War I helped further the isolationist position. The actual threat of involvement in the war clashed, for the first time, with the isolationists. Never before was there a

30 deals with the idea of early isolationist ideas of universal liberty and the discussions it promoted.

¹³⁵ This could easily be reasoned out with the idea that there was no international conflict with the magnitude and ramifications of World War I before this time. Therefore, no positions needed further explanation.

¹³⁶ As much as the focus was on preserving the values of their tradition, the actions perpetrated to less privileged groups falls in stark contrast to that idea. However, the idea cannot be underplayed that, through World War I, isolationists agreed in many ways with their predecessors.

war such as the one happening over seas. The economic interests of the United States positioned it directly in the middle of the controversy. The United States was afraid of Germany becoming the center of European trading.¹³⁷ While the foreign trade market was in danger of drastically changing, it was not a reasonable cause for the United States to enter the war.

The isolationists before entrance into the war were split along several foundations. There emerged intellectuals citing isolationist beliefs that differed from one another. Isolationists were on both sides of the debate about entering the war. Some saw the idealistic nature of previous generations of isolationists and lobbied for peace and justice in the world.¹³⁸ Still, other isolationists believed in security and prestige in foreign policy.¹³⁹ What was clear was isolationism began to change again. This time, instead of minor tenets being debated, such as foreign trade policy, the literal definition of isolationism was being debated. What came from this debate was another change in isolationism. Isolationism changed from being a tradition to being a political position.

Small groups began to form with strong isolationist ties. These groups were similar to the rising pacifist groups of the same era, with a few differences between them. One was the fear of the United States entangling itself in an alliance with warring nations. No one knew what would come of it if it were to happen. This is in sharp contrast with the pacifist approach that was, in some part, interested in changing the idea of a need for war in any way it could. The other difference was how these groups were viewed. The isolationist groups were patriotic and were

¹³⁷ Deconde, *Isolation and Security*, 14.

¹³⁸ John Middleton Cooper, *The Vanity of Power: American Isolationism and the First World War 1914-1917* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1970), 3.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

elevated as such.¹⁴⁰ As noted in the previous chapter, the pacifists were fighting the stigma of socialism while trying to portray their message to the United States. Isolationist groups had the luxury, one may say, not to have a harmful stigma attached to them. This isolationist group movement included “nationalist patriotic societies such as the American Legion and Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR).”¹⁴¹ While these groups shared isolationist beliefs, they were not formed necessarily to persuade people to their cause. This was unnecessary, due to their cause being a popular political idea at this time.

Several scholars formed varied isolationist discussions and opinions at this time. One position focused on revisiting traditional isolationist idealism. There were four prominent authors who took the mantle of isolationism head on.¹⁴² One such author was Samuel Orth. Orth believed that the situation in Europe would continue until all European countries were democratized, stating that “international peace will rest upon international democracy.”¹⁴³ Orth was one of many in a long line of isolationists who tried to remain true to the idealistic nature of isolationism. This isolationism was focused on a comprehensive idea of peace, but would only engage in it if it were safe for the United States to do so. There were others in this line of thought, William Jennings Bryan, Ellery Stowell, and Randolph Bourne, who also made fairly reasoned arguments. Bryan and Orth both cited the idealistic nature of the United States. Stowell argued similarly, although it was less nationalistic. Instead of the United States being viewed as a

¹⁴⁰ Deconde’s *Isolation and Security: Ideas and Interests in Twentieth-Century American Foreign Policy* has an excellent narrative to this point. The idea that is stated is that there was a blooming prestige in being from the United States.

¹⁴¹ Cecelia Lynch, *Beyond Appeasement* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), 37.

¹⁴² Indeed there are more than four authors and thinkers in this category. These thinkers, however, come to similar conclusion from varied positions.

¹⁴³ Samuel Orth, “Preserve U.S. From Europeanism; We Ought Not Be Lured by the Glitter of World Influence” *New York Times*, July 4, 1915.

righteous nation, Stowell's argument focused primarily on international politics.¹⁴⁴ All of these isolationists agreed in principle that the politics of the world would have to change before the United States could consider intervening. Bourne sums it up nicely when he asked, "Would not such a league (of Nations) contain the seeds of new wars?"¹⁴⁵ This idealistic view of the isolationism would not change up to and through 1919.

There were isolationists that did believe in something other than this ideal isolationism. There was a nationalistic isolationism that was interested solely on the interests of the United States. The national isolationists sought security and power from within and believed that the United States was the best example of freedom, just as the idealistic isolationists did. The difference was that the nationalistic isolationists recognized that "institutions could be maintained only inside a fortress America."¹⁴⁶ Ultimately, the idealist's views won popular support later in the twentieth century.¹⁴⁷ Just like the pacifists, the isolationists began to split on relatively minor ideas. Much like the center pacifists and the liberal pacifists, two strong ideologies began to emerge from the isolationist process.

Furthering the Spectrum: Isolationists and Internationalists

A particularly important issue that faced the isolationists during this time was the advent of internationalism. Although linked, the very premise of internationalism is in direct contention with the isolationist's position. Put simply, internationalism was the "willingness (of the United

¹⁴⁴ Cooper, *The Vanity of Power*, 69. Note that the other authors mentioned focus on an idealistic view. Stowell, while agreeing, states that more than a high view of the United States was needed.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 72

¹⁴⁶ Charles Chatfield, *For Peace and Justice: Pacifism in America, 1914-1941* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973), 171.

¹⁴⁷ Specifically, after Congress failed to ratify the League of Nations, and the United States was made fully aware of what happened at the Paris Peace Conference, the idealists' views became more popular simply because the thought of Europe not being stable was more of a reason not to engage than anything else.

State) to take on responsibilities of world leadership.”¹⁴⁸ The key to this connection is the similar thoughts both the isolationists and the internationalists had on the perfected aims of the United States and its ideas of freedom. Both groups wanted to share this definition of freedom with the world, but it was the internationalists that took such a direct view of how to do it. This affinity to try and “right the ills of the world” had forced the foreign policy of the United States to be “dichotomously labeled” as both internationalist and isolationist.¹⁴⁹ It is important to note that while many might view internationalists as something different than isolationism, they are very closely related. While it is true that many who later became internationalists lobbied for involvement in peace discussions and change, the only difference that the internationalists had with the isolationists was that it did not matter to the internationalists what the politics of the world were, as long as the sovereignty and freedoms of the United States were to remain intact.¹⁵⁰ What mattered was the message that the United States, with its focus on freedoms and democracy, would prevail and change the minds of other countries.

These internationalists had an important voice in this time. Brooks Adams, descendant from John Adams, was one voice that typified the movement. Adams wrote that “the risk of isolationism promises to be more serious than the risk of alliance.”¹⁵¹ The theory of the internationalists was that the United States would in some way have to contribute to the preservation of peace.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁸ Lynch, *Beyond Appeasement*, 126.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Nordlinger, *Isolationism Reconfigured*, 188.

¹⁵¹ Alder, *The Isolationist Impulse*, 30.

¹⁵² Ronald E. Powaski, *Toward an Entangling Alliance: American Isolationism, Internationalism, and Europe, 1901-1950* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991), 64.

Possibly one of the most famous internationalists was Woodrow Wilson. At the very least, modern scholarship seems to indicate that he would fit into the internationalist position.¹⁵³ When one considers Wilson's ideas for peace without victory, it is easy to see why it could be possible for Wilson to be classified as such. Wilson was reelected on the premise that he kept the United States out of war. When he presented his Fourteen Points, he called for peace without victory, self-determination, and economic globalization.¹⁵⁴ These points highlight traditional internationalist beliefs. Thus, it can be assumed that Wilson thought along the same lines as internationalists based on stated beliefs and a review of his actions.

The internationalists would play a greater role in the interwar years. They also were afforded much more attention in traditional peace movement studies than their isolationist counterparts. This can be directly related to the internationalist's willingness to take on the leadership of forging peace without worry of entangling alliances. That said, the internationalists were just as serious about the sovereignty of the United States as their isolationist counterparts.

*International Interpretations of Isolationism*¹⁵⁵

At this time in the history of the United States, there were many immigrants that were establishing small communities of their homeland within the borders of the United States. The United States welcomed them. With the immigrants came new interpretations to several peace doctrines. Again, isolationism was no different. Joseph Cuddy spent a large amount of time detailing the Irish-Americans and German-Americans in this time, and detailing how both were

¹⁵³ Wilson made no claim on way or another. The ideas here are based off of scholarship and the ideas that they put forth.

¹⁵⁴ John Middleton Cooper, ed., *Reconsidering Woodrow Wilson: Progressivism, Internationalism, War, and Peace* (Washington D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2008), 253.

¹⁵⁵ This section is largely based off of Joseph Cuddy, *Irish-America and National Isolationism, 1914-1920* (New York: Arno Press, 1976).

influential in their call for fundamental isolationism in his book, *Irish-America and National Isolationism, 1914-1920*.

The issue starts with base assumptions. Immigrants left old world issues for a new world. As such, their distaste for anything close to European tendencies only fueled the isolationists in their representation of European distrust. Irish-Americans were distrustful of anything European, especially anything British.¹⁵⁶ The resulting Irish nationalism that appeared in the United States was based on trying to win support for a free Ireland. German-Americans were sympathetic to the strife of Germany, yet also distrusted the old world ways of the British.¹⁵⁷ This was a major tie between Irish-Americans and German-Americans.

These groups sought neutrality from the United States, and started with trying to stop the munitions trade from the United States to the Allies.¹⁵⁸ This was a difficult task since it was generating large sums of money for the United States. Although the fight was tough, the international isolationist groups fought back. They were eventually silenced because the lure of money was too great.

Through the entirety of the war, German-Americans had to answer for the actions of Germany. Right or not, many assumed that the immigrants from Germany were sympathizers and, therefore, just as responsible. Irish-Americans were also looked at as sympathizers due to their hope that a German victory would lead to a free Ireland.¹⁵⁹ While both groups were focused on the neutrality of the United States, the stigma that they faced was difficult to break. Ultimately, German-Americans could not break the stigma. Although their message would gain

¹⁵⁶ At this time, Ireland was going through national upheavals with large sections of Ireland wanting to become a free country, which at this time was still under the rule of the English.

¹⁵⁷ DeConde, *Isolation and Security*, 12-13.

¹⁵⁸ Cuddy, *Irish-America and National Isolationism*, 77-78.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 59

some sympathy over the seemingly harsh treatment of the Treaty of Versailles, what Germany had done in the war overshadowed what the German-Americans thought.

Although their voice was considerably less impactful than normal isolationists, their voices were there. At the time, there were strong negative sentiments towards all those who emigrated from other countries. Specifically an anti-German sentiment was gaining ground, which led the way for “animosity... against all varieties of hyphenates.”¹⁶⁰ Irish-Americans had louder voices when it came to the freeing of Ireland later in the interwar years. This small coalition of immigrants helped secure an isolationist message. The determination of the Irish-Americans to be heard, and the eventual sympathy their movement would gain, catapulted the isolationist message further. Although these groups were important in later years, one reason for their importance was their unique religious ties. Specifically, within the Irish-American groups, there was a strong tie with Catholicism. Although it is outside the scope of this thesis, the “religious influences paralleled political objectives.”¹⁶¹

Interestingly to note, these groups were also vocal supporters of Wilson before the United States’ entrance into war. Wilson promised that the United States would not entangle itself with the problems of Europe. He was re-elected on this principle. Those that backed Wilson did so because of this isolationist stance. Even though the United States was not neutral anymore, the Irish-Americans saw the good in the position they were in. When Wilson did attend the peace negotiations, the Irish-Americans hoped that Wilson would sympathize with their ideas and, at

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 71

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 61

the very least, put the topic of a free Ireland on the table. Wilson did seek self-determination; however, he did not push for the Irish-Americans to be heard.¹⁶²

DeConde largely backs what Cuddy states, although he goes a step further and states that this new international view of pacifism in the United States was the backbone for isolationism at this time. His reasoning was that the international view of isolationism was not based on the “ethnic reaction to American foreign policy”¹⁶³ He also notes that these isolationists had little in common except their distrust for the old world ways, which was “strong enough to make some of them extreme nationalists, the new standard-bearers of traditional isolationist philosophy.”¹⁶⁴

The Rise of Isolationism

There were many reasons for the isolationist position to become as popular as it did. Tradition and beliefs carried it to the forefront of peace movements in the United States. Its lasting impact would be felt up to World War II. It is not the aim of this thesis to decide whether isolationism was right or wrong, or even trying to provide reasons for its validity. This thesis aims at examining the peace movements of a particular era. There is a fundamental reason that isolationism became as popular as it did.

¹⁶² There are varied accounts of Wilson hearing the Irish-Americans and their wish for a free Ireland. However, despite whether it happened or not, the Ireland topic was never resolved at the Paris Peace Conference. Whether or not that was Wilson’s fault can be debated, but the perception that resulted from it was that Wilson did not care for the Irish-Americans. Something that was backed up by his words to them on the speaking tour he took that was detailed in chapter 1. I would argue that this perception was more impactful than the question how much Wilson tried.

¹⁶³ Alexander DeConde, *Isolation and Security*, 12.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.* This also points to the idea that isolationists were becoming more nationalistic and patriotic.

As noted in the earlier section, there was a distrust of European, especially British, governments. This was a fundamental isolationist stance.¹⁶⁵ Participation in the war did little, if anything, to help this stance. With the seemingly unfair reparations request that was placed on Germany, and most of the subject matter of the Treaty of Versailles itself, public opinion began to question whether or not it was a good idea to participate in the war at all. While some may argue that participation was necessary due to the actions of the Germans,¹⁶⁶ questions of preparedness were rampant. What began to be seen was the realization that European politics had not changed. The focus was still on money, as evidenced by the reparations, and on the land requested by the Allied countries. The isolationists pointed to these facts and felt as if they were right to believe as they did all along.

The isolationists were also upset with Wilson. Wilson was seen as a proud supporter of isolationism when he initially refused to enter into the war. By the time the war was over, it became clear to the isolationists in the United States that Wilson's goals of making the world safe for democracy were idealistic. According to *The Isolationist Impulse*, the "ideological crusade" that he waged "mushroomed far beyond any possibility of fulfillment."¹⁶⁷ The idea of declaring war seemed unnecessary. The over-selling of its intentions also hurt when the results were unaccomplished at best.¹⁶⁸ Specifically the over-saturation of Wilson's promises and subsequent perceived failures caused the isolationist base, and many in the United States, to become disenfranchised with war. If this was what the founders of the United States meant when

¹⁶⁵ Although informal, the isolationists believed in non-entangling alliances, but the Paris Peace Conference backed up the tradition of mistrust with European politics.

¹⁶⁶ Towards the United States. Specifically speaking, the sinking of the Lusitania and the Zimmerman note.

¹⁶⁷ Alder, *Isolationist Impulse*, 34.

they warned against entangling alliances, then the years of history before intervention into World War I were proof enough that the United States did not need such alliances.

These factors led to a period of time when isolationism became a popular cry for the ways of years past, where the United States would look out for itself. Entrance into the war caused death, debt, and insecurity in the political ways of Europe. With a treaty that was seen as far less than promised, the isolation position gained ground in the peace movement. This popularity would accompany the isolationists for more than twenty years.

During and after World War I, interest in isolationism steadily rose in the United States. This could be due to the patriotic nature of the isolationists, or the strong tradition of their position. Either way, the isolationist position grew in popularity while other ideas of peace began to fade. Pacifism specifically was hurt, because it was perceived that most pacifists adopted several ideas that were outside the original scope of pacifism itself, which in turn had them labeled as sympathizers. Compared to the isolationists, the pacifists were multidimensional and proud of it. The sole focus of the isolationists may have helped the message find a greater audience, since it was easy to be focused on one idea versus the multitude of social agendas that the pacifists were tied to. What is known is that the rise of isolationism corresponded to the decline of pacifism in the peace movements.

Conclusion

In 1919, Senator William Borah stated that the newly finished election was “the judgment of the American people against any political alliance or combination of European powers.”¹⁶⁹ He continued by saying, “The United States has rededicated itself to the foreign policy of George

¹⁶⁹ Powaski, *Toward an Entangling Alliance*, 27.

Washington and James Monroe, undiluted and unemasculated.”¹⁷⁰ Borah was not the only person to think this to be the case.

Isolationism has had a long history within the United States. It started with the first colonizers and their noticing a natural barrier. It evolved into a political position with the founders of the country. It went largely untested until the realization that a world war was imminent. It was, by some accounts, disregarded for an idealism that failed simply because there was no reason to follow it. However, the people of the United States would eventually revive this idea based on the strong patriotic undertones that were assumed within.

There was an evolution of isolationism after World War I. This new isolationism, as labeled by Selig Alder, was midway between the prewar ideas of isolationism and the postwar idea of a global role that was called for by the internationalists.¹⁷¹ This new isolationism was characterized by greater involvement of the United States in economic affairs in Europe, but it was marked by a “persistent refusal to make commitments that would impair America’s traditional freedom of action.”¹⁷²

The idea of an isolationist peace movement is difficult for some to grasp. It did not follow the traditional ideas of the other peace movements, specifically pacifism. While isolationism is hard for some to label a peace movement, I believe that it was, because of its

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Alder, *Isolationist Impulse*, 34. For the counter of this argument, see Steven Kull, and I. M. Destler, *Misreading the Public: The Myth of a New Isolationism* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1999).

¹⁷² Powaski, *Toward an Entangling Alliance*, 29. Powaski does not label this a new type of isolationism like Alder has. However, Powaski does seem to reference a difference in the way isolationism was seen.

insistence on freedom and its eventual resistance to war.¹⁷³ While it is true that isolationism was a political position, so too was pacifism when it was first conceived, although, as will be seen, isolationism did do something that pacifism could not.

While pacifism remained multidimensional by being vocal in workers rights and racial equality, isolationism remained neutral to these causes. While certain isolationists may have believed in these causes, their strict focus on the United States' alliances kept them in the isolationist discussion. While the pacifists had to fight off a stigma that they were harmful to the wellbeing of the United States, the isolationists were able to say that they were helping the security of the United States by keeping it out of entangling alliances that would weaken the stability that has been prevalent through the generations. It seemed that the pacifists had to work in extremely difficult conditions to be heard, while the isolationists had most of their work done for them.¹⁷⁴ In many respects, the isolationists could be considered to be at one side of the peace scale, while the pacifists were their opposite, not in beliefs, but in works.

¹⁷³ Although it is important to remember that the isolationists were adamant on the ideas of freedom, the voices of the isolationists were largely absent when it came to furthering the borders of the United States and the invasion of the Philippines.

¹⁷⁴ Specifically meaning that the isolationists had distrust in the European ways before entrance into war. Now much of the United States did as well.

CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I have detailed three processes of peace. The political process was the most known, in many ways due to the spectacle it became rather than the peace conference it was intended to be. Although the hope was for nations to come together to forge a new era of peace, what ended up happening was political fighting leading to issues that were not resolved. The pacifist process was wrought with struggles as people tried to prove the worth of dissolving the institution of war in the face of disinterest and distrust. The isolationist process, in many ways, was the favorable option due to the history and patriotic implications that it espoused.

Peace is difficult to define, let alone to obtain. It requires many people believing in one idea, which can be tricky to achieve. Within the United States, there were three distinct processes to find peace. These three processes in 1919 were heavily intertwined. Woodrow Wilson, among many others during this era, was famously trying to achieve a peace that would last for years to come. In doing so, Wilson was viewed as an isolationist, internationalist, and as a peace politician. He could not escape the labels. Such was the way of the peace movement at that time. The way to achieving peace was marred with variant beliefs as to what was either achievable, or what was more right. Opinions differed considerably, regardless of beliefs. Between all the discussions, there was no agreed upon idea of the peace to be achieved.

In terms of achieving peace, 1919 was a decisive year. Never before had such influential processes been so prominent in the United States. With the rise of these processes, and the active struggle to achieve peace, differing ideas rose to become conflicting agendas. The emergence of the connections with these processes, despite the evident contrasts, points to a majority of people

wanting to attempt peace. While these processes varied in how they went about seeking peace, they were, at times, inseparable. Whether by design or perception, those who sought peace would come to be labeled similarly. There were some differences in labeling, but by and large these groups were considered to be similar in their goals. The political process, with its goals of peace through democracy, the pacifist process, with a high regard for human rights and dissolution of the institution of war, and the isolationist process, with a focus on keeping the United States free from harmful alliances, were all different views of a lasting peace. They were varied in beliefs and actions, but united under the hope for peace.

It is easy to look back and state that the peace movements failed. The Treaty of Versailles was not ratified, pacifist organizations were declining in numbers, and isolationists were only focused on the United States itself. Adding to that, there was no world peace. However, the foundation of a peace movement at large was laid. With entrance into World War II, the isolation process was still a heated debate, the groups that had characterized the pacifist process were still functioning, and the political process was largely redefined. If one is to measure the success of the peace processes in this time, then success (and failure) must be defined. If the goal was an establishment of an institution of peace, as in the pacifist process, then it could be said that the pacifist process failed. However, it is unfair to the pacifist process to label everything a failure. Those in the pacifist movement of this time were focused on an institution of peace, but they were also focused on human rights and bettering life for humanity. While these goals were not realized during the time frame dealt with in this thesis, this discussion continued, and change was brought about. It is hard to say that the pacifist process failed. Too often, the dualistic idea of Western Culture tends to label ideas in black and white categories. Either a movement or process

fails or succeeds based on the gathered information. Can these processes be more than a failure or a success? Could these processes not be a tool in helping others realize a voice?

In the Introduction, I stated that there was an assumption that peace was, in its nature, something that needed to be worked for rather than simply found. These processes typify that reasoning. Throughout the time that these processes worked for peace, they were met with resistance. This was a peculiar time for the peace movement. While there had been wars and violence before this time, there was never a war that encompassed so many people. While an ideal for peace may have been present before World War I, there had not been such an extensive war before it. Those seeking a form of peace had nothing to protest, since there was little international conflict that the United States had participated in. When that time came, there were people who decided to voice their opinions in opposition to the war. These opinions were based on tradition and personal convictions. The outworking of these people voicing their opinions was the formation of like-minded people into groups that used their collective voice to oppose what they thought was wrong. The foundation that was established by these groups would be felt through the Second World War, the Cold War, and the Vietnam War.

Peace is an ideal to which many people ascribe. Whether it is peace through religious convictions or a logical outworking of the counterproductive nature of war, the limitations of one's definition of peace is limited only by their opinions. The outworking of those who wanted peace in 1919 led to an established peace movement. That peace movement, as defined through the three processes discussed in this thesis, has caused a change in the international definition and understanding of peace. While this understanding might not have seemed to be great at the time, history has proven differently.

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