

Six Views of the Paris Peace Conference, 1919

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On December 13 1918, US President Woodrow Wilson arrived in France as the leading US representative to the Paris Peace Conference. The Great War had been a long and bloody one, involving 29 countries in which 8 million soldiers died and over 16 million were wounded. Additionally, 22 million civilians were killed or wounded (Mee xvi). Wilson brought with him a fourteen-point plan to bring a just and lasting peace. The cornerstone of his plan was a League of Nations to oversee international relations and prevent the outbreak of further wars. As the leader of the dominant economic power in the world, which, once having entered the war, had brought it to a quicker end, Wilson received a hero's welcome. When he toured France, Britain, and Italy, crowds of hundreds of thousands came out to greet him and cheer "the Savior of Europe." In response, he gave the crowds encouraging words on the importance of the peace treaty: "If we do not heed the mandates of mankind, we shall make ourselves the most conspicuous and deserved failures in the history of the world." (Nicholson 196)

The peace treaty was negotiated in Paris from January to June of 1919. The Conference was the largest peace conference the world had ever known, containing 58 separate committees. 27 of the national delegations attended for the full six months. The four leaders of Italy, France, Great Britain, and the US engaged in face-to-face negotiations of unprecedented length and intensity to "fashion a new international order out of the wreckage of postwar Europe amid an agitated atmosphere of political, social, and economic crisis." (Keylor 472) The original title of the Conference was actually "The Preliminary Peace Conference at Paris" (Czernin viii). This Conference eventually meandered its way into being the final Conference without any formal declaration.

The American delegation and advisory body (the Inquiry) numbered nearly 1300 (Gelfand 189). In the attempt to make a rational, scientific peace settlement, Wilson used historians and social scientists more than diplomats as his advisors. Wilson had called the Conference "the supreme conference in the history of mankind (Widenor 561). The realities of the Conference could not match Wilson's expectations. Robert Lansing wrote in his diary in January 1919, "The Great War seems to have split up into a lot of little wars." (Gelfand 189) French Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau declared that it would be more difficult to win the peace than win the war (MacMillan 31).

On June 28 1919, the 80,000-word Paris Peace Treaty was signed in a formal ceremony at the Hall of Mirrors in the Versailles Palace. Wilson biographer Ray Stannard Baker called the Treaty "the best

arrangement for peace that could be made at a moment still dominated by the spirit of war.” (Widenor 556) American Inquiry members Charles Haskins and Robert Lord called the treaty “an honest effort to set up a just and durable settlement.” (557) Critics – and there were many – found numerous faults. When Wilson returned to the US, he found the Treaty had not met with the popularity he had expected. The Treaty faced opposition for ratification from Congress, particularly concerning the US role in the League of Nations. The proposed Treaty was defeated, bringing a halt to US international involvement and ending Wilson’s hope of a US-led League providing for the world’s collective security. This defeat also added to the image of the failure of the Conference. Writing in 1999, historian John Ickenberry claimed that, “No peace settlement has provoked more controversy or regret than the Treaty of Versailles.” (Ickenberry 140) How much of a failure actually was the Treaty? This paper will examine 6 interpretations of the Paris Peace Conference and US involvement.

In *Versailles Twenty Years After*, (1941), Paul Birdsall seeks to “make an appraisal of the forces, personal and political, which determined the outcome of the struggle between Wilsonian principles of a new world order and the principles of reactionary nationalism.” (Birdsall xi) *Colonel House in Paris* by Inga Floto (1973) is an “attempt at combining an analysis of American policy at the Peace Conference and an account of Colonel Edward House’s part in its formation.” (Floto 10) In *Politics of Diplomacy and Peace-Making 1918-1919* (1967), Arno Mayer focuses on the “political and diplomatic context and climate in which the principal peacemakers dealt with critical issues and problems involving fundamental policy considerations” highlighting the interplay of domestic and international politics (Mayer vii). Arthur Nicolson’s *Peacemaking 1919* reflects on the Peace Conference from a participant’s point of view. He acknowledges the impossibility of a peace formulated completely of moderation and righteousness, and focuses on the “special circumstances of confusion” that faced the Paris negotiators (Nicolson 7). A final text included is *The Treat of Versailles: A Reassessment after 75 Years*, edited by Boemeke, Feldman, and Glaser (1998). The work is a compilation of an international conference on the Treaty of Versailles. The text is composed of 26 chapters by 26 Paris Peace Conference historians attempting to “produce an international research-oriented synthesis” (Boemeke, Feldman, and Glaser 1). This paper will examine two views from the text. In one chapter, William Keylor corrects some long-standing myths about the Conference. He believed the Treaty to be a workable one, although expectations were set too high, especially by Woodrow Wilson. Finally, Lawrence E. Gelfand examines some of the important and influential histories of the Paris Peace Conference, then assesses the strength of Wilson’s leadership and the legacy of Wilsonianism.

Paul Birdsall

Birdsall’s analysis is an effort to disprove the theory that the unrealistic Wilson program collapsed

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under the power politics of Europe. His argument is that Wilson's programs, tentatively agreed upon by the Allies and Germany in the Pre-Armistice, were compromised by all the major powers and Wilson's own chief negotiator, Colonel Edward House. Throughout all of this, Wilson remained "a man of courage in the face of almost insuperable obstacles."

Birdsall believes that all the Allied powers agreed to Wilson's peace plan in a Pre-Armistice agreement with only two reservations (German reparations and freedom of the seas (MacMillan 19)). This is considered by Birdsall to be a legal contract supposed to govern the terms of peace. Yet each of the major powers developed diplomatic strategies in violation of the Fourteen Points: the British wanted to annex former German colonies in Africa and to obtain German reparations; Italy desired extensive territorial claims; Japan wanted territorial rights in the Pacific and the Shantung Province in China; while the French sought German reparations and planned to oppose American amendments in order to obtain bargaining power.

In addition to the hypocrisy of the major negotiating powers, President Wilson faced the fact that his chief advisor Colonel Edward House was willing to make concessions on many meaningful issues. Birdsall dwells at length on House's role as an appeaser:

On every major issue he advocated compromise and concession at the expense of the accepted principles of peace, and in every case beyond the definite limits set by Wilson. To this extent he assisted the strategy of the British, Japanese, and French in extracting concessions from Wilson, in every instance except that of Reparation Settlement Wilson successfully stopped short of the extremes of compromise to which the Colonel was urging him. (Birdsall 20)

Wilson's ideology versus House's desire for a settlement at all costs produced a serious split in the American delegation during and after negotiations of Italian claims. It was here that Birdsall believes Wilson's relationship of trust and confidence in House coming to an end. After the Italian debate, House was to have little to say in the negotiations.

Wilson did make mistakes, Birdsall admits, but these were few and not entirely his fault. Allied premiers knew of his determination to establish a League of Nations, and were unscrupulous in exploiting Wilson's determination to extract concessions from him. His worst defeats were the Reparation Settlement and Shantung; the first occurred while Wilson was ill and the second because of an impregnable position held by the Japanese. Even Wilson's staunchest defenders Arthur Link and Ray Stannard Baker could not have assigned Wilson any less blame.

Birdsall believes Wilson was an idealistic, long-range visionary equipped with a workable plan for world peace. The "only man of real stature" showed extraordinary consistency and a high degree of political intelligence in trying to put the details of his plans into reality against the forces of reactionary nationalism.

Along with Birdsall's obvious agreement with Wilson's ideology, his viewpoint is also affected by the condition of world affairs at the time (1941) he was writing – dangerous and uncertain. Armed with these views, one can understand more clearly why he sees Wilson's cause as the noble one, why the Peace Conference held such opportunity for a new world order, and how the opportunity was squandered.

Igna Floto

Igna Floto explores the relationship between President Wilson and Colonel House in greater detail and over a longer period of time than Birdsall. Floto, a Danish academician, further details House's role in the formation of US policy in Paris. Included is an assessment of the political situation and environment which influenced House and Wilson's actions.

House left for Europe in October 1918, by which time there were already serious differences between he and Wilson. As early as 1916, they differed on what role the US should play in the war. House was more liberal than Wilson, and his leftist leanings caused him to ally himself closer to the Bolshevik movement than Wilson. He felt that Russia could be brought back to a liberal form of government if it was dealt with properly, while Wilson feared the spread of Communism and attempted to develop a policy to halt it. Another difference is that Wilson mistrusted the Allies, while House trusted and wanted to collaborate with them. Both agreed on the peace plan of the US and saw the League of Nations as the most important part, but differed on the means to be used to obtain a reasonable settlement.

At the Pre-Armistice agreements in October of 1918, House's actions were to foreshadow events at Paris three to six months later. He underestimated the importance of the negotiations, and having falsely assumed that the Allies already accepted the Fourteen Points, had lost sight of the political aspects of the Armistice. Wilson, for his part, failed to tell House what to expect or how to proceed: "I have not given you any instructions because I know you will know what to do." (Sharp 136; MacMillan 18)

House's most blatant misjudgment of his role occurred when Wilson returned to the US in February 1919. House took the initiative and acted in clear contradiction to Wilson's principles regarding French demands and the League of Nations Covenant. The result was a further weakening of the US position, already hurt by domestic opposition to Wilson's plans. Upon his return, Wilson broke with House and for all intents and purposes, left House out of further negotiations.

Out of desperation by Wilson, House did take part in some negotiations in early April while Wilson was ill. Here, House failed because he did not understand Wilson's intent to be firm on the issue of the Saar (Note: The French asked for sovereignty over the Saar Valley, which was a German territory valuable for its coal mines. The US compromised by allowing the French a 15-year lease.) House's pro-French policy also played a role in this failure. He involved himself in negotiations with Italy, but this was done on his own initiative and had no bearing on the US position. His independent Italy negotiations showed how

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isolated he had become from the American delegation.

The role of Colonel House at Paris reveals much about Wilson's character. Wilson wanted to be the sole decision-maker of the US delegation, and failed to keep his delegation informed on what he wanted done. This action, combined with House's desire for negotiating power, resulted in a serious rift in the US delegation and a weakening of the US bargaining position.

There is little doubt Colonel House's active role in the Paris Peace Conference weakened Wilsonian principles in the negotiations. He was basically a poor negotiator, but he alone cannot be blamed for all the inconsistent decisions the US made. Floto gives a fitting summary of the character of Colonel House (from Ray Stannard Baker): "He is a liberal by instinct; though not at all a thinker. He is a conciliator, an arranger. He likes human beings-and so they like him." (Floto 28). A more pithy quote comes from David Lloyd George: "It is perhaps to his credit that he was not nearly as cunning as he thought he was." (MacMillan 19)

Arno Mayer

Arno Mayer's book takes a broader look at the Peace Conference in a worldwide context. The forces of order in the world were shifting. The left of the political spectrum had made an imprint on the diplomacy of the world crisis, but after the armistice, a right-wing nationalist movement spread and dominated world politics.

Mayer believes that the most crucial problem of the Conference was the spread of Bolshevism. The Big Four spent more time and energy on the Russian question than on any major issue. Yet they never became unified on a course of action to contain or overthrow the Bolsheviks, although a host of different means, both direct and indirect, were proposed and tried. Particularly after the rise of Bela Kun and the establishment of a Bolshevik state in Hungary was the Conference thrown into turmoil. Mayer gives an insight into how important the Bolshevik question was by quoting Thorstein Veblen: "The compact to reduce Soviet Russia and contain Bolshevism was not written in the text of the treaty, but may rather be said to have been the parchment upon which the text was written." (Mayer 19)

Similarly, Mayer claims, the breakdown throughout Central and Eastern Europe shaped the pace and agenda of the negotiations more so than the planning and organization of the Conference participants.

One example of Mayer's thesis that the political forces of the world controlled the Conference is the actions of Woodrow Wilson. Wilson was faced with a rise of Republican nationalism in the US. This hurt his support at home and he sought the support of the liberal elements in Europe in order to assure that his peace plan would be carried out. The liberals in Europe themselves had been split by the rise of radical Bolshevism. Thus Wilson represented a position in the center, which was precarious because of the polarization of political forces. The conservative forces were dominant at Paris though, and Wilson found

himself being drawn away from the center and towards the right. In viewing the Russian Revolution, Wilson feared how it would affect Europe and the world. His course of action of leading Allied efforts to tame the revolution became central to his peacemaking strategy. Thus he took a more reactionary position than he had intended, a position dictated by the political climate. This alienated the left, upon whom he had counted on for support.

Mayer asserts a somewhat deterministic view of the Paris negotiators and presents a thorough argument for his claim that the political forces were more decisive in determining the course and outcome of the Paris Conference than the personalities, skills, and historical culture of the negotiators.

To Mayer, the Conference was just one event in the rapidly changing world of 1919. While the negotiations in Paris were going on, the charter meeting of the Third International was held in Moscow, the precursors of German Nazism fought Bolshevism through the Free Corps, Benito Mussolini scored his first Fascist triumph in Italy, and an awakening India reacted strongly to Great Britain's Amritsar Massacre in Punjab. Great changes were occurring independent of what was being decided in Paris.

Harold Nicolson

Nicolson's *Peace Making, 1919* is an account of the Paris Peace Conference by a member of the British delegation. He begins by acknowledging that human error is a permanent factor in history and will continue to be so. Compounding this factor was the difficulty of arranging a peace of moderation and righteousness after four years of bloody war. This view contrasts sharply with the 'political movement' ideas of Arno Mayer. Nicolson blames the delay between the Armistice and actual peace negotiations for causing "irrational hatred to swell up and consume alert but ignorant electorates," whereas Mayer attributes this nationalism to vast political design. To Nicholson, human error and human nature more than any political movement caused the failure of the Paris Peace Conference.

Like Birdsall, Nicolson believed the Conference was divided by a duality of purpose between Wilson's Fourteen Points and Principles, and the nationalist interests and emotions of peoples. He freely admits his allegiance to the Wilsonian program, but unlike Birdsall, feels that Wilson made a mistake in attending the Conference personally. By remaining in Washington, Wilson would have had to furnish his negotiators with written instructions, which would have given the Conference a solid base on which to proceed. In addition, Wilson could have better rallied the US public and Congress behind his cause. His negotiators would have been able to pause and re-think positions as they alibied about waiting for Wilson's decisions on important issues. Nicolson felt Wilson was somewhat slow-minded compared to his counterparts, was not a good negotiator, had a one-track mind, and was the only representative armed with immediate decision-making ability. All these points proved costly to his cause.

Another of Wilson's problems was his belief that the League of Nations would correct any injustices

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settled upon at Paris. Wilson was at times concessionary because he knew that Article 19 of the proposed League Covenant allowed for revision of the Peace Treaty. Nicolson is in agreement with Floto, both realizing Wilson (and not just Colonel House) compromised in order to protect the League of Nations interest.

Nicolson casts at least partial blame for the eventual failure on the fundamental organization of the Conference. There was a failure to coordinate any preliminary policy, which resulted in tentative methods, which hampered the speed of negotiations. It was never made clear whether the treaty being prepared was a final text or a mere basis of agreement to be revised later. Nicolson believes that a great deal of the Treaty was written with revision in mind, which made it harsher than was intended. Many parts, particularly the economic sections, were inserted as "maximum statements" intended to be negotiated upon later.

Despite the negotiators' aim of "creating a new international world order," not all nations in attendance were allowed to participate in the actual negotiations. The smaller powers were relegated to state their views in the Plenary Sessions, although in practice, most decisions were already made before the sessions were held. Nicolson believes that much of the time of the Supreme Council was wasted on trivialities. He also finds fault in the 58 committees and their role in Paris. They dealt with issues too narrow in scope, did not take economic considerations into account, and did not realize that their recommendations would be final and determinate. Two final organizational matters that contributed to problems at the Conference were the handling of the press (which was not allowed to witness any deliberations) and selecting the non-neutral site of Paris.

In Nicolson's view, a successful Paris Peace Conference would have required the leaders of the great democracies to bridge the gap between Woodrow Wilson's theoretical plan for peace and the practical needs of a distracted Europe. Nicolson believes these leaders did not make that attempt, leaving the underequipped Wilson to work alone, dooming he and the Conference to failure.

William Keylor

In "Versailles and International Diplomacy," historian William R. Keylor is puzzled by longstanding misperceptions about the Treaty. These ideas, originated by disgruntled delegation members such as John Maynard Keynes and William Bullitt, are still prevalent today. Keylor believes recent multiarchival research shows Paris peacemakers were flexible statesmen and diplomats who worked pragmatically to promote their nation's vital interests in a difficult environment. He examines the radical innovations in statecraft that were expected in Versailles, and the heightening of expectations that occurred due to President Wilson's Fourteen Points and the advantages the US possessed at the time of the Treaty.

Keylor believes that the significance of the League of Nations has been "vastly exaggerated" by historians. The European leaders, their foreign officers or military advisors never took it seriously except

as a bargaining chip to obtain concessions. David Lloyd George and Georges Clemenceau were obligated to pay lip service to the idea so as not to anger Wilson, from whom they needed so much. One could argue with this assertion by pointing to compromises made by Wilson, such as those with Japan and Italy, to keep support for his precious League.

Keylor believes that three innovations in statecraft were expected to be implemented at the Conference. The first innovation was Wilson's open diplomacy. Point one of Wilson's Fourteen Points talked of "open covenants of peace, openly arrived at" (Keylor 474). Wilson despised the secret treaties and the "old diplomacy" characterized by the Congress of Vienna. Open Diplomacy brought with it expectations of carrying out "the will of the people". In fact, though, Wilson approved the pre-negotiation decision not to allow the press to witness deliberations, and later became obsessed with security during the Conference. The text of the Peace Treaty was presented to the German delegation on May 7. While entrepreneurs were selling translations and American officials were taking home souvenir copies, Wilson forbade publication of the treaty in the US or even informal presentation to the Senate until after the official signing ceremony on June 28 (481). The lack of openness added to the public perception of the failure of the Conference, yet secret deliberations have been a characteristic of diplomatic negotiations ever since.

A second innovation was the concept of national self-determination, which was to replace balance-of-power as the criterion for postwar redistribution of territory. Supporters made more of this concept than Wilson intended it to. It was not one of the Fourteen Points; it was one of the four additional "principles" amending his Fourteen Points. Keylor believes that national self-determination was "sacrificed...with equanimity when it clashed with more compelling considerations of strategic and economic interest, historical right, or the sanctity of contracts." (496) The erratic establishment of self-determination, in addition to the mandate system that was established, resembled the "old diplomacy" so despised by Wilson. The pre-treaty optimism concerning open diplomacy and self-determination was aided by "two trumps" Wilson held at the end of the war. One was the financial leverage the US had over the European victors, both in the form of indebtedness to the US, and in the possibility of future US financial assistance. However, the US chose not to exercise its financial leverage to press the Allies on any decisions.

The second trump was Wilson's enormous popularity with the public of the Allied nations, as evidenced by the rousing receptions he received in Paris, London, and Rome in December 1918. This proved to be short-lived. By the time of the actual Conference, Wilson found the European populations "far more exigent and vindictive than their elected spokesmen" (479). Elections in three countries verified this. In the November 1918 Congressional election, Wilson's Democratic Party suffered a resounding defeat despite Wilson's partisan appeal for voters to maintain Democratic control of Congress. The Democrats

lost their majority in both the House and the Senate. Great Britain's "Khaki" election in December 1918 produced a landslide victory for Unionists and Lloyd George Liberals, while proponents of Wilsonian conciliatory peace terms such as Herbert Asquith and Ramsay MacDonald were defeated. Also in December, Clemenceau faced a vote of confidence in the Chamber of Deputies. Clemenceau vowed to protect France's security interests at the Peace Conference, and went on to defeat his Wilsonian critics 386-88 (480).

The third innovation for Keylor was that of reparations and the issue of German responsibility. Keylor sees Article 231 as one of the biggest misperceptions of the treaty. The article was not written as a "war guilt clause," but was inserted by moderate Americans (who had no bias of wanting reparations) "as part of their strategy to protect Germany from economic ruin that would surely have resulted from the requirement that it pay for the entire cost of the war" (504). Concerning the popular conception of the Carthaginian peace imposed upon Germany, Keylor cites recent scholarship which shows that reparations amounts recommended by the American delegation to the Reparation Commission and specified in the London Schedule of Payments of May 1921 would have been manageable had the Joseph Wirth government in Berlin "pursued a politically courageous fiscal policy" (502). Additionally a "relatively moderate" increase in taxation and reduction in consumption in the Weimar Republic would have yielded the requisite export surplus to generate the foreign exchange needed to service the reparation debt (502).

Keylor sees the Treaty as a workable instrument, but one that needed the support of its signatories. While Wilson can be held partly to blame for abetting excessive expectations, the negative conventional wisdom is also excessive. The treaty was not a dismal failure, but its successes were mixed. Keylor is left wondering when scholarship will replace the popular myths that have been circulating since 1919.

Lawrence E. Gelfand

In "The American Mission to Negotiate Peace: An Historian Looks Back," Lawrence E. Gelfand first examines some of the key histories of the Paris Peace Conference since 1920, then offers his own assessment. The early accounts were primarily written by veterans of the Conference. John Maynard Keynes fired the first polemic by criticizing the impractical nature of Wilson's programs and the German reparations. Ray Stannard Baker, Wilson's official biographer, emphasized the conflict between liberals and reactionaries, and the righteousness of Wilson. *The Papers of Colonel House* stressed Colonel House's importance as an architect of US policy. More sympathetic works appeared around the time of the Second World War. Bailey's *Woodrow Wilson and the Lost Peace*, and Paul Birdsall's *Versailles 20 Years After* make the assumption that the ideal peace settlement would have followed the principles set forth by Wilson. Attacks on Wilsonian diplomacy and his moral idealism came in the late 1940s and 1950s with works written by Hans Morgenthau and George F. Kennan. Morgenthau wrote, "Wilson returned from Versailles

a compromised idealist, an empty-handed statesman, a discredited ally. In that triple failure lies the tragedy of Wilson...and...of Wilsonianism as a political doctrine" (198).

Gelfand counters the realist arguments of Kennan and Mortenthau. While recognizing Wilson the moralist, Gelfand claims Wilson had a "keen appreciation" of nationalist interests and even a pragmatic strategy: Wilson kept American diplomatic separateness from the Allies within the wartime coalition; established the Inquiry in 1917 to determine whether America's co-belligerents were interested in the same objects in the war as the US; and "adroitly" handled the Pre-Armistice negotiation by winning a commitment from the German government to accept an end to the war on Wilsonian terms (198).

Gelfand points out how much was actually changed by US participation. The US was given parity with principal European powers at an international conference for the first time. The US participated fully in peace arrangements in Europe as well as Africa, the Middle East and Oceania. Wilsonian foreign policy had extended the perimeter of American national interest to embrace the entire political world in which America would be a full partner. Wilson recognized what the isolationists did not: American national interests demanded a peaceful world order. Political participation and not withdrawal was necessary for the US to engage in trade.

Wilson universalism called for the US to assume obligations for maintaining collective security that transcended whatever the League of Nations or other international organizations might request of member states. For example, at the conference, Wilson committed to guaranteeing French security against future German aggression (201). Although the Treaty was not ratified by the US Congress, Wilson's ideas of universalism and collective security were fundamental concepts of US foreign policy from World War II onward. This legacy includes the United Nations, American occupation forces in Germany and Japan after 1945, NATO, and US involvement in Korea and Vietnam.

Another achievement of the Paris Conference influenced by the American mission had to do with human rights. As an example, guarantees were inserted into international treaties for minorities in Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and other states of Europe (201). No previous international record applied this principle so extensively, Gelfand asserts.

Gelfand sees many positives coming from the Peace Conference. While recognizing some failures, he seeks to set the record straight about the legacy of Wilsonianism. That the US rejected the treaty and moved towards isolation was not the fault of Wilson's leadership and his universalism eventually won out, in terms of post World War II US foreign policy.

Conclusion

In the aforementioned six views of the Paris Peace Conference, US President Woodrow Wilson is the divisive element in the authors' interpretations. Both Birdsall and Gelfand were very positive about Wilson

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and his plan. Birdsall believes a successful peace was only possible with the Wilson model, and considers him a great man with the best plan. Gelfand believes Wilson more pragmatic than generally given credit for, and writing 75 years after Versailles, shows the impact Wilsonianism has had on US foreign policy.

Keylor takes a more neutral stand. While blaming Wilson for raising excessive expectations, he still believes that the Treaty was a workable one. He shares with Nicolson the feeling that Wilson needed help in bridging the gap between the theoretical and practical.

Mayer and Floto are less focused on Wilson for different reasons. In seeing political forces as more important than individual efforts, Mayer asserts that Wilson was weakened by political forces, not misjudgments or betrayal. Floto sees Wilson as having been significantly undermined by the betrayals of Colonel House. Floto also recognizes the faults of Wilson for some failures at Paris: his desire to be the sole decision-maker, and refusal to explain his wishes to other American delegation members.

Certainly, mistakes were made at the Conference. As Mayer points out, the decision-makers at Paris did not make a place for the Soviet Union. There was a failure to create a stable world economic order. The exclusion of the US in the Paris Treaty, due to rejection by US Congress, weakened the Treaty. While affairs of Europe were looked after with great care, the non-Western world received offhand treatment. In Africa, territory was handed out to suit the imperialists, while in the Middle East (especially Iraq) disparate peoples were thrown together. Another failure of the peacemakers was the inability to "fathom the contradictions that commonly exist between democracy and peace" (Kunz 531). Keylor highlights Wilson's abiding faith in public opinion, yet public opinion often supports war, nationalistic feuds, and territorial aggrandizement.

Both Mayer and Keylor mention the excessive expectations or the impossibility of achieving such high expectations. Why was so much expected? Was 1919 so much different than anything that had occurred in the past? American delegation member Clive Dale takes a sympathetic look at the Conference: "The Paris Peace Conference faced vastly greater problems, studied its problems in a more scientific way, and sought more earnestly to harmonize in settlement with principles of justice." (Widenor 562) Concerning the expectations, Inquiry members Charles Haskins and Robert Lord wrote that, "the congress could not create a new heaven and a new earth; it could at best only make some sort of advance on the road thither and show the way along which further advance lay." (Widenor 562) One of the themes of *A Reassessment after 75 Years* is that negotiators did make advances. There was an era of temporary stability between 1924 and 1931 (Boemeke *et al* 3). The problem was that Treaty decisions were not advanced upon, as nations retreated to domestic concerns, isolation, and finally, had to face a worldwide depression.

There were successes at the Paris Peace Conference. The Covenant of the League of Nations was prominent in the planning. The League had a place in supervising the plebiscites, governing the Saar and

Danzig, and monitoring the Mandates. The Treaty contained provisions for an International Labor Organization, treaties to protect minorities, and the setting up of a permanent court of justice. These showed a concern for some kind of international standards beyond mere national interest. As Gelfand points out, the League of Nations became a reality with the United Nations after World War II. In addition, as Wilson knew and others have pointed out, the Treaty lent itself to future revision.

The rhetoric proclaiming the Great War to be “the war to end all wars” proved to be unsustainable. While expectations were excessive, so have been the negative appraisals of the Conference. There is credence in Lloyd George’s reflection that the Peace Treaty has been “the most abused and least perused document in history” (Czernin v). The Paris Peace Treaty of 1919 is not the bogeyman responsible for all of the world’s troubles that have occurred since that time. It was an imperfect Peace Treaty rendered by imperfect men in an imperfect world.

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