Wilsonian Explanations for American Conflicts

A revaluation of the use of the Wilsonian framework to evaluate conflicts in the history of the United States.

By

Ashley John Cox

A thesis submitted to the University of Leicester for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Politics and International Relations

College of Social Sciences

University of Leicester

September 2013
Abstract

This thesis adds to our understanding of American foreign policy and conflicts in the history of the United States through the use of the Wilsonian framework. This is an important topic because the United States is the single most important actor in international relations and its decisions have far reaching consequences. This thesis makes a unique contribution to the literature on the understanding of the decisions by the United States to go to war. It does this by emphasising that the Wilsonian framework has been overlooked in our understanding of these conflicts and can be used to give a more complete picture of the conflicts discussed. By using wars across the history of the United States this thesis shows that this framework is applicable independent of the power the United States possesses.
Acknowledgements

The author of this thesis would like to acknowledge the many people who have helped him complete it. First and foremost my longsuffering girlfriend Nicola without whom I would never have completed this thesis. For her support and the never ending supply of coffee she provided I will be eternally grateful.

I would also like to express my gratitude to my supervisors, Dr. Alex Waddan and Dr. Andrew Futter, for their support and guidance during the development of this thesis. Their input has been invaluable to constructing this argument and their tireless efforts in helping me to complete are without measure. In the same vain I would also like to thank Dr. J. Simon Rofe both for his role in supervising this PhD and for his continued friendship and professional guidance.

To all of my friends and family who have supported me through this endeavour with words of wisdom and necessary distractions. I owe you the debt of sanity and my continued ability to realise there was a world beyond Wilsonianism and American foreign policy; as well as to my friend, colleague and indefatigable proof reader Ashley Dodsworth whose rapier wit and keen insight have made me rethink an argument on more than one occasion.

I would also like to thank the many organisations that have lent their financial support to this project. To the Fulbright Commission for a memorable and rewarding experience in New York, to the Scowcroft Institute and the O'Donnell Grant Program for an opportunity to conduct research in the archives at Texas A&M. As well as the embassy of the United States of America for their generous contributions to conference fees and the U.S. foreign policy working group.
Finally I would like to thank the University of Leicester and the Department of Politics and international relations not only for funding my PhD process but for giving me the opportunity to study and complete this work.

Ashley Cox

Leicester 2013
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Introduction

This central contention of the following thesis is that the importance of what might be termed Wilsonian factors has been wrongly neglected in explanations of why the United States participated in a range of conflicts. This thesis defines the Wilsonian School as an approach to foreign policy which argues that the United States should promote democracy abroad and an international system that is based on collective security. These concerns have often played a significant part in the thinking of foreign policy makers and declarations to that effect by America’s political elite should not be dismissed as mere lip service to justify potentially controversial actions. To illustrate this argument the thesis will emphasize that the United States’ intervention in the First World War reflected a genuine expression of these Wilsonian sentiments. It was, of course, that war which gave rise to the term Wilsonian, but in order to expand its argument the dissertation also contends that the War of 1812, the Korean War and the First Gulf War also exhibit these qualities. The application of a Wilsonian lens to these wars suggests that the considerations underlying Wilsonianism in fact pre-date President Woodrow Wilson’s articulation of these themes by nearly one hundred years, back to almost the earliest days of the new republic. Furthermore, the same concerns also played a role in the thinking of policy makers over seventy five years later. The United States role in all these conflicts, including the First World War, has been explained in ways that do not draw upon Wilsonian principles, implying that those ideas provide a rhetorical window dressing that disguises the United States’ real motives. This thesis, however, will demonstrate that current understandings of these conflicts that are based on strategic and economic factors fails to give a sufficient explanation of the events and that to
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fully comprehend the circumstances surrounding American actions we must include the factors presented by the Wilsonian School.

This introduction begins by laying out the research questions at the heart of this thesis before moving on to discuss the central argument that is to be articulated through the dissertation with an explanation of why that argument adds to the current literature. The chapter will then proceed to present a general outline of the rest of the thesis.

Research Questions

This thesis seeks to answer the following research question:

*Are Wilsonian factors an important consideration in the decision for the United States to enter these conflicts?*

In order to answer this over-arching question the thesis investigates a series of issues:

1. How can we gain a better understanding of these conflicts if we examine the role Wilsonian factors have played?

2. Are these factors real considerations for the president or merely a justification for the strategic actions of the Unites States?

3. Do these influences extend across the history of the United States independent of American power within the international system?

In order to address the question of Wilsonian factors, this thesis will revisit the conflicts and evaluate the strategic and economic factors that have traditionally been used to explain
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these conflicts. Each chapter will then discuss what the Wilsonian factors add to each of these debates and why we should take these factors in to account when understanding these conflicts.

The secondary research questions address the components of the primary research question. Understanding how we will gain a better understanding of these conflicts if we examine the role Wilsonian factors have played is the first stage in establishing the importance of these factors. To this end each chapter will address how Wilsonian factors are present in these conflicts. These factors are divided into two broad camps, those that suggest the United States must enter the conflict for the purpose of promoting democracy and those that suggest that the United States must protect and defend the concept of collective security. The salience of each of these factors varies throughout the case studies, showing primacy for either democracy promotion or collective security in each case. Independent of which pillar of the school was the most influential in a particular case this thesis will show that these factors add in a significant way to our understanding of the events. This thesis will also show that these factors are a real consideration for the president in his decision to enter into conflict. Each chapter will demonstrate this by discussing the debate surrounding these conflicts and investigate the strategic and economic factors that have been used previously to explain them. These sections will show that these explanations do not offer a satisfactory account of why the United States engaged in these conflicts and that we should look towards other factors to add to our understanding of these wars. It is the contention of this thesis that we should look towards the explanations the Wilsonian School presents in order to augment our understanding of these decisions.
The third question this thesis will answer is if the influence of the Wilsonian School can be traced across the history of the United States and is independent of the power the United States possesses. This question has been addressed by taking case studies from four distinct eras of American power within the international system. These four periods see the United States grow from a weak state in a system with multiple great powers, to the most powerful state in a system of multiple great powers, then as one of two super powers in a bipolar system and finally to a unipolar system where the United States was the only great power remaining. By demonstrating that Wilsonian factors were influencing the decisions for the United States to go to war in each of these case studies this thesis will show that these factors have been an influence since the beginning of the republic. This is particularly important with regard to the war of 1812 which discusses the presence of Wilsonian factor before the presidency of Woodrow Wilson.

Thus this thesis will show that the United States’ government has been influenced in a substantive way in these cases by considerations of both the collective security and democracy promotion elements of the Wilsonian School.

The Importance of this Research

Understanding the foreign policy of the United States and why it engages in conflict is an important topic. To those with an interest in foreign policy, understanding the motivations for conflict is important with regards to any nation. Yet the unique position held by the United States within the international system, since at least the end of the Second World War, makes understanding American conflicts a key component of any understanding of
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The foreign policy of the United States has far reaching global effects, far greater than any other country in the world today. The United States is at the centre of contemporary international relations. Whenever there is a matter of global importance, it is to the response of the American president the world looks, from conferences on global warming to military responses to a regional crisis. With by far the largest defence budget in the world it is American military power that is often the lynchpin of operations from humanitarian aid to active operations against governments that have violated international norms.

The vast importance of the United States in the world economy is also crucial, as it produces approximately one quarter of global GDP, is home to two of the largest stock exchanges and is the base of operations for over a quarter of the top two thousand companies in the world. The United States also exerts an unparalleled global cultural

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presence\textsuperscript{8} with the world’s largest music industry\textsuperscript{9} and a large and globally popular film industry.\textsuperscript{10} It is America’s global influence that makes an understanding of why America goes to war significant in many aspects of global daily life and of particular importance to the discipline of international relations.

Given the importance in understanding why the United States becomes involved in conflicts, thesis will explain in greater detail the influences of the Wilsonian School on these decisions. This thesis will contest the dominant discourse that suggests strategic and economic factors are sufficient to explain these conflicts alone. In order to accomplish this it has taken several case studies to show these conflicts can be best explained by including the Wilsonian factors of democracy promotion and collective security. These case studies have been chosen to represent different periods of American power, but they also represent cases where material and economic factors have been particularly strong. It is because these are more difficult cases that they serve as important examples as to how Wilsonian factors are an influencing factor in American foreign policy decisions.

This thesis makes several key contributions to the literature on the foreign policy of the United States. It expands on our understanding of Wilsonian discourse by discussing the influences of both the democracy promotion and collective security elements of the Wilsonian School. Developing our understanding of how these elements can influence the


\textsuperscript{10} Data from \textit{Motion Picture Association of America}, last accessed September 2nd 2013, available at: http://www.mpaa.org/.
decisions of the United States to go to war. In doing so it demonstrates that these factors are a real influence on the decisions of the United States to go to war. It also contributes to our understanding of these conflicts, reevaluating the traditional discourses on each of these cases to include important Wilsonian factors.

**Thesis Structure**

In order to answer the research questions this thesis has presented it will follow the structure laid out in this section. Chapter One will establish the theoretical framework for this thesis. This chapter is divided into several sections beginning with a detailed discussion of the question this thesis seeks to answer. It then goes on to discuss the concept of liberalism in the context of the United States and how this concept has impacted on the character of American foreign policy. This chapter will continue with a discussion of how other international relations theories approach the problems discussed in this thesis. As Wilsonianism is a concept that requires the United States to have some agency in the decisions it makes, this chapter will then discuss how we can define that agency. The following section of this chapter will discusses Wilsonianism within the context of American foreign policy. The final section will address in detail the wars chosen to study and the rational for their choice.

With the theoretical background set out, the thesis will turn to four case studies, each drawn from a different period of American power, to show how the Wilsonian lens can contribute to our understanding of each. Chapter Two will discuss the First World War, the first case study this thesis will examine. This has been chosen as the first case study because of Woodrow Wilson’s association with the Wilsonian School.
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This intriguing conflict marks the transition from the Long Nineteenth Century to the beginning of the Short Twentieth Century.\textsuperscript{11} This conflict is a point of change in international relations and alters the political landscape of Europe marking the end of the power of absolutist monarchies as a serious form of political organisation in Europe.\textsuperscript{12} This war represents both the first instance of American forces being deployed in significant numbers to fight in Europe and the first significant step in the transition from a British to an American dominated international system.\textsuperscript{13} This chapter will show how, when re-examined through the Wilsonian lens, the decisions of Woodrow Wilson - the archetypical president for the Wilsonian approach - gives an improved understanding of this conflict.

The second conflict that this thesis will examine takes us back to the War of 1812. This war was one that was fought contiguously with the events of the Napoleonic Wars and a key point in one of defining conflicts of European history. Chapter Three demonstrates that although Wilson is a key figure in the Wilsonian School, this approach can still give us key insights into the conflict a century before Wilson came to office. This chapter will argue that the ideas of the Wilsonian School have been present since the formation of the republic. The events of the early republic, when the future of the United States was far from secure, present us with an important case study as it shows that the Wilsonian School can give us valid interpretations of the actions of the founding generation of the United States. This chapter explores the relationship between the republican government that the United


\textsuperscript{13} Paul Kennedy, The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000 (New York: Random House, 1987)
States was pioneering and the Wilsonian School, showing that there are key connections between the domestic nature of the United States and its approach to foreign policy.

Chapter Four is dedicated to the Korean War, a conflict in which we see the active use of the United Nations to turn back aggression on the Korean peninsula. This returns the focus of this thesis to the twentieth century and an era of bi-polarity in the international system. The chapter shows how, against the backdrop of the Cold War, the Wilsonian School can still give us valuable insight into the decisions for going to war. This chapter discusses strategic considerations and the revisionist arguments that have been present to understand this conflict and demonstrates how the Wilsonian School adds to this argument.

The next chapter discusses the first American war of the post-Cold War period, the First Gulf War. This conflict was fought in the Middle East and is another example of United Nations backed action to reverse aggression. In this instance, however, it was done with the support of the Soviet Union in contrast to the Korean War. This chapter will discuss the role that oil and regional stability played in the decision for American intervention and the Wilsonian influences that contributed to it.

Chapter Six brings together the conclusions that this thesis has made in its substantive chapters. It shows how the Wilsonian School has had an important influence and allows us to gain greater insight into the reasons the United States went to war in each of the case studies and draws together the key themes this thesis has discussed.
Summary

This chapter has introduced the core contention of this thesis, that Wilsonian factors have been an important consideration in the American decision to go to war in the cases presented. Understanding the role that these factors have played in these conflicts broadens our understanding of these conflicts and deepens our understanding of the Wilsonian discourse. It allows us to understand that these factors were more than just a way for the United States to explain its actions, but were considerations that the president had taken seriously and influenced his decision to enter these conflicts in a real and important way.
Chapter One: A Wilsonian Interpretation

Introduction

The purpose of this thesis is to show how a Wilsonian framework, that is a framework based on the concepts of democracy promotion and collective security, has been an active and important part of the foreign policy decisions of the United States. Specifically it will contest the assumptions put forward by the realist and revisionist schools that these ideals are used to simply justify the actions of the United States.¹ This thesis argues against the conception that existing explanations provide a strong enough explanation in isolation for them to be accepted without an understanding of the Wilsonian framework. In short, valuable insight into the decisions to enter these conflicts can be gleaned from adopting a Wilsonian framework.

The case studies that this thesis presents are ones where the dominant discussion has been one that emphasises strategic and economic motivations alone and that any pronouncements by the United States to the contrary were a nothing more than a public relations exercise. This chapter will begin with a review of the approaches that this thesis finds inadequate as complete explanations for these conflicts, including the realist and liberal approaches. As this thesis focuses primarily on the utility of a Wilsonian approach it will then proceed to discuss the definition of Wilsonianism that this thesis will use. This will be done by drawing together a discussion of Wilsonianism as discussed by Walter Russell Mead and other authors. Finally this section shows how this thesis has redressed the deficiency of other explanations in these case studies that are often not treated as Wilsonian conflicts

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Research Questions

This thesis’s primary research question asks whether Wilsonian factors are important in the decision for the United States to enter these conflicts. In order to answer this question it will address three key secondary questions. How can we gain a better understanding of these conflicts if we examine the role Wilsonian factors have played? Are these factors real considerations for the president or merely a justification for the strategic actions of the Unites States? Do these influences extend across the history of the United States independent of American power within the international system? This next section will discuss how each of these questions contributes to answering the primary research question. In the following chapters this thesis will show that the explanations that previous accounts have presented do not take into account the role that Wilsonian concepts have played in the decisions to go to war.

In order to show that these factors are an important part of the decision, this thesis will discuss how these conflicts have been traditionally interpreted to show that these factors do not present us with the complete picture of why the United States entered these conflicts. If these factors are not sufficient then it is important to add other explanations to our understanding. These factors are present to us by the Wilsonian School and this thesis will demonstrate that they give us a better understanding of these conflicts.

This thesis will address the concept that Wilsonian factors are often used to justify the actions of the United States rather than being an influencing factor.\(^2\) In the following

chapters this work will dispute the claim that Wilsonianism has been used to cover the actions of the United States with an acceptable motive and to show that consideration was given to both the concepts of democracy promotion and collective security in the decision to enter each of these conflicts.

Finally this thesis asks if we can show that these factors are separate from the power that the United States possess in the international system. In order to accomplish this, the following case studies have been chosen from different periods of American history; in each of which we see demonstrable differences in the power of the United States. This chapter will discuss the case studies and the reasons they have been chosen in more detail below.

The above questions are important in improving our understanding of the conflicts discussed. In the following section this chapter will discuss the approaches that other authors have used to understand these conflicts and then move on to discuss the Wilsonian approach in more detail.

**Traditional Approaches**

Those trying to understanding why the United States has gone to war have presented numerous explanations based on the concept that the United States is pursuing its own strategic and economic interests. This section will discuss the approaches that have been traditionally used to explain these conflicts.

The realist school began with the discussions of Thucydides over the origins of Athens’ war against Sparta. This argument was based purely on the concept that powerful
nations act in their own interest and weak nations must put up with these demands.\(^3\)

Modern international relations explanations for state behaviour can be found in two key texts. E.H Carr’s *Twenty Years’ Crisis* and Hans Morganthau’s *Politics Among Nations*.\(^4\) These texts essentially form the basis of classical realist theories of international relations that concentrate on the system in which the state exists and whose explanations are predicated on states needing to protect themselves in order to ensure their own survival. Neo-realists emphasize to a greater extent the importance of power on a state’s behaviour. Beginning with Kenneth Waltz’s *Theory of International Politics*, where states are driven by the need to survive threats to them and so the balance of power within the system is of primary importance as it dictates the threats a nation faces.\(^5\) As an offshoot to this theory, we see John Mearsheimer’s theories of offensive realism which dictates that states must maximize their power and, where possible, seek regional and global hegemony as the only way to guarantee a state’s survival is to ensure that there are no states that are capable of threatening it militarily.\(^6\) The application of these theories have been discussed by a number of authors in attempts to explain the behaviour of states.\(^7\)

This section presents some of the core concepts that the Realist Schools have in common. Realism is centred on ‘the concept of interest, defined in terms of power.’\(^8\)

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\(^6\) Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*


\(^8\) Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations* p. 5
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Morgenthau argues that realist theory ‘will guard against two popular fallacies: the concern with motives and the concern with ideological preferences.’ Waltz supports this:

No matter how good their intentions … Each state pursues its own interests, however defined, in ways it judges best. Force is a means of achieving the external ends of states because there exists no consistent, reliable process of reconciling the conflicts of interest that inevitably arise among similar units in a condition of anarchy.

In this argument, realism is the only choice for leaders because ‘only a rational choice foreign policy minimizes risks and maximizes benefit and, hence, complies both with the moral precept of prudence and the political requirement of success.’ In his theory Morgenthau puts forward that realism is not only the dominant paradigm by which states act but he is highly critical of ‘the “legalistic-moralistic approach” to international politics.’ When states follow this approach, he goes on to argue, they consider international-relations only on the basis of a legal argument, without considering the interest of their specific nation, thus the decisions reached could have ‘no bearing on the issue that their very existence might have depended upon.’ By treating power as the unit by which we measure success in international relations, the realist paradigm argues it is the only thing for which nations strive and that a government that does not increase its power is failing in its objectives. As Tang argues:

In a nutshell, all states seek security. Because both offensive realism and defensive realism subscribe to the core assumption of realism that power is the fundamental feature of (international) politics and because political outcomes (e.g., states’

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9 Ibid p. 5
10 Waltz, Man the State and War p. 238
11 Morgenthau, Politics Among Nations p. 10
12 Ibid p. 14
13 Ibid p. 14
security) are primarily determined by material power, both offensive realism and defensive realism believe that seeking relative power is an important means of external self-help under anarchy.\textsuperscript{14}

Waltz goes on to argue ‘because each state is the final judge of its own cause, any state may at any time use force to implement its policies.’\textsuperscript{15} Morgenthau argues that no matter ‘the ultimate aims of international politics, power is always the immediate aim’\textsuperscript{16} as without power states can achieve none of their other goals, but that by choosing to use power states become an actor in international relations.

Further, he contends that a nation is not always involved in international politics. When a state interacts with another state certain activities, including ‘legal, economic, humanitarian and cultural’\textsuperscript{17} take place and these are not part of realist theory. Although Morgenthau concedes that there are some restraints on what a state can do to achieve these ends, he leaves little room for how a nation’s own internal character can lead to different decisions in the same circumstance. Within the realist paradigm, the state is the most important unit within the international system and the only unit that conducts international politics. These states will always need to act in line with their own national interest and ‘as long as the world is politically organized into nations, the national interest is indeed the last word in world politics.’\textsuperscript{18}

Neo-realism concentrates mostly on the structural factors of international relations. That is, the self-help incentive imposed by the chaos of the international system means that

\begin{footnotes}
\item[15] Waltz, \textit{Man the State and War} p. 238
\item[16] Morgenthau, \textit{Politics Among Nations} p. 29
\item[17] ibid p. 30
\end{footnotes}
nations who wish to survive, as all states do, are forced to act to maximize their chances of survival. They do this by seeking to be more powerful than the other actors and thus ensure their survival, for as Kenneth Waltz argues ‘international structures are defined, first, by the ordering principle of the system, in our case anarchy, and second, by the distribution of capabilities across units.’

By studying how these factors force states to act, it is easy to see why the internal nature of the state was not considered a vital factor. Waltz argues that ‘states are made functionally similar by the constraints of structure, with the principle difference among them defined according to capabilities.’ If the nature of international relations is systemic in its origin, then all states within the system are likely to act in a similar fashion as they are all bound to compete within the same system. The defining characteristic of each actor within the system is the power that they wield; hence states act differently from each other because the strategies they can pursue vary as a result of the differences in power. John Mearsheimer goes further, arguing that states must seek hegemony over other states because it is the only way these states can ensure their power is greater than their opponents. ‘States recognize that the more powerful they are relative to their rivals, the better their chance of survival. Indeed, the best guarantee of survival is to be a hegemon, because no other state can threaten such a mighty power.’

Neo-classical realism takes the approach that ‘relative material power establishes the basic parameters of a country’s foreign policy’ but ‘to understand the way states

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19 Kenneth N Waltz, ‘Realist Thought and Neorealist Theory’, *Journal of International Affairs* Vol 44 No 1 (Summer 1990) p. 227
20 Although not a completely irrelevant one.
21 Waltz, ‘Realist Thought and Neorealist Theory’ p. 231
22 Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, p. 3
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interpret and respond to their external environment. They say one must analyse how systemic pressures are translated through unit-level intervening variables such as decision-makers’ perceptions and domestic state structure.’ In common with the more traditional realist approach, the national interest is still the driving factor but the options available to policy makers are limited by the nation they lead. This theory attempts to bridge the gap between realist assertions of states as like actors and the observations that states of a different character behave differently. This is important as it suggests that we do need to consider the role domestic ideology plays in the determining of foreign policy of a state. This thesis will achieve this by addressing how Wilsonian influences have played a role in the decisions of the United States to go to war.

Strategic motivations are not the only factors authors have presented to explain the actions of states within the international arena. Theories that have concentrated on economic aspects of international relations are often referred to as radical, Marxist or institutionalist. These theories also diverge into sub schools, but at the centre of each is that the primary causes of war are economic in origin. Broadly speaking, developed metropolitan centres seek to exploit under developed peripheral regions. By using the resources in these regions to fuel economic growth in the core region the economic development of these regions is prevented. A variation on this belief is that industrialised states are forced to seek ever growing markets as an outlet for their goods. As such, developed states are

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25 Ibid p. 152
27 John Atkinson Hobson, Imperialism: A Study (New York: Cosimo Classics, 2005)
expansionist in their nature and wars will occur between developed states as they compete for these markets.\textsuperscript{28}

The above sections have discussed the theoretical basis that underlines the dominant explanations for the conflicts this thesis will address. These explanations provide only part of the picture however; this thesis contends that we must consider the roles that democracy promotion and collective security have played in these decisions. If we are to have a more complete explanation then we must consider the factors that the Wilsonian School presents.

**Formulating a Wilsonian Approach to U.S. Foreign Military Engagemen**

This section sets out the theoretical framework that this thesis will use in order to show that the Wilsonian approach is a real factor in the American decision to go to war in these cases. Wilsonianism is a contested concept- in order to bring together a coherent view of what is meant by Wilsonianism, this thesis will synthesise a definition of Wilsonianism from several key writers including Walter Russell Mead, and Tony Smith.\textsuperscript{29} From the works of these authors we can distil that Wilsonianism has two core pillars. The first of these is the promotion of democracy consisting of two central ideas:

1) Democracy is the best form of government.

2) The United States should promote democracy in other nations.


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The second pillar is that of the value of international law and collective security in maintaining peace in the international system. This pillar also has two key principles:

1) A peaceful international system is desirable and should also be promoted.

2) International institutions and international law have utility in the promotion of international peace through collective security.

These components of Wilsonianism are important in understanding the Wilsonian framework. The first pillar is addressed by Mead and expanded upon by Smith. Simply put; the governments of democratic states are more likely to reflect the will of the people than authoritarian states and are more likely to have a broadly liberal political culture. Smith argues that Wilsonianism is ‘the conviction that American national interests could best be pursued by promoting democracy worldwide.’30 This will make these states more peaceful and more likely to cooperate with each other. The Wilsonian School follows the logic that if these types of government are more peaceful and cooperative then they should be promoted in other states so that the United States has better and more reliable partners in the international system.

The second pillar is addressed in the concept that if the United States seeks to live in a peaceful system it should seek to encourage international institutions that will help to enforce international law and act as a collective security guarantee to dissuade states from resolving their differences through the use of force. Knock argues that a key component of the Wilsonian philosophy was a world ‘in which the great powers, including the United States, could prosper by exercising restraint—a new world order sustained by procedures

30 Smith, America’s Mission p. xxi
for the arbitration of disputes between nations.\textsuperscript{31} This would allow ‘solutions openly arrived at through the agency of international organization.’\textsuperscript{32} As Thompson argues this has created a tension within the Wilsonian framework:

A commitment to a comprehensive system of collective security involves emphasizing and building upon the common interests that the states share—particularly that in avoiding devastating war. It requires a policy of tolerant coexistence with regimes of all types, and of seeking cooperation whenever possible. A commitment to the universal promotion of democracy, self-determination and Human Rights, on the other hand, involves putting pressure on, and in the last resort opposing, regimes that do not observe (and may not even pay lip service to) these values.\textsuperscript{33}

The central argument of this thesis is that Wilsonian principles are real and explanatory factors in the decisions of the United States to enter these conflicts. The analysis of each of the case studies shows that the two key pillars of the Wilsonian School are important in understanding the development of American involvement in the conflicts under review. One misconception is to see Wilsonian values in purely idealistic terms. It is important to establish that we do not have to consider Wilsonianism as an idealistic approach. Mead argues that:

While Wilsonian foreign policy concepts contain much that realists find hard to swallow, the core strategic ideas of the Wilsonian community are neither as impractical nor as contradictory as their critics often allege.\textsuperscript{34}

This thesis will present a Wilsonian framework to explain why the United States of America, has engaged in the conflicts discussed in the following chapters. The Wilsonian School has been important in understanding that the United States has had consistent motivations for

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid p. 31
\textsuperscript{33} John A Thompson, ‘Wilsonianism the Dynamics of a Conflicted Concept’ \textit{International Affairs} Volume 86, Issue 1, January 2010 p. 30
\textsuperscript{34} Mead, \textit{Special Providence} p. 162
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engaging in these wars since the foundation of the republic. To achieve a consistency of motivation across such a long period of time, there must be something that connects these disparate leaders and situations. The key argument of this thesis is that ideology is this connection, an ideology which has been codified in the constitution and transmitted through a shared history and culture.

This section will look in detail at the Wilsonian framework and how we can define it as a conceptual framework. It will begin with a discussion of different elements to the Wilsonian tradition and then discuss Walter Russell Mead’s definition of Wilsonianism as laid out in Special Providence.35 The Wilsonian tradition is the dominant framework through which this thesis will examine the wars it has used as case studies. Although it may seem anachronistic to suggest that the War of 1812 could be Wilsonian a century before Wilson, it is this thesis’s contention that Wilson’s approach was one of clarification and articulation of a situation that already existed. That is that the liberal nature of the United States and its democratic tradition has been influential in creating how the United States, confronted the world. David Steigerwald argues that:

The experience of the 1930s demonstrated that there was little new in the political philosophy or the practical programs of Wilsonians. The decade exposed how deeply rooted internationalism was in a static liberalism that owed more to the Enlightenment than to the twentieth century.36

This is furthered by Tony Smith who argues that, rather than beginning with Woodrow Wilson, ‘Thomas Jefferson had been the first to insist that a peaceful world order in which

35 Mead, Special Providence pp.132-173
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America could fully participate needed to be one constituted by democratic states. This concept will be discussed in greater detail below.

Wilsonianism is a contested concept, and there have been many texts dedicated to articulating what the concept actually entails. Walter Russell Mead presents a well-defined and useful definition of Wilsonianism which will form part of this thesis’ approach. It will begin with a discussion of why Wilsonians believe that the United States should promote democracy as a form of government, prior to discussing the roles that international institutions have within this framework. To this end we do not need to view Wilsonianism as an altruistic form of foreign policy, but one that seeks to increase American security through the application of the democratic peace theory.

Mead’s definition of Wilsonianism postulates that democratic states are more peaceful than their autocratic counterparts. As Mead argues ‘the first principle of Wilsonian foreign policy is that democracies make better and more reliable partners than monarchies and tyrannies.’ The structures that make democracies responsible to their people and give them a stable government also make them less vulnerable to the vagaries of monarchs and despots in their relations with other states. In a democratic system, power is not centralised in one person as it is in highly authoritarian states.

In these authoritarian states the policies of the nation can change on the whims of the individual and those individual’s personal biases and dislikes can influence the states relationship with other states. Further these policies can change rapidly with a change of leader or create uncertainty when there is a dispute over dynastic successions. As Mead

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38 Mead, Special Providence p. 162
argues ‘nonrepresentative polities are not simply unstable because their rulers can be erratic. They are unreliable precisely because public opinion is imperfectly reflected in the government.’ According to Mead, the rule of law that is required to create a functioning democracy is also beneficial for the economy and ‘democratic governments more than any others are likely over time to develop fair and effective legal systems.’ Wealthy nations not only make better trading partners but these trade links are likely to increase the cost of fighting wars against your trading partners. The United States should also promote democracy abroad because according to Mead’s argument ‘democracies are likely to move toward increasing degrees of moral and political agreement,’ this reduces the tensions between nations and makes wars less likely.

Tony Smith also argues that the key component of the Wilsonian philosophy is that of democracy promotion. He argues however that the ‘greatest ambition of the United States foreign policy over the past century: to promote democracy abroad as a way of enhancing the national security.’ This view makes it clear that Smith believes that Wilsonianism does not just promote democracy for democracies sake but that it is in the genuine interest of the United States to do so. In Smith’s words it is ‘the Wilsonian view

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39 Ibid pp. 162-163
40 Ibid p. 163
41 Ibid p. 163
42 Ibid p. 163
43 Smith, America’s Mission p. 4
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that the promotion of democracy worldwide advances the national security of the United States, but it does so by arguing that such policy makes for better relations with other peoples and hence satisfies realist demands that the country think of its interests defined in terms of the international organization of power.\textsuperscript{44}

These assertions however are drawn from the liberal theories of democratic peace, a theory that is itself contested. There has been much written by a disparate group of authors on the efficacy of the democratic peace theory. Early works can be traced back to Immanuel Kant’s perpetual peace through to more modern pieces in Francis Fukuyama’s and the End of History thesis. It is important to note that in their discussions of Wilsonianism neither Mead nor Smith attempt to directly engage critics of this approach. The criticisms of democratic peace theory come from two broad schools of thought, firstly that the evidence surrounding the democratic peace theory does not support the conclusions that its proponents have drawn, specifically democracies do go to war with each other, unless you use a rather narrowly defined definition of democracy or of war. Bruce Russett defined these criteria as interstate conflicts that involve more than a thousand deaths and a democracy as a state ‘a government brought to power in contested elections, and an executive either popularly elected or responsible to an elected legislature.’\textsuperscript{45} These definitions exclude several conflicts, including the War of 1812 and the America civil war on the grounds of the criteria laid out above. This runs the risk of cherry picking cases to prove a theory, as Layne argues:

Indeed, if a democracy as tightly knit-politically, economically, culturally-as the United States was in 1861 could split into two warring successor states, we should

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid p. 32

have little confidence that democracy will prevent great power conflicts in an anarchic, competitive, self-help realm like international politics.\footnote{Christopher Layne, ‘Kant or Cant: The Myth of the Democratic Peace’ \textit{International Security}, Vol. 19, No. 2 (Fall, 1994), p. 41}

The second major critique of this theory is that even though democracies have not gone to war in the past, the defining cause of this peace has not been that they are democracies, but that other factors have caused this peace and as such in the absence of these factors there is no reason to assume that a system consisting entirely of democracies would not be just as inclined to conflicts. Sebastian Rosato argues that ‘there are, then, several examples of liberal states violating liberal norms in their conduct of foreign policy and therefore the claim that liberal states generally externalize their internal norms of conflict resolution is open to question.’\footnote{Sebastian Rosato, ‘The Flawed Logic of Democratic Peace Theory’, \textit{The American Political Science Review}, Vol. 97, No. 4 (Nov., 2003), pp. 585-602} Christopher Layne argues that in respect to near instances of war between democratic powers ‘realism is superior to democratic peace theory as a predictor of international outcomes. Indeed, democratic peace theory appears to have extremely little explanatory power.’\footnote{Christopher Layne, ‘Kant or Cant: The Myth of the Democratic Peace’ \textit{International Security}, Vol. 19, No. 2 (Fall, 1994), p. 7} These are important criticism of Wilsonianism and neither Wilsonians nor supporters of the democratic peace theory have conclusively proved its existence.

The supporters of a Wilsonian approach however rebut these assertions and argue that there is a clear and logical explanation to support the theories that democracy is an important factor in preventing conflict. The first argument in support of these theories is that the democratic nature of these states make them more amenable to compromised solution to problems, as their domestic political character is constructed on the basis of
compromise between political parties that is ‘they practice the norm of compromise with each other that works so well within their own borders.’\textsuperscript{49}

Other than the normative nature of democracies, there are also factors drawn from the domestic structures of democratic states that support the Wilsonian premise. In a democratic state the head of government ‘must gain approval for war from cabinet members or legislatures and ultimately from the electorate.’\textsuperscript{50} As such these states are less reliant on the whims of the individual. This is supported by Doyle who argues that it was the change in the domestic political structure of the United Kingdom that led to its rapprochement with the United States:

...during the nineteenth century, the United States and Great Britain engaged in nearly continual strife; however after the reform act of 1832 defined actual representation as the formal source of the sovereignty of the British parliament, Britain and the United States negotiated their disputes.\textsuperscript{51}

It is from this line of thinking that the Wilsonian approach draws its ideas. Doyle supports the concept that the passivity of democracies is linked to their relationship with other democracies ‘aggression by the liberal state has also characterized a large number of wars. Both France and Britain fought expansionist colonial wars throughout the nineteenth century.’\textsuperscript{52} This suggests that there is a strong argument to be made that ‘we consider the possibility that liberals have indeed established a separate peace- but only among themselves.’\textsuperscript{53} This concept is the foundation of the Wilsonian approach to democracy promotion. Supporters of democracy promotion postulate that because ‘true interests harmonize, the more people are free, the better off all are.’\textsuperscript{54} This creates a security

\textsuperscript{50} Owe, ‘How Liberalism Produces Democratic Peace’ p. 90
\textsuperscript{51} Doyle, ‘Liberalism and World Politics’ p. 1156
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid p. 1157
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid p. 1156
\textsuperscript{54} Owe, ‘How Liberalism Produces Democratic Peace’ p. 94
imperative to be hostile to non-liberal states or, at the very least, those states which are perceived to be actively opposed to liberal values. The very nature of domestic liberalism compels it to view nations by regime type and thus ‘illiberal states …are viewed *prima facie* as unreasonable, unpredictable, and potentially dangerous.’ Overall, if liberal states view illiberal states differently then it follows they will not treat such states as like actors, as realist theories of international relations suggest they should. Further Andrew Moravcsik argues that li offers ‘a plausible theoretical explanation for variation in the substantive content of foreign policy’ that the differences we observe in the foreign policies of different regime types are better explained by considering the domestic character of the states involved. Moravcsik also contends that states have preferences unique to them and ‘each state seeks to realize its distinctive preference under varying constraints imposed by the preferences of other states.’

Proponents of Wilsonianism however offer an understanding of how the Wilsonian ideal has influenced the conduct of American foreign policy. The above debate has shown that although there are criticisms of the democracy promotion element of Wilsonianism, it also has some strong supporters. In either case what is clear is that those who argue for a Wilsonian approach to international relations believe that democracies are more peaceful and less likely to make war on one another. As such Wilsonian ideas that democracy promotion should be part of American foreign policy continues to be a real and active force and more than just a cover for actions that provide the United States with strategic or economic advantage.

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55 Ibid p. 96  
57 Ibid p. 520
The recent rise of the neo-conservative movement and the decisions of the George W. Bush administration to go to war in Iraq and Afghanistan have brought to light the different approaches which have laid claim to the democracy promotion agenda. Colin Powell in his confirmation hearing expresses a Wilsonian sentiment:

Democracy and free markets work, and the world knows it. And there is no finer example of this than America and her allies, who together comprise the strongest economies in the world, helping to reshape the entire world by willing to trade openly and encourage others to do likewise. And there should be no question in any world leader’s mind that the first and most essential ingredient for success in this 21st century is a free people and a government that derives its right to govern from the consent of such people.

Michael Mazarr, argues that there was a strong idealist streak within the George W. Bush administration:

... the Bush administration seems unanimous in its support for a fundamentally anti-realist proposition: the ideology of a state-as Ronald Reagan profoundly said of the Soviet Union-matters a great deal. In particular, democracies are more peaceful, more law-abiding, more predictable, more friendly than non-democratic states. A world of democracies might not be a world without war, but it would be closer to it.

These sentiments clearly echo the Wilsonian School’s understanding of the international system. But the actions of the administration do not seem to fit the Wilsonian dynamic.

With a flagrant disregard for the United Nations and the conduct of a pre-emptive war in Iraq, it is clear that the Neo-conservative approach is one that is distinct from that of the

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Wilsonian School. Charles Krauthammer’s concept of democratic globalism/realism, closely connected to neo-conservatism has espoused the belief that a world consisting entirely of democracies would be more peaceful. Krauthammer makes it clear that there are distinct differences between democratic realism and Wilsonianism within his argument, ‘democratic globalism is not Wilsonianism’\(^\text{61}\) he nevertheless argues that the spread of democracy would reduce world conflict and improve the security of the United States Krauthammer’s argument is that ‘the spread of democracy is not just an ends but a means, an indispensable means for securing American interests.’\(^\text{62}\) It is because there are numerous schools that seek to further spread democracy that we need to identify what constitutes Wilsonianism in a more specific way that differentiates itself from the neo-conservative approach.

In order to identify these differences we must look to the collective security element of the Wilsonian school. The Wilsonian School has approached the problems of conflict in a number of ways. The first is the previously mentioned spread of democratic values. However in an imperfect system where there are non-democratic states the Wilsonian School has sought other solutions. Multi-lateralism and collective security have become an important part of the Wilsonian tradition.\(^\text{63}\) The concept of collective security is one that has been closely tied to Wilsonianism because of Woodrow Wilson’s role in the formation of the League of Nations. Frank Ninkovich has seen Wilsonianism as a distinct way to manage the

\(^\text{62}\) Ibid p. 15
crises in the international system that faced the United States in the twentieth century. ‘Wilsonianism was a crisis internationalism that surfaced in bad times’\textsuperscript{64} and that Wilsonianism was a solution to distinct problems that modernisation had brought to the international system. The most dangerous of these was the modern and industrialized nature of conflicts. Ninkovich highlights that it is the collective security arrangement that the League of Nations represented that is at the heart of this Wilsonian thinking, drawing on Wilson’s speech to the senate in January 1917:

\begin{quote}
Is the present war a struggle for a just and secure peace, or only for a new balance of power? If it be only a struggle for a new balance of power, who will guarantee, who can guarantee, the stable equilibrium of the new arrangement? Only a tranquil Europe can be a stable Europe. There must be, not a balance of power, but a community of power; not organized rivalries, but an organized common peace.\textsuperscript{65}
\end{quote}

Ninkovich goes on to argue that the concept of collective security is the key to understanding Wilson’s approach. Without a firm American commitment to Article X of the League of Nations Covenant, the key article in committing the United States to collective security, Wilson believed that the whole ‘he drove home again and again the point that without American participation in the League and without full commitment to Article 10 the League would be stillborn.’\textsuperscript{66} That the Wilsonian approach was different from classic international relations as Ninkovich argues:

\begin{quote}
It would have been a remarkable story if the United States had gone from isolationism to world power by following the traditional path of power politics. But the nation took a different and altogether more extraordinary course by radically redefining what it meant to be a world power. American internationalism in the 20\textsuperscript{th} century was truly exceptional because it abandoned the idea of interest as
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{64}Ninkovich, \textit{The Wilsonian Century} p. 12
\textsuperscript{66}Ninkovich, \textit{The Wilsonian Century} p. 75
traditionally understood over thousands of years, opting instead to identify its national security with global needs.  

This focus on reducing the risk of war through collective security is further supported by Robert McNamara and James G. Blight who argue:

Wilson believed that until the power to make war was given over in large part to an international body such as the League, there could be no insurance against the kind of miscalculation, paranoia, suspicion, and error-ridden decision making that had led to the First World War. The security of the members of the League would thus be collective. The security of the members of the League and accepted this condition, then the League would become something like the mother of all alliances, with all protected from all, by all.  

This highlights the importance of the collective security approach as the second pillar of the Wilsonian framework. McNamara and Blight reinforce the importance of this element further as they argue that Wilson saw that the ‘one absolutely essential feature of the League: its multilateral imperative, embodied in Article X of the Covenant.’  

The final aspect of Wilsonianism to be discussed here is the assertion that the United States has ‘the right and the duty to change the rest of the world’s behaviour.’ This is an important part of understanding how the Wilsonian framework can contribute further to our understanding of these conflicts. The understanding that Wilsonians should make a difference in improving the international system helps in demonstrating why these factors are important in leading the United States to go to war to achieve them.

67 Ibid p. 16
69 McNamara and Blight, Wilson’s Ghost p. 8
70 Ibid p. 138
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The cases that this thesis examines, whilst not necessarily the most obvious ones, have been chosen to represent distinct eras of American power in the international system. By showing that the Wilsonian explanation is consistent and it is independent of the power the United States this thesis will demonstrate that power, classically defined as military power and in terms of the security dilemma by the Realist School, is not the only factor in the decision making process. It will show that Wilsonianism is a key framework that we can use to gain greater understanding these conflicts.

Wilsonianism is a complex and multifaceted ideological position and approach. This thesis will bring together these strands to highlight the key parts of Wilsonianism that have been consistent across the history of the republic and to show this framework has contributed to our understanding of why the United States became involved in these wars.

Previous works which have discussed Wilsonianism as a tradition of the foreign policy of the

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United States, have looked in detail at the origins of this philosophy and how it has been applied to the United States. In contrast, this thesis will concentrate on how the Wilsonian framework furthers our understanding of the wars in question in opposition to the explanations presented by other schools of thought.

Mead also believes that Wilsonianism should not be misinterpreted to mean the policies of Wilson and those attempting to emulate him, but a tradition of liberal foreign policy. Instead ‘Wilsonians were actively shaping American foreign policy long before Wilson moved to Washington, and the ideas that underlie this Wilsonian School are more deeply rooted in the national character and more directly related to the national interest than might appear at first glance.’ Mead argues that Wilsonianism possesses ‘unique characteristics drawn from American culture and history.’ Mead further argues that Wilsonianism is essentially foreign policy with a moral element; using the power that the United States possesses to do more than further its own ends but to spread its values. Although there is much debate over what defines American values, Mead highlights the key principles of ‘democratic government and the politics of human rights.’

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75 Mead, *Special Providence* p. 134
76 Ibid p. 134
77 He does however note that a moral element to foreign policy can be found throughout the English speaking world.
78 Mead, *Special Providence* p. 139
Chapter One: A Wilsonian Interpretation

Wilsonianism Before Wilson

This thesis contends that the concepts proposed by the Wilsonian School predate the presidency of Woodrow Wilson. This section will place the Wilsonian School in the broader context of international relations theory, then go on to discuss its origins in the liberal traditions of the United States. It will then discuss how these factors have been present since the formation of the republic and why we should consider Wilsonianism as an influence before Wilson’s election.

The Wilsonian School draws its approach to international relations from the liberal and the constructivist school. This section will discuss these schools and their approach to international relations. The Liberal School of international relations seeks to explain states’ relations with one another in terms other than power. With early origins in the works of John Locke and Immanuel Kant, the liberal school is grounded in the conception that the domestic character of states does make a difference to the way it conducts international relations. 79 More specifically it suggests that those of a democratic nature will be more inclined to cooperate and thus war becomes less likely. 80 This is an important conception and one that is a key component in the Wilsonian Schools approach to international relations.

This means that the classical liberal approach is far less concerned with systemic explanations than its realist counterpart. Early liberal thinkers include the Baron de La Brede

et de Montesquieu, a French philosopher writing in the eighteenth century who argued that war is a societal problem that can be overcome by the regulation of the state system. This is not dissimilar to Kant’s theories that the formation of an alliance of nations that would allow sovereign states to coexist peacefully. Liberalism also supports the growth of liberal economic relations between states. Liberal thinking posits that as the world has become more interconnected, the growth of free trade and economic interdependence has made resources more available and the cost of war greater and so has made conflict less likely.

Wilsonian conceptions of democracy as the best form of government; that the international system would be more peaceful and that international institutions are a positive force to prevent aggressive nations expanding can trace their lineage to the Wilsonian School. More recently, neo-liberal theories of international relations are more focused on the international system and its anarchic nature. Describing cooperation between states as a kind of self-interest and promoting international institutions as a way to promote state security.

The Wilsonian School also draws on concepts expressed by the social constructivist school. The constructivist and culturalist approaches are more recent editions to international relations theory. These theories argue that international relations are

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81 For the Barron’s full works see: The Online Books Page, University of Pennsylvania library, books by Charles de Montesquieu Secondat complete collection last accessed September 24th 2013 available at: http://onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu/webbin/book/search?author=Montesquieu&amode=words
82 Immanuel Kant, Perpetual Peace
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class=\text{constructed from the social norms within a state. That the view each state has of how the system functions has an effect on the function of the system.}^{85} \text{Wendt argues:}

\ldots that the structures of human association are determined primarily by shared ideas rather than material forces, and that the identities and interests of purposive actors are constructed by these shared ideas rather than given by nature.^{86}

Wilsonianism is connected to the constructivist approach in a number of ways; firstly, constructivism postulates that ‘states do what they think most appropriate.’^{87} The culturalist approach argues that ‘how state action regarding military force is shaped by beliefs collectively held by policymakers and political elites.’^{88} If the concepts of democracy promotion and collective security are routed in the American liberal tradition, as is discussed below, then the constructivist approach can help in our understanding of these conflicts. Farrell argues that this school is important in understanding the concept of democratic peace, a concept that is at the heart of the Wilsonian democracy promotion agenda. Farrell believes that this is the case because ‘norms figure in all accounts of this phenomenon.’^{89} Constructivism is also helpful in understanding Wilsonian conflicts because it provides explanatory power for why democratic states are not less prone to war with non-democratic states. As ‘constructivism helps us by focusing on how constructing identity shapes the application of norms of bounded competition’^{90} that is states that are thought of as illiberal by democratic nations are not treated in the same way as those that are seen as liberal. As Wilsonianism’s democracy promotion element is based on the principle that

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item Ibid p. 1
\item Ibid p. 53
\item Ibid p. 66
\item Ibid p. 67
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democracies are better partners than non-democracies we can see that constructivism’s 
approach helps us to understand why these domestic elements are important factors in a 
Wilsonian explanation.

Both of these schools highlight the importance of domestic characteristics in 
understanding how states conduct their foreign policy. As a school that draws on the liberal 
tradition, this section will discuss the origins of Wilsonianism within American culture. In 
order to fully understand this ideological position we need to go back before the formation 
of the republic, to the political causes of the American Revolution. The Revolution was 
founded within an ideological premise that the government can only govern with the 
consent of the people. Yehoshua Arieli argues that the ‘Declaration of Independence, the 
various bills of rights of the states, and the debates over the ratification of the Constitution 
revealed the ideological character of the movement.’ In building the United States the 
Founding Fathers looked to the classical republics of Greece and Rome, ‘for all their stress 
on modern progress, [George] Washington and his colleagues in the American 
Enlightenment also looked back to the classical past for inspiration.’ It is in this period that 
the key tenets of American ideology formed this ideology can be defined as liberal 
democracy. Seymour Lipset uses a similar definition; ‘the American Creed can be described 
in five terms: liberty, egalitarianism, individualism, populism and laisssez-faire.’ This is 
reinforced by Tony Smith who argues that ‘liberalism has always been the dominant political

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creed in the United States, even if it has been strikingly unselfconscious in the positions it has taken.94

The term ‘liberalism’ as a concept is one that has proved elusive to codify.95 Broadly envisioned, ‘liberalism has made a series of claims about the moral character of the individual and the state.96 Smith argues that we can best understand these states by their defining characteristic that is ‘Constitutionalism or the rule of law’.97 It is this rule of law that constrains the actions of governments, restrictions their ability to make decisions without the input of their citizens and places at its heart the rights of the individual. Kahn argues that:

... liberalism refers to a political culture that has neither the sophistication of a theory nor the partisanship of a political party. This is the sense in which we speak of American political culture— or, more generally, of the West— as liberal.98

Further we can see in Khan’s argument that the adoption of liberalism in the early republic was a key factor in the formation of the American national culture:

This does not mean that American government was born with a full-blown theory of laissez-faire capitalism. But it does mean that Americans easily adopted the Lockean idea that government comes into existence in order to protect private property. Property quickly came to mark the boundaries of legitimate authority: government must respect private property in its own dealings with individuals, and it must protect private property from trespass, theft, or destruction. Government, from this perspective, is feared as endlessly voracious, always wanting more: taxing private wealth, regulating market activities and land use, intruding into private contracts, and deploying force to extend its territorial domain. Government should be designed

94 Tony Smith, America’s Mission p. 16
95 The term liberalism is used differently in different contexts. In the American domestic context it is often used to denote those in favour of a larger role for the state, in sharp contrast to the historical use in economic liberalism to denote the opposite opinion.
96 Tony Smith, America’s Mission p. 14
97 Smith, America’s Mission p. 14
in such a way as to place some hindrances in the path of this voraciousness. America, one might say, begins with an antitax bias.99

Colin Dueck writes that, in the United States, ‘to an extent that is unusual compared to other countries, Americans define their national identity according to a classical liberal creed, or a set of beliefs.’100 Classical liberalism can encompass many concepts that have developed overtime; but it is clear that it shares a mutually reinforcing relationship with democracy and capitalism. Doyle argues that liberal regimes share certain key characteristics:

There is no canonical description of liberalism. What we tend to call liberal resembles a family portrait of principles and institutions, recognizable by certain characteristics-for example, individual freedom, political participation, private property, and equality of opportunity that most liberal states share.101

Shinko argues ‘one of the most widely accepted observations about the American political experience is the dominance of liberalism as the framework of American political discourse.’102 Rachel Turner suggests that ‘liberalism in the United States has a rich political heritage that has drawn on ideas which were not American in origin. These ideas were interpreted, adopted and modified to suit historical circumstances, and in the long term were moulded into a tradition that is characteristically American.’103 The basis of liberalism is found in the respect for the rights of the individual and this ideology was codified in the Constitution. Turner proceeds to argue ‘Eighteenth-century American constitutionalism gave institutional expression to a belief that a higher law existed which restricted the

99 Kahn, Putting Liberalism in Its Place, p. 11
powers of government on behalf of the general welfare of the people.’ The liberal nature of the constitution is an important factor in explaining why this liberal tradition has continued through the history of the United States.

Louis Hartz presents a detailed argument on the nature of liberalism arguing not only that we can see in the United States the adoption of John Locke’s liberalism as the framework for American political culture but that ideologies which exist outside of this framework are unable to gain traction in American political life. As Hartz argues ‘there has never been a “liberal movement” or a real “liberal party” in America: we have only had the American Way of Life, nationalist articulation of Locke which usually does not know that Locke himself is involved.’ Hartz’s thesis is a contested one for Rogers M. Smith argues that ‘Hartz’s argument worked fairly well when attention centered on white men, as his usually did’ but argues that Hartz’s thesis does not hold when applied to other social groups. Rogers goes on to argue that ‘most African-American men and most white women did not enjoy the range of basic individual rights, including economic rights, that Hartz’s definition of liberalism said they should have.’

This thesis however is primarily concerned with the foreign relations of the United States and how Wilsonianism can be used to help explain these conflicts. This area of government has traditionally been dominated by elites that have been the primary focus of

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104 Turner, Neo-Liberal Ideology p. 33
107 Smith, Liberalism and Racism p. 19
the liberal tradition. Louis Hartz argues that ‘America skipping the feudal stage of history’ was a key element in the origins of this tradition. This is also a contested proposition. It is neither this thesis’s contention nor objective to defend Hartz’s thesis from criticisms that it has been unevenly applied in the domestic context, but to instead explain how Hartz concept of American liberalism has contributed to the foreign policy of the United States. One of the recurring themes of the liberal tradition is that it is a force for peace, both in its role in shaping domestic character and within international relations theory. If we revisit the liberal theories of international relations that were discussed above, we can see that one of the key elements of this theory is the concept of the rule of law and how the democratic nature of a liberal state will lead it to have more peaceful relations with other liberal states. As Doyle argues ‘when the citizens who bear the burdens of war elect their governments, wars become impossible.’ So despite the uneven application of the liberal traditions we have discussed above, the basic precepts that will lead to a liberal foreign policy exist amongst those that were making foreign policy. That is those who are making foreign policy were part of the electorate and were reliant on the rule of law and property protection to ensure their position. Doyle argues ‘the political bonds of liberal rights and interests have proven a remarkably firm foundation for mutual nonaggression.’ This is an interesting phenomenon as the conflicts in this thesis have been against states that the United States has viewed as non-liberal states.

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108 For further discussion of Hartz’s theory see David F Ericson and Louisa Bertch Green, The Liberal Tradition in American Politics.
109 Lois Hartz, The Liberal Tradition in America p. 3
110 A distinct but connected part of the liberal tradition.
111 Doyle, ‘Liberalism and World Politics’, pp. 1151-1169
112 Ibid, p. 1151
113 Ibid, p. 1162
The word democracy has become synonymous with the United States, despite the term appearing in neither the Declaration of Independence nor in the Constitution. Indeed the United States was founded as a republic and thus it should be noted was not, in the strictest sense, formed as a democracy at all. As is argued in the Federalist Papers, ‘the two great points of difference between a democracy and a republic are: first, the delegation of the government, in the latter, to a small number of citizens elected by the rest.’\(^{114}\) Which form the nascent American State should take was a highly debated subject, echoed in the debates the Founding Fathers had in their writings. The Federalist Papers recommended to the populace a republican form of government, rather than a direct democracy partly because of the size of the United States: ‘a democracy, consequently, will be confined to a small spot. A republic may be extended over a large region.’\(^{115}\) Once again we see the codification of this democratic creed in the constitution and the evolving nature of the franchise from its narrow conception to a more universalist nature over the next two hundred years. Alexis de Tocqueville in his classic work Democracy in America argues ‘the emigrants who fixed themselves on the shore of America in the beginning of the seventeenth century severed the democratic principle from all the principles which repressed it in the old communities of Europe.’\(^{116}\) In the absence of the pressures that would contain the democratic process it was likely to become the dominant force in the American political system.

Having discussed what constitutes the American national character, we can see there are numerous influences that make up this complex phenomenon, such as the roles of


\(^{115}\) Ibid p. 1022

liberalism and democracy in the American state. If we can identify that each state has its own distinct set of preferences which are derived from its own domestic character, then it can also be demonstrated that the United States has a set of foreign policy preferences that are derived from its domestic culture. As is discussed above, there is much evidence to suggest that the dominant domestic paradigm of the United States has been a liberal democratic one since its inception. Thus it would follow that this liberal character has an effect on the preferences of the foreign policy of the United States. If the liberal character of the United States is an important factor in deciding its foreign policy, then we should see this tradition reflected in the way foreign policy is conducted and debated within the United States. If the character of states is made up from that state’s different historical traditions, cultural norms and local laws then we can conclude this domestic character has been consistent since the formation of the republic and we would find this tradition across several case studies spread across the history of the United States.\textsuperscript{117} One aspect of this liberal influence in foreign policy can be interpreted as the Wilsonian tradition.

This section has discussed the origins of Wilsonianism in the domestic liberal character of the United States; this character is one that has existed since the beginning of the republic. It is this liberal nature that created an American political culture\textsuperscript{118} where Wilsonian ideals could be an influencing factor on foreign policy. As Dennis Kavanagh argues


‘the concept of political culture helps us to explain why broadly similar phenomena across nations produce dissimilar results.’ As such we can see that these factors are at work, throughout the history of the United States and play apart even before the Wilson administration.

American Exceptionalism

This section will discuss the concept of American exceptionalism and its relationship to the Wilsonian School. At its core the concept of American exceptionalism is based on the idea that ‘the United States is an extraordinary nation with a special role to play in human history, not only unique but also superior among nations.’ The idea of American exceptionalism is one that is also said to have its origins in American culture. McCrisken argues that ‘from the start Americans have believed that destiny has marked their country as different from all others.’ Exceptionalism is often used by its supporters as meaning exceptionally good or virtuous and the actions this belief leads to will be ones with positive effects. This section will not debate whether the United States is actually exceptional but will instead focus on the debates that have surrounded the concept.

The exceptionalist discourse has spawned two distinctive camps known as the exemplar and missionary camps. The exemplar camp is one that posits that the United States should set an example to the rest of the world but not involve itself in the affairs of others:

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121 McCrisken *American Exceptionalism and the Legacy of Vietnam* p. 3
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The exemplary identity is then said to inspire an “isolationist” foreign policy (more recently “aloof” has become the preferred term). Isolationism or aloofness was said to be exemplified by Puritan John Winthrop’s “City upon a Hill” speech.¹²²

This philosophy has often been associated with the presidency of Thomas Jefferson. Mead argues that the Jeffersonian tradition is an important in the traditions of American foreign policy and also has its cultural roots in the liberal nature of the United States. In this case it is in the limitation of the role of government in the lives of the citizens. If we return to Hartz’s arguments about what defines a liberal state, we see that, to him this aspect is what constitutes the defining characteristics of liberalism. From the Jeffersonian perspective the defence of American liberty is the first priority of foreign policy. Like the Wilsonians democracy is the most important part of liberalism, unlike them, however Jeffersonians do not believe that democracy is a robust form of government that will win out when all things are equal. Instead liberty and democracy must be constantly defended from its both foreign and domestic enemies.

The Jeffersonian tradition is one that insists that the American republic is both virtuous and fragile and that it is necessary to perfect the republic first with all other concerns secondary. The Jeffersonian tradition is opposed to war for a variety of reasons, but the main reason is the potential for damage to the liberty of the republic at home. For example, Thomas Jefferson was concerned that, not only would the Federal Government’s power grow because of these conflicts, (although that at least could recede when the conflict was over), but that the financial burden of war fighting is one that directly imposes on the liberties of the American people and one that would exist long after the conflict is over. After all, Mead argues:

Wars cost money, piling up debts that concentrate power in the central government and forced most of the population to labor and pay taxes to support the minority that owned government bonds issued to cover the debt.\textsuperscript{123}

The missionary camp is one that posits that the United States should go out into the world and use its military power to effect a positive change. It is this camp that has been most associated with the Wilsonian School. It is important to recognise that Wilsonianism can be interpreted as a very specific form of missionary exceptionalism. Both concepts derive their ideas from American culture and they are both proponents of using military power to effect positive change or at least what the proponents of these approaches perceive to be positive.

As we have seen above there are many theories that explain unique American behaviour; realists have argued America is exceptional powerful, revisionists that it is exceptional capitalist and neo conservatives that it is exceptional good and virtuous. Wilsonianism’s approach is that the United States represents a particularly good system of government and demonstrates an exceptional form of international organisation in the form of collective security. Ruggie argues that a world order based along more multilateral lines is one ‘singularly compatible with America’s collective self-conception as a nation.’\textsuperscript{124} Thus we can see that Wilsonians believe that the United States is exceptional in its role in bringing about exceptional change to the international system.

\textsuperscript{123} Mead, \textit{Special Providence} p. 186
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The Case Studies

This section will discuss the case studies that this thesis addresses. The case studies have been chosen because existing literature neither fully explain them nor subjects them to an in-depth analysis using the Wilsonian framework. A framework which, this thesis argues has explanatory value across the whole of American history, starting from the earliest days of the republic. As Robert Tucker argues ‘what is often considered Wilson's legacy does not begin with Wilson but with the Founding Fathers.’\(^\text{125}\) The section that follows sets out the conflicts that have been included in this thesis and why our understanding of these conflicts is enhanced by revisiting them using the Wilsonian framework. One of the key arguments of this thesis is that the Wilsonian framework is a useful tool for understanding America’s decisions to go to war. This implies that the United States has some form of agency in these conflicts so that the factors Wilsonianism would highlight could affect the decision for conflict. Richard Haass argues that ‘Wars can either be viewed as essentially unavoidable, that is acts of necessity, or just the opposite, reflecting conscious choice when other reasonable policies are available but are deemed to be less attractive.’\(^\text{126}\) As Zbigniew Brzezinski argues ‘any decision to go to war unless it is in response to an attack on one’s state is the consequence of a judgment regarding the definition of “necessity” made in reaction to some ominous foreign event.’\(^\text{127}\)

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As the concept of agency is a nebulous one in relation to states, especially when one considers the agency and structure debate, it is important, if one is to understand Wilsonianism as an explanatory tool, to lay out when the United States had agency. To begin with the United States when making the decision to go to war cannot have its territory under direct attack nor can it be under the threat of imminent attack by a foreign power. The United States’ vital interests are not threatened in such a way that the state would become unviable if it does not go to war. All of these considerations would limit the agency the United States would have in the decision to go to and limit the influence of Wilsonian factors.

The first conflict this thesis discusses is the First World War. This conflict and the Wilsonian motivations for the United States to enter the conflict show how this school of foreign policy came to be known after Woodrow Wilson. It is for this reason that this thesis will address this conflict first rather than addressing them chronologically. Next this section discusses the War of 1812 and how Wilsonian explanations are applicable to American foreign policy since the inception of the republic, when the United States was a relatively weak power. This section then goes on to discuss the Korean War and how Wilsonianism gives us a deeper understanding of this early Cold War conflict where the United States was one of two superpowers in a bipolar system. The final conflict this thesis investigates was the First Gulf War that shows us a period in which the United States is the only viable great power.

The First World War is one of the most significant conflicts of the Twentieth Century, which saw the great powers of Europe make war against each other in the first truly industrialized great power conflict. Although not the earliest conflict chronologically the First World War has been chosen as the first examined in this thesis because it is the war most associated with Woodrow Wilson. The First World War took place in a period of transition in American history as the United States rose to the ranks of the great powers and was arguably the most powerful state in the system by 1917. It is an important case study as it shows how Wilson conducted foreign policy and is the best example of why the Wilsonian School contributes to our understanding of American conflicts. This new understanding is important as the origins of this conflict are highly contested within international relations theory. It is important to note however this thesis does not address the origins of the general conflict between the great powers but it seeks to explain how we can best understand the involvement of the United States in the war. This thesis will show that the Wilsonian framework can allow a much more complete understanding of why United States entered the First World War. By examining the role that securing democracy had on Woodrow Wilson’s decisions for war, this chapter shows that the Wilsonian framework is a powerful tool to understand America’s entry into this conflict. This chapter will begin by addressing the traditional understandings of why the United States became involved in this conflict by discussing how the United States had agency in these events and that although there were strong strategic and economic motivations for the conflict these can be supplemented with the addition of Wilsonian factors. The conclusion of this chapter will

establish why we should view the Wilsonian School as an important tool for understanding the United States decision to enter this conflict.

The War of 1812, the first chronologically of the wars examined herein, has been chosen as a conflict representative of the early republic, when the United States was a relatively weak power. The origins of this conflict are an example of how Wilsonianism influenced American conflicts before Woodrow Wilson took the White House. By using this war as a case study, this chapter will demonstrate that even though the early republic had little power, it was nevertheless influenced by the moral influences and objectives of the Wilsonian tradition.

Fought between the United States and Great Britain over issues of citizenship and the nature of the American republic, this war is also the only conflict of the case studies that was fought on the soil of the United States, or indeed the North American continent. With this conflict we see battles along the northern border of the United States, New Orleans, the sacking of the capital—Washington D.C.—as well as the war at sea. This conflict is also the only conflict in this thesis’s case studies where a defeat could have led to the possible destruction of the United States as a nation as the result of conflict. The fragility of the American republic in this war makes it uniquely suited to demonstrate that the realist dynamic of security maximization is not sufficient to explain the risks the United States takes given the potential rewards. This chapter argues that the Wilsonian framework is a key explanatory tool in understanding James Madison’s decision for war. The role the United States’ domestic ideology, particularly its need to fight for republican government against those who would violate the rights of the United States and its citizens played in this decision are brought to the fore by the Wilsonian framework.
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This war is also of interest because it was fought between the United States and Great Britain. During this period Britain was in many ways not that distant from the ideology of the United States, promoting the benefits of trade and a general liberal economic system. The young nation also had several grievances with republican France during this period and came close to war against it on numerous occasions, but this chapter will show why war was waged against Britain and not France. This period of history shows us a period of multipolarity within the international system with Britain and France as the two strongest powers. This was also a period where France represented a potential regional hegemon in Europe and this power is balanced by Britain and its allies. Although this is generally considered a period of isolation, it is clear that the United States placed considerable importance on the outcome of the struggle in Europe.

This chapter begins with a discussion of free trade and sailor’s rights, the contemporary justification for the conflict and discusses how we need to revisit this in light of an understanding of the Wilsonian School. This war makes up a key component of this thesis’s argument as it shows that the United States was willing to risk the very existence of the republic and the reasons for this risk are best understood using Wilsonianism as a tool. Further this conflict demonstrates that Wilsonianism has been a key influence since the earliest days of the republic.

The Korean war - often known as the forgotten war,\textsuperscript{130} despite the scale of the conflict- ‘with an estimated three million-plus deaths of all nationalities, the Korean War still ranks behind only the two world wars as the most costly war of the twentieth century in

terms of human lives lost.\footnote{Allan R. Millett, ‘Introduction to the Korean War’ \textit{The Journal of Military History}, Vol. 65, No. 4 (Oct., 2001), p. 924} Fought on the Korean peninsula what began as a conflict between the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (North Korea) and the Republic of Korea (South Korea), would soon involve the United States leading a multinational task force in a de-facto war against the People’s Republic of China. As the first major active military conflict of the Cold War, the Korean War is an important case study in this thesis. The Korean War has been chosen as an example of a Cold War conflict at a time of bipolarity which represents the third stage of American power that this thesis discusses. The end of the Second World War saw the disruption of the regional balance of power with Britain and France exhausted and the Japanese Empire destroyed.

Both the Soviet Union and the United States had an interest in the Korean peninsula, having sponsored their respective occupation zones to become states. This was also the first period in which the United States takes an active role in maintaining the global balance of power. This chapter begins with a discussion of this conflict in the context of the early Cold War and seeks to show that strategic motivations will not alone explain the United States’ entry into this conflict. As this conflict is set against the backdrop of the Cold War it is important to consider it not only as the direct implication of the conflict but how it fits into the greater context of the super power struggle. This chapter demonstrates how we can best understand this conflict using the Wilsonian framework. This is because the conflict is fought as part of a United Nations mandate and can thus be viewed as a case of collective security, which the Wilsonian School promotes in order to prevent international conflict and to deter aggression with a collective response. As we have established, Wilsonianism has at its core a belief that nations that are democracies are less prone to conflict, so in a perfect
world all states would be democracies and thus there would seldom be conflict. In a world which does contain aggressive non-democratic states, however, collective action is a method that can be employed to prevent aggression from these states. In a Wilsonian based system states would agree to support each other if attacked and thus create a system whereby aggression would not be able to succeed and thus aggressors would be deterred. Although this system had failed to prevent the Second World War, the United Nations had been constituted with the same collective security principle in mind. From a Wilsonian perspective the aggression in Korea was exactly the kind of event that the United Nations was supposed to prevent. By using the framework provided by Wilsonianism, this chapter will show Harry Truman acting to secure Wilsonian objectives in defending South Korea.

The final case study this thesis will address is that of the First Gulf War, where the United States and its allies sought to liberate the Kingdom of Kuwait from its Iraqi occupier. This war is an important case study as it took place at the end of the Cold War as the world is entering a period of American uni-polarity. This represents a fourth distinct era in the power of the United States. During this conflict we see that the United States has achieved a level of technological and logistical capability that gives it an overwhelming military superiority over the Iraqi forces, which in the resultant conflict led to an even more decisive victory than the planners of the war had expected. This war is also important because it is traditionally defined as a realist conflict and George H.W. Bush as a pragmatic president.132 This thesis takes a different view of that the conflict and argues that there is a strong Wilsonian dynamic at work in President Bush’s attempt to create a new world order at the end of the Cold War. For an order where military aggression is not seen as a legitimate

method for the resolution of differences between states is a clearly Wilsonian goal. This chapter therefore argues that, if we revisit the evidence the traditional interpretation of the conflict presents, then see that this evidence does not point to the realist explanation alone, we should see Wilsonianism as aiding our understanding of this conflict.

The above conflicts are not a definitive list of American conflicts since the formation of the republic. This thesis’s objective is not to explain every conflict that the United States has fought, but to identify how Wilsonianism can give additional insight into the conflicts it analyses. This opens the possibility toward future projects that would include an analysis of how this approach could be applied to other wars of choice fought by the United States. Although there is insufficient space to discuss all of the conflicts that have been excluded this section gives a brief discussion of some of the larger conflicts that are not included.

The Civil War is an important conflict in the history of the United States and, if we are to take the southern states secession as a rebellion, then it is clear that this violates the first principle of agency discussed previously in the chapter as the United States’ territory was threatened. If we are to assume the Confederacy was an independent state which could undermine the security of the United States in two ways- not only because the Confederacy itself could become a competitor to the United States and vie with it for dominance in North America (and create a multi-polar state system, a situation the Founding Fathers had wished to avoid by creating the federal government originally),\(^{133}\) It would also open the door to European powers to reassert their influence in the New World, and force the United States to take a more active part in the international system.

\(^{133}\)For a full discussion of the Founding Fathers’ view on the benefits of the union and the prevention of war see the *Federalist Papers*. 
The Second World War is perhaps the most important war the United States has fought, given the massive upheaval to the international system this war causes and the significant alterations to the global balance of power left in its wake. This conflict has been excluded for two primary reasons; the first being that on December 7th 1941 the Empire of Japan attacked and destroyed a large part of the United States Pacific Fleet based at Pearl Harbor. As it is this event that triggered the entry of the United States and this is a clear example of American territory being under attack and as such eliminates the role of agency and how much Wilsonian ideology can play in the decision and so does not play a part in this study. The second is this conflict also demonstrates a good example of when the United States was presented with a situation where Wilsonianism could have been the primary motivation for conflict but was not. The Germany of 1939 was clearly not a democratic state\textsuperscript{134} nor was it conductive to an international system that was rules based. Given the situation in Europe after the defeat of France in 1940\textsuperscript{135} and the danger that democratic government may have ceased to be, in Europe, it would seem that Wilsonianism should have driven America to war long before the attack on Pearl Harbor. It is precisely because Wilsonianism is not the driver of all American foreign policy that America did not fight in 1939 or 1940.\textsuperscript{136} This period is perhaps a nadir point for the forces of Wilsonianism in American foreign policy given the strength of the movements to keep the United States out


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of the war. Mead argues that it was the Jeffersonian School that kept the U.S. out of the war, for ‘a great many Jeffersonians continued to make the case against United States participation in the war long after a dispassionate study of the strategic realities would have shown the time had come to prepare.’ The events of the Second World War present an interesting counter example to the conflicts that have been driven by Wilsonianism and investigated in this thesis.

There are numerous conflicts that took place during the Cold War that have been excluded, most notably the conflict in Vietnam. These conflicts also present us with different motivations for why these conflicts were fought. Some of these conflicts are driven by Wilsonian ideas but have been excluded because Korea has been chosen as an example of a conflict fought in this period of American power. Once again this is not to say that all of America’s conflict during this period are Wilsonian, the United States has clearly been influenced by the other schools of thought in its foreign policy during the period. Indeed in the immediate post-Vietnam period events had ‘revived popular distrust of the federal government’ and brought Jeffersonianism back to the fore, whilst Hamiltonians supported America’s aggressive support of global free trade.

The post-Cold War period shows use a significant increase in America’s interventions abroad, with the rise of humanitarian interventions. The events in Bosnia and particularly


\[138\] Mead, Special Providence p. 208


\[140\] Mead, Special Providence p. 213
Kosovo\textsuperscript{141} are interesting case studies that given more space would add new evidence to the debate. The conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq\textsuperscript{142} are also examples of conflicts that take place in the fourth period of American power that may have a Wilsonian explanation which warrant further investigation in another work. This period also presents examples of restraint by the United States that may be explained with reference to other schools. For example if we investigate the conflicts in Rwanda\textsuperscript{143} we can see here the strong influence of the Jacksonian School, as Mead argues ‘an unpunished genocide in Rwanda might encourage ethnic slaughter in Assam or Liberia, but Jacksonians awoke from the fevered dream of the Cold War and found they could live with these outcomes more easily than they thought.’\textsuperscript{144} This is a clear example of when Jacksonian thought has stayed the Wilsonian hand.

In each of the cases studies this thesis addresses there is not a sufficient explanation derived from the realist explanation of security and power to explain these conflicts without considering additional factors. It is exactly because there was more than Realpolitik involved


\textsuperscript{144} Mead, Special Providence p. 299
that the Wilsonian framework is so useful. If the balance of power calculations upon which realism is founded do not serve to wholly explain these conflicts, then there must be other factors at work and Wilsonianism is a key tool for understanding these factors.

As these wars are not best explained by the distribution of power, this thesis contends that simply having more military power does not make the decision to go to war more likely. As such, American military power is an independent variable within the study and the United States is not more or less likely to go to war in these cases if it has more military power. To demonstrate this, these case studies have been chosen to represent different eras of American military strength.

Benjamin O. Fordham makes a strong counterpoint to this, arguing that ‘advocates of military force, uniformed or not, can make a stronger case for their preferred course of action when the state has greater military capabilities.’\(^{145}\) The basis of his argument is that the more disproportionate the difference in military power is the easier it will seem to be to seek a military solution. It stands to reason that if your opponent is in a weaker position you are less inclined to compromise with him, if it seems that you can get everything you want militarily, there is a disincentive to negotiate. Fordham concludes that ‘greater military capability might itself lead a state to resort to force more often.’\(^{146}\)

The case studies in this thesis will demonstrate that this is not the conclusion that should be drawn when explaining the conflicts addressed, the case studies show that even when the United States does not have a military advantage the Wilsonian lens will add to our understanding.

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\(^{146}\) Ibid p. 635
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Summary

This chapter has established why the current literature is not sufficient to fully explain these conflicts. It shows that an explanation based on the domestic liberal nature of the United States has created a particular approach to foreign policy which has it at its core an ideological position that promotes American values and strives to create an international order that is compatible with those values. This ideological approach has in turn created several distinct and competing schools of thought on how the United States should relate to the rest of the world and how it should comport itself in relations with these states. One of these schools has been defined as Wilsonianism as Woodrow Wilson is seen as the president that best encompassed the values of this collection of ideas, even though they had existed before his presidency.

This chapter has also established that the United States has sometimes engaged in conflicts that are not completely explained by understanding what would be in the best strategic interests of the United States. Having explained the definition and importance of Wilsonianism and agency, this chapter has sought to establish a connection between those wars that have been examined and the Wilsonian school of thought. This chapter presents the argument that we can view the Wilsonian framework as key to understanding the conflicts that this thesis investigates. Although the Wilsonian School does not explain every American conflict, there is clearly a recurring theme in the patterns of these wars that can be identified as being influenced by the Wilsonian School. This chapter has shown that although there are competing theories of international relations that try to explain these conflicts, a new and more direct analysis of how the Wilsonian dynamic has led to these
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wars will further our understanding of these conflicts. In the following chapters this thesis will lay out the cases for each war and how they fit into the greater Wilsonian framework.
Chapter Two: The First World War

Introduction

The debate on the origins of the First World War is a complex one with many competing explanations offered.\(^1\) In this conflict, which engaged many of the major world powers of 1914,\(^2\) the United States had remained neutral until 1917. This chapter will demonstrate how the Wilsonian framework is a real and influencing factor in understanding of the United States decision enter the war.

This chapter will show that we can gain a better understanding of the role that “making the world safe for democracy” has in the United States’ entry into the conflict. To do this we shall re-examine the concept as part of a Wilsonian desire to promote democracy and shape the international system in line with Wilsonian preferences. At its core the

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\(^2\) While there is some debate on what constitutes a major power in the international system, for 1914 it is clear that Great Britain, Germany, France, Russia, The Austro-Hungarian Empire, Italy Japan the Ottoman Empire and the United States represent a broad definition of states that can be considered the major powers of the time. For further reading on what constitutes a great power see: Jack S. Levy, *War in the modern Great Power system 1495-1975* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1983), John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, (New York : Norton and Co., 2001) and Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military conflict from 1500 to 2000*, (London: Random House, 1987)
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Wilsonian School is one that posits, America can utilise its military power to bring democracy to other nations that have authoritarian government.

This chapter will show that the democracy promotion and the collective security pillars of the Wilsonian framework are present in this conflict. The Wilsonian framework looks at the factors that contribute to America going to war in a different way to the traditional strategic approach. This is an important consideration when understanding the causes of the First World War. Chapter One discussed in detail how this has been a part of American ideology since the early days of the republic. Woodrow Wilson however can be considered the first consciously Wilsonian president, and his presidency so embodied these values that Mead identifies him as a central figure in the tradition. It is Thomas Knock who argues that ‘Wilson was arguably the first president to use military force systematically to bring about certain kinds of political results.’³ For this reason as well as Wilson’s synonymy with the Wilsonian framework, the First World War is the first conflict this thesis addresses. Woodrow Wilson’s vision of a more peaceful world has been used in various forms across the whole spectrum of political ideologies from liberalism to neo-conservatism.⁴ This has led to multiple different interpretations of Wilson’s intentions and motivations in going to war in 1917.

As it is this the contention of this thesis that Wilsonianism is an active force that influences foreign policy, it is important to return to the core principles of Wilsonianism discussed in Chapter One. As we have identified there are two key components to the

Wilsonian approach—democracy promotion and collective security. Those who have been most supportive of Wilson’s League of Nations approach, believing that supra-national organizations are the key to a more secure world, have fallen under the banner of liberalism.\(^5\) Neoconservatives on the other hand have pointed to the need to increase the number of democracies in the world in order to prevent conflicts.\(^6\) Realists are however far more cynical of Wilson’s motivations, looking at the other factors that could have drawn the U.S. into the conflict and arguing that democracy promotion was a justification for Wilson’s decision to intervene in the balance of power. The Wilsonian framework is a powerful tool for understanding the First World War because it highlights both the importance of factors such as the spread of democracy and the importance of collective security. Factors that the traditional debates do not consider or dismisses as simply camouflage for power orientated approaches.

This chapter will begin by addressing the traditional debates that focus on how the United States went to war for strategic and economic reasons. The second section will move on to discuss the Wilsonian interpretation of the events. The final section will address how we can use Mead’s Wilsonian framework to interpret Wilson’s decision for conflict and why this framework is an important analytical tool.

\(^5\) It is important to remember that Liberalism covers a large section of political theory with many competing ideas related by the concept that the domestic organization of states has an important effect on how states act at the international level.
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The Debate

This section will review the arguments that have been classically used to explain the American entry into the First World War. It will then go on to discuss the economic arguments that surrounded American entry into the conflict.

The first strategic factor this to consider is the classical interpretation of the origins of the First World War, which is that the United States acted only in its own strategic interest. This argument suggests that the United States had no need to concern itself with events in Europe until 1917 because Britain had been able to contain any potential hegemon. This section will begin by addressing the neo-realist assertion that the United States had pursued a ‘buck passing’ strategy up to 1917 allowing the Allies to pay the price of containing Germany. This policy changed, so the realist argument goes, as the tide appeared to turn against the Allies in 1917. Thus the United States was forced to support the Allies when presented with potential German hegemony in Europe. In this analysis a victorious Germany would not only possess the strongest army in the world but it would shatter British naval supremacy, which played an important part in enforcing the Monroe doctrine. With the great powers of Europe defeated, Germany would be unopposed on its

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7 Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*
8 This is a term used by John Mearsheimer to indicate a power attempting to pass the cost of containing its rivals to another great power.
10 Compiled data on the relative military strengths of the great powers can be found in Table 8.4 in Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* p. 303.
borders and as such could attempt to spread its influence to the new world and pose a threat to the United States.\textsuperscript{12} This scenario would not be appealing for the United States, which owed its own success in the Western Hemisphere to the lack of peer competitors and the balance of the European great powers. John Mearsheimer contends that ‘the United States entered World War One in good part because it thought that Germany was gaining the upper hand.’\textsuperscript{13}

It is also important to remember that when the First World War broke out it was widely expected to be a short sharp conflict with victory achieved by Christmas.\textsuperscript{14} The military leaders on both sides had ‘failed to take account of the enormous difficulties which the development of modern weapons had placed in the way of mass attacks of the traditional kind.’\textsuperscript{15} Given the relatively weak position of the American military in 1914 it would, from the American perspective, be unable to affect the outcome even if it wished to intervene. If one were to take into account the time it would take to mobilize the army and transport it across the Atlantic, it appeared to Wilson that he was impotent to act even if he were inclined. In fact only four divisions were available by the end of 1917 and it was not until 1918 that a sizable American force was available.\textsuperscript{16} As the conflict dragged on however

\textsuperscript{13} Mearsheimer, The Tragedy of Great Power Politics, p. 253
\textsuperscript{16} Mearsheimer, The Tragedy of Great Power Politics p. 253
it is clear the United States’ ability to replace allied troops with millions of reserves would be a decisive factor.

This next section will look at the events of 1917 that show the fracturing of the Allied cause, the most important of which is the revolution in Russia which overthrew the Tsar. The first revolution did not result in Russian surrender as the second revolution would but it was an indication that Russia was in disarray and could no longer be relied upon to contain Germany. French manpower at this stage of the war was beginning to show its strain after the battles of Verdun. It was also clear that it would be nearly impossible for Britain to continue the land war if France and Russia were defeated. At the same time the U-boat campaign was having a devastating effect on Britain’s supply lines and it looked as though Britain might be starved out of the war. If Britain collapsed then France and Russia would likely follow.

Viewed from a realist perspective the Zimmerman telegram provides important supporting evidence; Tuchman argues that the British decoders that had intercepted the

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18 For further reading on these battles see: Sir Alistair Horne, The Price of Glory: Verdun 1916, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1962)
19 Britain could have continued operations against the Ottoman Empire or in Europe through Italy but this would be logistically difficult. For discussion of the stopping power of water see Mearsheimer, The Tragedy of Great Power Politics and for a discussion of the difficulty of amphibious operations see Alfred Vagts, Landing Operations: Strategy, Psychology, Tactic, Politics, from Antiquity to 1945, (Harrisburg: Military Service Publishing Co, 1946)
21 Although it is conceivable that the other powers could fight on without Britain in seems unlikely given the industrial disparity that they would face vs. the Central Powers. For discussion of Britain’s economic contribution to the allies see Kennedy, Rise and Fall, R. Trouton, ‘Cancellation of Inter-Allied Debts’ The Economic Journal, Vol. 31, No. 121 (Mar., 1921), pp. 38-45 and Stephen Broadberry and Mark Harrison (eds), The Economics of World War I, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009)
22 This telegram was sent from Arthur Zimmerman, the German Foreign Minister, to the German Ambassador in Mexico, Heinrich von Eckardt. This telegram contained instructions to approach the Mexican Government
message now had ‘the lever with which to move the United States.’ There had been concern in the United States over German influence in the Western Hemisphere before the war had started. An analysis of the text of the Zimmerman telegram shows that there were several key elements to this message that would point to intervention being in America’s interest. First and foremost is the threat that Germany would support the annexation of New Mexico, Texas and Arizona with ‘general financial support.’ With the Royal Navy’s blockade it would have been impossible for Germany to provide troops to aid Mexico, unless the U-Boat campaign had led to Britain’s surrender. Further it would be unlikely that Mexican troops could achieve such territorial gains without significant German military support. Thus this was clearly an attempt by Berlin to distract the United States long enough for Germany to achieve victory in Europe.

A more disturbing section of the telegram encourages the President of Mexico ‘to mediate between Germany and Japan’ as a rapprochement between Germany and Japan would threaten American interests in the Pacific, as well as putting strains on the already overstretched Royal Navy, foreshadowing the situation in the Second World War. It would also risk the formation of a balancing coalition in the Western Hemisphere, a situation America had sought to avoid since its creation. Not only would it be logical for the United States to head off the forming of a balancing coalition in the Western Hemisphere, it would with an offer of an alliance in the event the United States looked likely to enter the war on the side of the Allies. This offer would include loans and German military support and diplomatic support in recovering territory previously lost to the United States.

26 Ibid
be easier to defeat the coalition leader - in this case Germany- with the support of the Allies than if it waited to see the outcome of the war in Europe.

The closing sentence of the telegram declares that the ‘ruthless submarine warfare now promises to compel England to make peace in a few months.’ It is easy to dismiss this as hyperbole to convince the Mexican government to attack the United States, however when compared with the other known factors it may have added to the fears in the administration of German hegemony and isolation. The threat of submarines starving Britain to surrender would not only lead to defeat of the Allies but also the removal of the blockade of Germany which would allow the support of Mexico by Germany.

To review, there is strong evidence to suggest that the United States went to war in 1917 to further her own interests, the most important of which was to prevent a German hegemony in Europe. This interpretation would also explain why the United States had different attitudes towards the British and German blockades. As neither the United Kingdom nor any of the Allies presented a potential hegemon the United States could aid the Allies without threatening its own position. As such, if the United States were following a realist policy of avoiding the costs of containment, the United States would provide aid to the Allies, which it did in the form of loans and munitions, and avoid declaring war until it could no longer rely on an Allied victory, as was the situation in 1917. The thesis does not dispute the validity of these claims, but seeks to show that Wilsonian factors will add considerably to our understanding of this conflict, for though these are strong reasons they do not give us a complete understanding.

27 Ibid
28 There is some debate about the British position in 1917 and to what extent it represented a hegemon. Given its dependence on the U.S. to continue the war, it is this thesis’s contention that it no longer had enough power to hold this position.
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The second set of factors this chapter will consider are the economic motivations that led to this conflict. It was a popular interpretation in the 1930’s that the United States had been tricked into the war by banks and industrialists. David Reynolds writes that:

...with Wall Street and big business already scapegoated for the depression, attention now turned to their role in foreign policy. The 1934-6 Senate inquiry into the munitions industry encouraged the belief that bankers and arms manufacturers (the so-called ‘merchants of death’) had inveigled America into the war for their own financial gain.

These groups possessed a vested interest in insuring an Allied victory in order to secure their loans and to continue their sale of arms and munitions. To some extent this must be viewed through the lens of the Great Depression. Edith James highlights that ‘by the mid-1930s, the country was enveloped in the economic depression and engulfed by isolationism. The contemporary crisis had its impact on World War historiography.’ By 1917 Britain did not have the funds to pay for the war directly ‘only borrowing on the New York and Chicago money markets, to pay the American munitions suppliers in dollars, would do the trick.’ A British report issued in 1916 stated that ‘by next June, or earlier, the President of the American Republic would be in a position, if he wishes, to dictate his terms to us.’ Some historians have rejected this as an exaggeration, claiming instead that Britain’s finances

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29 This thesis has recently been revisited by Benjamin O. Fordham, ‘Revisionism Reconsidered: Exports and American Intervention in World War I’, *International Organization*, Vol. 61, No. 2 (Spring, 2007), pp. 277-310
34 Roger Chickering and Stig Forster, *Great War, Total War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) p. 423
were in better shape than the report suggested and that Britain remained a net creditor nation so that ‘in 1921 Britain’s external debts, primarily to the United States, totalled $5.4 billion; but was owed $9.7 Billion by its allies.’\textsuperscript{35} This however does not address the underlying problem of liquidity, given that Britain was unlikely to be repaid anytime soon and the continued borrowing from the United States was essential for maintaining the flow of good to the Allies. Thus Britain may have had the assets to pay for the war, but converting them to spendable currency, especially United States’ Dollars, was difficult.

The extent to which this was true was unknown to the United States government at the time. What was known however was the amount the American economy was now dependent on exports to the Allies. Arthur Link has argued that ‘American material well-being had always depended upon world trade; in 1915 it depended upon trade with the allied world.’\textsuperscript{36} It is not only important to note the size of the loans to the Allies ‘$2.5 Billion between 1915 and 1917’\textsuperscript{37} (approximately $46.5 Billion in today’s money\textsuperscript{38}), but that this was ten times the amount lent to the Central Powers.

There are several explanations for this disparity; the first being that because of the British blockade of Germany it was much easier for the Allies to gain access to the United States markets. As a consequence there was a far higher demand for dollars to pay for American goods. The second is the availability of credit to the Allies, which was far more forth coming thanks to a British guarantee of loans. Britain’s role as banker in chief of the Allies allowed it to loan money to the other Allies secured against British collateral. As the

\textsuperscript{35} Chickering and Forster, Great War, Total War p. 424


city of London had been the centre of the world’s system of banking for centuries, a role it was then surrendering to New York, its finance houses were well suited to procuring loans from U.S. banks. We must of course be careful not to overestimate the role of economic interlinking. As Link has argued, even if Wilson had wanted to stop trading with the Allies, ‘Wilson had no statutory authority whatsoever to stop any transatlantic trade.’ It is also important to note that as a neutral power the United States had certain obligations; one of which was ‘to permit its citizens to trade with any and all belligerents.’ Thus if we are to take this obligation to trade and combine it with the British control of the seas, we can see that Wilson may have had no choice but to allow a situation to develop whereby the Allies would disproportionately benefit from the strict neutrality of the United States. It is clear that Wilson did not feel morally or legally committed to artificially redress the differences. But it was Germany’s attempt to redress the balance through the use of submarine warfare that would lead to friction between the United States and Germany.

It is also clear that Wilson believed he could use entry into the conflict to America’s economic advantage. Using America’s influence, Wilson could persuade other nations to agree to end discriminatory trade policies that had made it difficult for American companies to compete in the markets controlled as colonies by the European powers. Wilson

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41 Link, *Woodrow Wilson: Revolution, War and Peace* p. 30
42 Ibid p. 30
43 This in hindsight proved incorrect given the protectionism of the interwar years see Tim Rooth, *British Protectionism and the International Economy: Overseas Commercial Policy in the 1930s*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993)
attempted to redress this in his Fourteen Points when, in point three, he asked for the removal of trade barriers. This would be highly advantageous to American industry as by 1914 the United States had the highest per capita income of the major powers. Furthermore due to the damage caused to the belligerents’ economies by the war the United States would be in a stronger position to dominate the post war world economy if it could prevent the imposition of tariffs by the belligerents. This objective would be best served by codifying it as part of the peace treaty and the United States could only influence this treaty as a combatant. We see here that there is an important Wilsonian tradition at work namely an attempt to liberalize international trading and spread free markets which is in keeping with a liberal ideology which holds that trade between nations prevented wars by encouraging connections between them. Wilson also believed ‘that democracy and liberal capitalism are mutually reinforcing systems’ and as such his economic motivations are connected with that of spreading democracy, as discussed further below.

It can also be argued that the loans are connected to the realist arguments outlined above, that the continued support of the Allies was a form of buck-passing and that ‘it was unquestionable that the allied war effort would eventually, by the spring of 1917, have ground to a halt without American credit.’ Thus the United States could keep the Allies in the war without needing to join in the fighting. Additionally as the war was paid for in loans to the Allies the United States could increase its national security without needing to incur the costs of the war.

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44 The Fourteen Points were a list of reforms to the international system that Wilson believed would make the post-war world more peaceful. Woodrow Wilson, ‘14 Points Speech (1918)’, Our Documents, last accessed September 1st 2013 available at: http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?doc=62
45 By 1914 the per capita income of the United States was $377 compared to Britain’s $244 and Germany’s $184. Kennedy, Rise and Fall p. 314
46 Smith, America’s Mission p. 85
47 Link, Woodrow Wilson: Revolution, War and Peace p. 36
A final explanation for the disparity in loans to the Allies and the clear bias towards them runs in a similar vein. Arguing that Wilson was motivated not by the strategic motivations outlined by the realist argument but by sympathy to the Allied cause Ferrell argues that Wilson’s ‘personal sympathies….were all with the allies’⁴⁸ and felt that he could help the Allies indirectly by allowing them access to United States production. This would give the allies an advantage and allow them to defeat Germany without the need for direct American intervention. As with the realist explanation, we see that simple access to the United States market was not enough by 1917 and America had to enter the war to aid the Allies in victory.

In conclusion the economic interdependence between the United States and the Allies, especially Great Britain, connected the United States to the conflict and hindered her ability to remain neutral. Wilson however felt that these shipments must continue whether for the economic health of the United States, the Allied need for continued supply to carry on the war against Germany or America’s sovereign right to trade with whom they please. This section has discussed the economic arguments of the debate; and in the next section we will look at how the Wilsonian framework can give us new insight into these events.

Wilsonian Factors

In order to show that that the power politics and economic factors that have been discussed in the preceding section were not the only factors involved, we will now discuss how the

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Wilsonian framework can add to the debate over the entry of the United States into World War One.

By using the Wilsonian lens this chapter will further our understanding of this conflict and show that Wilsonianism is a real and important factor in the United States going to war. It will begin with a discussion of the role of submarine warfare in this conflict; it will then go on to discuss “making the world safe for democracy”.

This section will look at is the role of submarine warfare in demonstrating how Wilsonian thinking lead to the United States declaring war on Germany in 1917. This has two elements to it; first that Imperial Germany’s disregard for international law and the role this played in the United States entering the conflict, the second how Germany’s actions in conducting an unrestricted submarine warfare campaign lead to the view in the United States that Imperial Germany was not compatible with the Wilsonian vision of a democratic international order. As we discussed in Chapter Two the Wilsonian framework propagates the belief that the rules of the international law should be respected and are important in maintaining international peace. This section will show that the Wilsonian belief that these rules needed to be enforced are a factor that contributes to the United States decision to go to war.

At the outbreak of the conflict there was an assumption that the war would be fought in a similar manner to Nineteenth Century conflicts. This opinion was shared in the United States which expected its ships to be able to continue the trade with Germany without hindrance by the Royal Navy.\(^4^9\) We see here the preferences of the United States

which was that, provided the United States obeyed the rules of contraband laid out by the 1909 Declaration of London, America’s commercial interests would not be infringed by the conflict. It was also expected that both sides would obey the “cruiser rules” during the conflict. As the war went on however it became clear that this conflict would be decided as much by the economic staying power of the alliances as it would on the battlefield. This necessity would lead Germany to the use of submarine warfare and as such is connected with the shift in American public opinion.

Woodrow Wilson, in his declaration of war said that ‘the current submarine warfare against commerce is warfare against mankind.’ Clearly the sinking of American ships played an important role in the declaration of war by the United States. There were three key issues for the president in the use of German submarine warfare. The first was the rights of neutral nations to trade with belligerents and the violation of international law by Germany. The second was the indiscriminate attack on those Wilson saw to be non-combatants. The third issue was how America could remain neutral whilst allowing the United Kingdom to violate the rules of the high seas but protest so strongly at Germany’s response. It is the Wilsonian School framework that gives us the most effective lens for understanding these factors.

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51 Cruiser Rules were essentially a series of customs governing the behaviour of warships and there relations to civilian ships, such as allowing the crew time to disembark before sinking the merchant vessel.


As the Wilsonian School sees international law as a key component of the international system, those nations that violate these rules must be censured and if necessary forced to respect the rules. Wilson refers to submarines as ‘out laws when used as the German submarines have been used against merchant shipping.’ He goes on to argue that:

...because of the very character of the vessels employed and the very methods of attack which their employment of course involves, incompatible with the principles of humanity, the long established and incontrovertible rights of neutrals, and the sacred immunities of non-combatants.

These arguments are ones that differentiate the Wilsonian approach from that of traditional realist interpretations of the events. Although Robert Tucker argues that Wilson’s belief that international law protected American civilians on ships was spurious at best. He points out that as there would be no way to tell if there was an American citizen on board any given ship and as such this became ‘indistinguishable from the claim that Germany could not destroy Allied merchant ships, without first exercising visit and providing for the safety of the crew.’ This may be true, but the above commentary from Wilson demonstrates that at least in Wilson’s eyes Germany was not living up to its obligations under international law.

That is not to dispute that the use of the submarines in its most effective form is to use it as an unrestricted weapon. The very nature of submarines, as thin-hulled vessels, would have left any boat on the surface vulnerable to being rammed by the liner they were

55 Ibid
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attempting to accost. Also given that the Allies had also placed armaments on many of their ships\textsuperscript{59} the submarine, once surfaced, was a sitting target for these armed merchant ship. Q-ships were far less effective once a submarine did not have to surface to attack its target.\textsuperscript{60} These factors however are not important in Wilsonian thinking and it is because Wilsonian thinking is a real factor in the American decision to go to war that these factors become important.

The next element of the submarine campaign that supports the argument that Wilsonianism is a real consideration in the United States decision to go to war is the effect civilian casualties caused by the campaign on the United States decision to enter the conflict. The loss of American civilian life was clearly disturbing to Wilson, he called it a:

...wanton and wholesale destruction of the lives of noncombatants, men, women and children, engaged in pursuits which have always, even in the darkest periods of modern history, been deemed innocent and legitimate.\textsuperscript{61}

This touches on the belief that Wilsonian School is an essentially moral philosophy that seeks to improve the world through the spread of democracy. This morality does not seem compatible with the targeted attack on civilian targets. Wilson argues that these deaths are clearly unjustified:

The lives of non-combatants, passengers and crew, have been sacrificed wholesale, in a manner which the Government of the United States cannot but regard as wanton and without the slightest color of justification. No limit of any kind has in fact been set to the indiscriminate pursuit and destruction of merchantmen of all

\textsuperscript{59} These ships were known as Q-ships.


\textsuperscript{61} Woodrow Wilson, *War Message*
kinds and nationalities within the waters, constantly extending in area, where these operations have been carried on.\footnote{Woodrow Wilson, ‘Address on Unrestricted Submarine Warfare, 19 Apr. 1916’, \textit{Woodrow Wilson E-library}, last accessed March 3rd 2014 available at: http://wwl2.dataformat.com/Document.aspx?doc=30461}

Newspaper reporting of these deaths heightened the shock of unrestricted submarine warfare, as Gregory argues, ‘no person who read of these events could fail to experience thoughts of distress and astonishment; few could avoid feeling hostility for the nation responsible.’\footnote{Gregory, \textit{The origins of American Intervention in the First World War} p. 59} Link argues that Wilson was forced to go to war in 1917 because the assault upon American lives and property was so overwhelming and so flagrant a denial of national rights that armed neutrality was both ineffective and inappropriate.\footnote{Link: \textit{Woodrow Wilson: Revolution, War and Peace} p. 69} The Wilsonian framework shows that civilian lives of all nations are a consideration in the decision to act in a way these factors are not for the Realist School.

The third factor that the submarine blockade brings to light which supports the argument that Wilsonianism is an important and real consideration can be seen if we compare the American response to the allied and German blockades.\footnote{Marion C. Siney, ‘British Official Histories of the Blockade of the Central Powers during the First World War’, \textit{The American Historical Review} , Vol. 68, No. 2 (Jan., 1963), pp. 392-401} We can see far less objection -to the Allies’ methods- despite the violations of international agreement. By March 1st 1915 the Allies had resolved to prevent all goods entering or leaving Germany. This was clearly a violation of America’s rights to trade non-contraband goods with Germany, although Britain argued that, given the nature of the conflict, all goods would in some way aid the enemy war effort. Further this process was extended to include the process of stopping and
searching neutral ships bound to other neutral nations bordering Germany. Gregory argues that this was of ‘dubious legality and almost certainly injurious to some American economic groups.’\(^{66}\) Gregory goes on to argue that even though the U.S. would have had a solid case for objection it made very little fuss: ‘the administration chose not to stand up to the Orders in Council.’\(^{67}\) Tucker argues that:

...the United States had acquiesced in the British blockade; its protests notwithstanding, it had neither taken nor threatened to take those measures that were in its power and that might have led to Britain’s abandonment of the blockade.\(^{68}\)

A key issue to address here if we are to understand how these actions drew the United States into World War One, is why the United States reaction to Germany and Britain was different. It could be argued that the methods rather than the ends were the deciding factor. The deaths caused by the German blockade contrasted with the British seizure of property- one appeared callous\(^{69}\) the other a gentlemanly method to prevent supplies reaching the enemy.\(^{70}\) Independent of the results it was clear that there were stark differences in methods which were reflected in public opinion.

Other historians such as Robert Tucker demonstrate that the responses were different because the relations between the United States and Britain, and the United States

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\(^{67}\) Ibid p. 56

\(^{68}\) Tucker, *Woodrow Wilson and the Great War* p. 133


\(^{70}\) Although there were complaints of the minutia over what constituted a legal blockade.
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and Germany were fundamentally different.\textsuperscript{71} Many in the U.S. administration harboured pro-British sentiments; as shown from Colonel House’s remarks regarding the Anglo-American relationship to the German Ambassador, in which he emphasized that the relationship between Britain and America ‘are quite different from our relations with Germany; that war with Germany would be possible, whereas, war with Great Britain would be more or less out of the question.’\textsuperscript{72} Why this was the case can been seen through the lens of Wilsonianism. It is the Wilsonian School that highlights the differences in the domestic character of Britain the sets it apart from Kaiser Wilhelm’s Germany. Britain was, domestically a constitutional monarchy. This to the Wilsonian School is an important distinction that sets it apart from Germany.

The use of unrestricted submarine warfare is often seen as the “smoking gun” in the United States entry into World War One and is perhaps the most important factor in persuading the population of the United States of the need to oppose Germany. Although less clear-cut than the attack on Pearl Harbor would be in the next great conflict, it presented Wilson with a \textit{casus belli}. The reason this form of attack was unacceptable can be best viewed through the Wilsonian lens.

The role that the democracy promotion element of the Wilsonian framework plays in America going to war is highlighted by the change in the government of Russia. One of the key changes to the nature of the conflict occurred in 1917 when revolution broke out in Russia.\textsuperscript{73} Previously the conflict had been viewed by many in the United States, and to some

\textsuperscript{71} This is not an uncontested opinion for alternative opinions see: David Reynolds ‘Rethinking Anglo-American Relations’, \textit{International Affairs} (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-) , Vol. 65, No. 1 (Winter, 1988-1989), pp. 89-111

\textsuperscript{72} Tucker, \textit{Woodrow Wilson and the Great War} p. 142

\textsuperscript{73} For further reading on the February revolution see: Robert Bruce Lockhart, “”The Unanimous Revolution”: Russia, February 1917”, \textit{Foreign Affairs} , Vol. 35, No. 2 (Jan., 1957), pp. 320-333, Michael C. Hickey, “Discourses
extent Wilson himself, as a conflict between imperial powers. In March of 1917 the Russian revolution broke out and the Tsar was overthrown and replaced by a democratic government. 74 This event was important to the administration and the Wilsonian School of thought as it was, as Gregory writes, a:

...removal of the blight that had burdened the Allied cause since the beginning of the War. Joining the Allies heretofore had also meant fighting alongside the most backward and autocratic of all belligerent nations, including Germany. It was now possible to say that the Allies in all major respects were fighting the battle for democracy. 75

In a letter written to Woodrow Wilson in 1917 shows concern for the future of Russian democracy ‘We must expect that the German Imperial Government will not spare their best talent in men and money in dealing the newly established Russian democracy a crushing blow.’ 76

This was a battle that the Wilsonian School could more enthusiastically take up, as opposed to a battle of classical imperial powers the conflict had looked like at the beginning of the war. Wilson clearly thought these events were of import as in his war message he comments:

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74 Although this government was itself to fall to the communist revolution in October/November at the time of the American declaration of war all of the major allied powers were democracies. Also it is important to note that the term “democratic” in reference to the provisional government is a liberal interpretation of the term

75 Gregory, The origins of American Intervention in the First World War, p. 127


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...does not every American feel that assurance has been added to our hope for the future peace of the world by wonderful and heartening things that have been happening within the last few weeks in Russia? 

Wilson expressed further support for the change of government in Russia in his correspondence to Cyrus H. McCormick in 1917:

The object of the commission is, primarily, to show our interest and sympathy at this critical juncture in Russian affairs and, secondly, to associate ourselves in counsel and in all friendly services with the present Government of Russia.

It is clear that the defence of democracy and democratic ideals was important to Wilson. In his own work on the constitutional government of the United States Wilson argues that people ‘a constitutional government is one whose powers have been adapted to the interests of its people and to the maintenance of individual liberty.’ In this he uses Tsarist Russia as an example of a state that is undemocratic ‘The population which is ruled by a limited class who are its conquerors is apt, if we may judge by the case of Russia, to stand still until the polity rots.’ Even if he did not believe in the virtuousness of the Allied cause, it was clear the Allies were the lesser of two evils. The Wilsonian framework gives us an understanding of how these important factors should be interpreted, highlighting the role of democracy and, in particular, Wilsonian ideas in the decision for war.

What does Wilsonianism add to the debate?

The Wilsonian framework gives us several important insights into the debate. Making the “world safe for democracy” has become synonymous with Wilson and the American

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77 Woodrow Wilson, War Message
80 Ibid p. 17
declaration of war upon Imperial Germany. The role this ideology plays in this declaration is an important one. This section will revisit the conflict through the Wilsonian framework and show how it helps us interpret the war.

The United States alone, out of all the great powers, had time to deliberate its decision to enter the conflict with knowledge of what type of war it was getting into. When addressing the question of why the United States chose to enter the war in April 1917, it would be of benefit to us to look at why the U.S. did not declare war in 1914 when the other great powers rushed into the conflict. This section will argue that if we revisit the conflict through the Wilsonian framework it will better identify the changes that occur and weigh their importance between the outbreak of the conflict in 1914 and the American entry in 1917.

The first reason that the United States remained at peace in 1914 was that it was not part of the alliance system that had built up in Europe over the preceding decades. The United States therefore had no commitment to any of the belligerents and no American territory had been attacked. If we return to the first criterion of agency discussed in Chapter One, that a state must not have its territory under attack, it can be shown that neither a *casus belli* nor *casus foederis* existed. We can see America’s reluctance to engage in prewar alliances also had a significant effect on America remaining neutral in 1914. This American foreign policy tradition of avoiding alliances was a policy that George Washington

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81 In 1914 the U.S. had the economic power to warrant great power status but had been reluctant to take on the other aspects of great power status such as a large standing military. For further reading on the United States rise to Great Power Status see: Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, and Paul Kennedy, ‘The First World War and the International Power System’, *International Security*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (Summer, 1984), pp. 7-40.

82 To go to war because a state has signed an alliance with another state and the criteria for activating that alliance have been met.
had encouraged and given his blessing to in his farewell address as president. As a result of this lack of alliance America had a degree of freedom of action in foreign affairs, and was not constrained by its allies. This is important in understanding why the Wilsonian School can be used as a framework - if the United States had been dragged in unwillingly, then the factors the Wilsonian school discusses would not have relevance. America’s freedom of action on the other hand adds credence to these factors.

A second factor contributing to America remaining at peace was that American public opinion did not support entering the war. With the exception of a few, the bulk of public opinion in the United States was to remain neutral. Arthur Link points out, that ‘in between the two extremes were probably the majority of the American people and their leaders in church and state.’ Much of the American population thought that the affairs of the old world were none of their concern, because whichever side won it would not threaten the United States. In the words of a contemporary writer ‘the United States is remote, unconquerable, huge without hostile neighbors or any neighbors at all of anything like her own strength.’ This coupled with the tradition of avoiding entangling alliances, led to a widespread belief that this was not America’s war. Link argues:

The dominant American sentiment from 1914 to 1917 can be summarily characterized by the single adjective, “neutral.” Americans, to be sure, had decided

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It is also interesting to note that even after the United States declared War on Germany it was not a member of the allies, but an associate power.
opinions and reactions. Probably, substantial minorities were sentimentally pro-Ally and reacted sharply to particular events like the German invasion of Belgium, the burning of Louvain and the sinking of the Lusitania. On the other hand, the sizable German- and Irish- American populations tended to be strongly pro-German, as did many Jews on account of Russian membership in the Triple Entente. Nonetheless, however the scales of American public opinion tipped, the preponderant majority of Americans did not believe that their interests and security were vitally involved in the outcome of the war. 87

This demonstrates that though there were both pro-Allied and pro-Triple Alliance forces at work, neither of these groups was strong enough at the beginning of the war to bring the United States into the conflict on either side. The shift in public opinion toward the Allies by 1917 was a key factor in the United States deciding to enter the conflict. The Wilsonian framework gives us an understanding of why this shift in opinion was important to the decision to go to war. The change in the perceptions of the war, as we discussed above, were from that of an imperial conflict that was typical of the European great powers to one of a conflict between the democratic and civilized allies and autocratic Germany. The combination of the change in government in Russia and the events of submarine warfare were key contributors to this change in perception. The Wilsonian framework gives us a strong tool for showing why this perception of domestic regimes is an important one; after all it is the Wilsonian School that has been at the vanguard of American efforts to defend democratic ideals and defeat autocracies with military force if necessary.

To the Wilsonian School, American entry into the First World War was a once in a generation chance to reshape the international system along Wilsonian lines. If other nations would adopt a democratic form of government they would be richer and more

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87 Link, *Wilson the struggle for neutrality* 1914-1915 p. 25
successful and their governments would be accountable. It was obvious by 1917 that the international system would not be the same at the end of the war as it was at the beginning. At the end of the conflict one of the power blocks would be defeated and the other would dictate terms to the other. In this situation it was clear that the United States would prefer an allied victory. When viewing the conflict through the Wilsonian framework, however it was vital the United States was a key player in presenting those terms. To the Wilsonian School America was exceptional and it was the only nation that could reshape the international system and bring a just peace to Europe. Again Wilson endorsed this idea in his war message, declaring that America is ‘seeking nothing for ourselves but what we shall wish to share with all free peoples.’ Lloyd E Ambrosius comments that:

Wilson believed that the United States, unlike other great powers, played an exceptional role in world politics. It served the common welfare of mankind rather than its own imperial ends.

Further evidence of this belief can be found in America’s status once it had entered the war, as the United States fought as an associated rather than an allied power. This decision is clearly in line with the Wilsonian School’s belief that the United States is uniquely qualified to shape a more peaceful world.

In his speech asking for a declaration of war upon Germany, Wilson makes clear that the war against Germany is at least in part because Imperial Germany was an autocracy. ‘Our object now, as then is to vindicate the principles of peace and justice in the life of the world as against selfish and autocratic power.’ He also argues that only democracies can

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88 Woodrow Wilson, *War Message*
90 As an associate power the United States retained more independence of action than the Allied powers. The United States was not at war with the Ottoman Empire and could conclude a separate peace with Germany if it chose to do so.
91 Woodrow Wilson, *War Message*
ensure a peaceful world, ‘a steadfast concert for peace can never be maintained except by a partnership of democratic nations. No autocratic government could be trusted to keep faith within it or observe its covenants.’ From this it is obvious that Wilson wanted to present the war to the American public, and possibly the German people, as a war for democracy against autocracy. This is supported by Wilson’s closest friend, Colonel House, in a letter to Wilson saying that:

What is needed, it seems to me, is a firm tone, full of determination, but yet breathing a spirit of liberalism and justice, that will make the people of the Central Powers feel safe in your hands. You could say again that our people had entered this fight with fixed purpose and high courage, and would continue to fight until a new order of liberty and justice for all people was brought about, and some agreement reached by which such another war could never again occur. You can make a statement that will not only be the undoing of autocratic Germany, but one that will strengthen the hands of the Russian liberals in their purpose to mould their country into a mighty republic. I pray that you may not lose this great opportunity.

In this passage House argues that America is fighting for a new liberal and democratic international order. As defending democracy is one of the key pillars of the Wilsonian School we have discussed in Chapter One, this shows that the Wilsonianism is having an effect on the policy that Wilson is pursuing. Liberal democracies come in many varied forms but they all display several key features of democratic government, such as the constraints on the power of the executive branch and civilian control of the military. If the great powers of Europe adopted these features then following Wilsonian logic wars are less likely.

Connected to the belief that democracy was the most pacific form of government, was the idea that democracies behaved themselves in certain ways within the international system. Germany’s behaviour during the conflict had lent support to those who believed

92 Ibid
that democratic and autocratic governments could not function together collectively. Since the war began many Americans had taken a dim view of German tactics. Starting with the invasion of Belgium and culminating in the U-boat campaign. If we look at these events using the Wilsonian framework, the reasons given for this aberrant behaviour was that Germany was not a democracy. This belief that nations should act in certain ways and Germany was breaking those norms was reinforced by the text of the Zimmerman Telegram. Many were outraged at Germany attempting to incite war between the United States and Mexico through covert deals and promises of territorial aggrandisement.

These kinds of bargains were exactly what Wilson had been trying to avoid in his call for open diplomacy in his fourteen points, and it surely did not help matters that Germany had sent this communication using an American telegraph line, which had been made available to Germany in the interests of neutrality. Quinn argues that, although the submarine attacks were the initial cause of the war, ‘Wilson’s political case for war was the argument that that aspect of German behaviour was merely a symptom of the deeper threat posed by that nation and its desire for the domination of Europe.’  

If we revisit the collective security element of Wilsonianism it highlights the importance of the rule of law in democracies which in Mead’s opinion ‘leads to increasing degrees of agreement over the proper constitution and rules of international society’ These rules did not allow for the use of unrestricted submarine warfare nor a conspiracy to incite a nation to attack its neighbour.

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95 Mead, *Special Providence* p. 163
It is also important to take into account the moral values associated with the Wilsonian School and how this combines with its mission to make the world safe for democracy. Quinn argues that ‘Wilson himself believed that America could better attain greatness through the pursuit of grand historic projects for the moral uplift of civilisation rather than through the pursuit of mere treasure.’\textsuperscript{96} It was this moral approach that led Wilson to deny that the economic motivation, although real, was important in Wilson’s eventual intervention in the conflict. Wilson could see that there was an economic case for intervention but he maintained that it was not part of his deliberation. Quinn argues:

Wilson was generally open in arguing that there was a case based on economic self-interest to be made for U.S. participation. But he always insisted on expressing at the same time his view that such a justification lowered the tone of the American debate, and exhorted the people to share that sense.\textsuperscript{97}

This is a classical position for the Wilsonian School, arguing that the focus should be on how the United States can spread the values for which it stands to others who are denied them by tyrants. If we return to the arguments regarding the different responses to the blockade of Britain and Germany, Link argues that one of the key reasons that Germany and Britain were treated differently was that they had different forms of government. Link argues that ‘one result of destroying the British blockade would have been the wrecking of the friendship between the United States and the only other important democracies in the world, Great Britain and France.’\textsuperscript{98} Also returning to Colonel House’s comment that war was not possible with Great Britain because of the different relationship it had with the United

\textsuperscript{96} Adam Quinn, \textit{U.S. Foreign Policy in Context} p. 89
\textsuperscript{97} Ibid, p. 90
\textsuperscript{98} Link, \textit{Woodrow Wilson: Revolution, War and Peace}, p. 34

90
States when compared to Germany. Part of that difference was that the Great Britain was a democracy and Germany was not.

The Wilsonian belief that only the United States could bring a just settlement to the war and this just settlement would involve the spread of democratic ideals was an important factor in bringing America into the war. Wilson had tried to negotiate a peace from the side-lines and had failed. He could bring pressure on the Allies to negotiate but using that pressure could result in a German victory. The only way to exert influence on the peace was to have leverage over the Allies and the Central Powers. With America an active combatant Wilson could bring pressure to bear with the U.S. army on Germany and the U.S. economy on the Allies. Robert Hannigan quotes one of Wilson’s advisors:

Our becoming a belligerent would not be without its advantages in as much as it would strengthen your position at home and with the Allies, It would eliminate the necessity for calling in the conference any neutral because the only purpose in calling them in was to invite ourselves. Your influence at the peace congress would be...enhanced... we could still be the force to stop the war when the proper time came.

Colonel House shares a similar sentiment in his correspondence with Wilson:

I believe you have an opportunity to take the peace negotiations out of the hands of the Pope and hold them in your own. Governmental Germany realizes that no one excepting you is in a position to enforce peace terms. The Allies must succumb to your judgment and Germany is not much better off. Badly as the Allied cause is going, Germany is in a worse condition. It is a race now of endurance, with Germany as likely to go under first as either of the Entente powers. Germany and Austria are a

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seething mass of discontent. The Russian revolution has shown the people their power, and it has put the fear of God in to the hearts of the Imperialists.\textsuperscript{101}

It is clear from this quote that the role the United States would have in shaping the peace was an important part of Wilson’s decision to go to war in 1917.

The importance to Wilson of reshaping the international system is further demonstrated by his publication of his Fourteen Points.\textsuperscript{102} Although some of these points are specific to the circumstances of 1914, many suggest important changes to the way the international system functions. These changes are concurrent with the Wilsonian School’s plan for how the international system should be structured. It is important to note that the first issue Wilson addressed in his Fourteen Points is how states should deal with one another. It is also an indication of Wilson’s belief that World War One was in part caused by the system of secret clauses in alliances that had built up in the run up to the war\textsuperscript{103} and that changing the way diplomacy was conducted would create a more peaceful world.\textsuperscript{104} He also addressed the issue of arms limitations treaties that would reduce the amount of arms possessed by nations.\textsuperscript{105} Wilson understood however that in an essentially anarchic system, states would continue to build arms and negotiate treaties, often with secret clauses\textsuperscript{106} because in the self-help system of international relations there would be no recourse if

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\textsuperscript{101} House, ‘Letter to Wilson August 1917’.
\textsuperscript{102} Woodrow Wilson, ‘Fourteen Points, 8 January, 1918’, Avalon Project, last accessed May 6\textsuperscript{th} 2014 available at: http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th\_century/wilson14.asp
\textsuperscript{103} Also the Zimmerman Telegram was essentially a proposal of a secret alliance with Mexico.
\textsuperscript{104} On this point Wilson was successful as it is now received convention that treaties should be public see G.R. Berridge, Diplomacy: Theory and Practice, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005) p. 72
\textsuperscript{105} It was popular at the time to blame the European arms race and the failure of deterrence for the conflict. For discussion of the validity of this idea see: Theresa Clair Smith, ‘Arms Race Instability and War’ The Journal of Conflict Resolution, Vol. 24, No. 2 (Jun., 1980), pp. 253-284
\textsuperscript{106} Indeed on the run up to World War Two we see secret clauses in the Ribbentrop-Molotov packed to divide Poland between the USSR and Nazi Germany. Gabriel Gorodetsky, ‘The Impact of the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact on the Course of Soviet Foreign Policy’ Cahiers du Monde russe et soviétique, Vol. 31, No. 1 (Jan. - Mar., 1990), pp. 27-41
\end{flushright}
attacked. Thus Wilson proposed a League of Nations, which would act as a guarantor of security in what would essentially be a worldwide mutual defence pact designed to deter aggression. Smith argues that these points were ‘envisioned as a comprehensive framework for world order.’

This world order was inextricably linked to the spread of democracy as Wilsonians intended that the states in the League of Nations would be democratic. Smith supports this view arguing that the ‘foundation of Wilson’s order was the democratic nation-state.’ Wilson himself states that:

No peace can last, or ought to last, which does not recognise and accept the principle that governments derive all their just powers from the consent of the governed, and that no right anywhere exists to hand peoples about from sovereignty to sovereignty as if they were property.

As we can see, the Wilsonian framework shows us why Wilson believed that the only way to prevent another war was to reshape the international system in America’s image. This new international system would be democratic; believe in free markets, and be governed by the rule of law. It would be one in which ‘democracy is the most peace loving and only legitimate form of modern government.’ Thus we can see that Wilsonian motivations in making the world safe for democracy and the opportunity to improve the international system came together to motivate the United States to war in 1917. The Wilsonian framework however shows us the importance of the events of 1917 and how they...

108 Ibid, p. 82
110 Smith, America’s Mission, p. 85
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presented a unique opportunity to affect the political system of Europe. It was clear that the only way Wilson could ensure democratic ideals were an important part of the peace settlement was to ensure he was there; and the only way he could be sure he was there was as a victorious belligerent party.

Conclusion

We have seen there were numerous factors contributing to America’s entry into the First World War. Once the war began, it became clear that the world economy had become far more integrated than it had been in Napoleonic period\(^{111}\) and these economic links would put strain on America’s ability to stay neutral in the conflict. America’s defence of the rights of neutrals to trade with belligerents during wartime and attempt to maintain freedom of the seas was a reflection of the disagreements that the United States had during the War of 1812, which will be discussed in Chapter Three. However, the submarine presented new problems for the United States in defending these rights and as the casualties among American civilians began to rise we see the tolerance for these continuous provocations by Germany decline. It is however more accurate to view the submarine campaign as a catalyst which lowered the barrier for the United States’ entry into the conflict rather than a deciding factor in and of itself.

The economic ties between the United States and the Allies provided the U.S. with a strong motivation to enter the conflict and secure its investment. It is also important to consider that the submarine campaign threatened to cut this economic link and cause a great amount of hardship for American exporters, many of whom were reliant solely on the

\(^{111}\) The Napoleonic period gives a good comparison as this was the last major European conflict which leads to American belligerence with a European great power since the War of 1812 discussed previously. Spain having fallen out of the great power ranks by the time of the Spanish American War. The Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars can be consider to have been between 1792 and 1815.
arms trade to the Allies for their sales. The sheer scale of the loans and trade make it appear as though an Allied defeat would lead to the collapse of the American economy. It is essential to remember however that the quantities of arms sold would decrease at the end of the conflict even in the event of an Allied victory. The issue of the recuperation of loans and the fear in the United States that if Britain were defeated she would default on the debt was a serious one, especially as the only allied power to be defeated by Germany – Russia – did default on its debts. We should also note that the amount was so high that even in victory there would be no guarantee that the Allies could pay the debt. American economic motivations were clearly an important factor, but it would have been difficult to sell this to the American public at large as a rallying call for conflict against Germany. More importantly this argument does not withstand major scrutiny as there is little documentary evidence that Wilson was motivated by this and although there were clearly powerful groups within the United States government that may have lobbied for intervention because of the loans, Wilson was notorious for keeping his own counsel.

A German hegemony in Europe would create severe strategic problems for the United States. Although it remained unlikely that Germany would assimilate the defeated Allies, it would certainly gain territorially and ensure that France and Russia were no longer threats to its borders. Without the threat of the Royal Navy the German Navy would be free to operate around the globe and threaten U.S. interests in the Pacific and South America. This also explains America’s entry in 1917 and the lack of intervention beforehand as it was the prevailing opinion in Washington at the beginning of the conflict the Allies would be

112 It is a fair assessment that that takeover of the communist government was the most important factor in the default
113 This is of course what happened when the debt was effectively written off by the Hoover moratorium in 1931. Herbert Hoover, ‘Statement on the Moratorium on Intergovernmental Debts and Reparations. July 6, 1931’, The American Presidency Project, last accessed June 20th 2013 available at: http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=22735
victorious and as such there was no motivation to intervene. As the situation worsened, America acted.

As compelling as the realist argument is, it is based on the assumption that German power was viewed as the primary motivator for Wilson’s declaration of war. Wilson however viewed the problem differently; it was not German power that was the threat to the United States but German militarism and the increasing power of an autocratic state which posed a threat to American democracy much as it was threatening democracy in Britain, France and now Russia. As Woodward argues, even after the declaration of war it was Wilson’s:

...continued hope was that once it was understood in Germany that American participation made a victors peace impossible, the liberal elements in that country would triumph over the autocratic and military clique, making it possible for the United States to be the peace broker between the Allies and a new liberal Germany.\(^{114}\)

It is for this reason that the Wilsonian framework gives a strong augmentation of the reasons for American entry into the conflict. The events leading up to the declaration of war had persuaded Wilson that Germany as it was constituted could not be trusted as a partner because of its domestic political character. Further he had decided that the only way to prevent another conflict was to encourage the spread of democracies, which in his opinion were more peaceful. It is for this reason that the Wilsonian School takes his name. It is the conviction that the internal political organisation of a state does affect international relations and that in the long run you could only trust democratic governments that formed a core part of this ideology. Ensuring that democracy was the dominant form of government

in the international system and the post war world would be one that was to America’s liking could only be done with the defeat of Germany. It is because the Allies appeared unable to do this in 1917, due to battlefield events and the risk of losing access to U.S. supplies caused by the submarine campaign. It was for these reasons that direct American intervention was the only option left to Wilson, particularly if he wanted to see a peace which reshaped the international system along the lines Wilsonians had envisaged. These considerations must be taken seriously if we are to gain a complete understanding of the conflict.

In the eyes of Wilsonians the only world in which the United States could be safe and a long-term peace established was one in which militarism was defeated and that was safe for democracy. The belief that only the United States could bring about “a world safe for democracy”, that without American guidance and intervention this opportunity to make an inherently Wilsonian world would be lost clearly had an effect on Wilson’s decision to go to war. By using the Wilsonian framework we can understand why Wilsonian considerations have a real effect on taking the United States to war in 1917. Thus the United States went to war because ‘God helping her, she can do no other’.115

115 Woodrow Wilson, War Message
Chapter Three: The War of 1812

Introduction

The obscure nature of the War of 1812 is unusual because many important parts of contemporary American iconography come from this war. For example Francis Scott Key wrote his famous poem The Defence of Fort McHenry, which would later become the lyrics to the United States' national anthem, the Star-Spangled Banner, whilst aboard a Royal Navy ship involved in the Battle of Baltimore.¹ The War of 1812 also sees the first use of the Uncle Sam character as a representation of the United States.

This conflict has often been described as the Second War of Independence,² as it was an important factor in the creation of a distinct American nation separate from the immediate post-colonial period. The events leading up to this conflict demonstrate the diverse nature of the loose connections shared by the constituent States of the United States in the early years of the republic and the divergent interests of northern and southern states; as well as the weak control exerted by the federal government.³ As Louis Serurier, the French Minister in Washington, observed in 1815, ‘the war has given the Americans what they so essentially lacked, a national character founded on a glory common to all.’⁴ Classically this war has been interpreted as a response by the young American

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republic to the actions of Great Britain in “press ganging” American sailors into the Royal Navy and a refusal to acknowledge the rights of neutrals on the high seas. This problem would still cause tensions a century later in the First World War, as was discussed in Chapter Two. This chapter contends that although these factors were important in the United States’ declaration of war Wilsonian factors were an active and important consideration as well. This is because the strategic and economic reasons alone do not explain why the United States entered this conflict and we must also consider the ideological motivations behind this decision, which are best explained by the Wilsonian framework. This chapter is a demonstration of the concept that Wilsonian factors are important, even before Woodrow Wilson became president and that the concept of seeking an international system based on the rule of law and founded on democratic governments was an active driver of the foreign relations of the United States, from the formation of the republic.

This chapter will begin by discussing the current state of the debate on why this conflict occurred and investigate the motivations that have been put forward as drivers of this conflict. This debate encompasses the strategic motivations, economic factors as well as the concept of free trade and sailors’ rights. The second section will go on to discuss a Wilsonian approach to this conflict and how the Wilsonian framework adds to our understanding of this conflict. Finally this chapter will discuss what Wilsonianism tells us about this conflict and how this enhances the traditional understanding by adding a Wilsonian perspective.

Chapter Three: The War of 1812

The Debate

This section will outline the key arguments that have been presented for explaining why the United States decided to fight the War of 1812. This section will begin by discussing the strategic motivations for the United States declaration of war and will then proceed to discuss the role that the press-ganging of sailors and economic factors played.

The first factor this chapter will discuss is the role territorial aggrandisement played in the conflict. The historian Jon Latimer argues that the War of 1812 ‘was fundamentally a failed war of conquest.’ He goes on to argue that the ‘American desire to possess British North America dated back to the earliest days of the revolution and the ill-fated attack on Quebec of 31 December 1775.’ In many ways the United States was fortunate at the beginning of the Nineteenth Century; with the major European powers engaged in wars with each other, they could not devote time and resources to the North American continent. Relations with France began to deteriorate with France’s reacquisition of Louisiana; given the strategic position of New Orleans at the mouth of the Mississippi River it would be difficult for President Thomas Jefferson to sit by as Napoleonic France developed a powerful military presence there. A militarization of Louisiana by France would have forced the usually Anglophobic Jefferson to realign the United States with Britain:

8 Latimer, 1812: War With America p. 3
...should France take possession of New Orleans, the United States would have no choice but to “marry” itself to the “British fleet and nation” and use the outbreak of war in Europe as an excuse to take Louisiana by force.  

With Jefferson’s decision to dispatch James Monroe to Europe to resolve the situation with France, and his subsequent agreement to purchase the whole of Louisiana, he had effectively removed French presence from mainland North America. This would leave Great Britain as the only great power to share a border with the United States, via its Canadian colony. This reduction in tensions with France would amplify the difficulties Madison would later have with Britain.

The strategic situation facing the early American republic was a difficult one. The United States controlled large areas of land, especially after the purchase of Louisiana from France, whilst possessing a low population density from which to draw a standing army.

In addition to this, it shared a long border with the British colony of Canada; this made Britain the only great power that could directly attack the United States. Many in the United States saw the acquisition of Canada, by force if necessary, as a way of securing the United States borders and excluding Britain from the mainland of North America. Hatzenbuehler and Lvie argue that it was ‘only in 1812, though did the republicans articulate a thoroughly universal appeal for war which rested upon the central proposition that Great Britain was

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13 Although Spain did share a border with the United States it had ceased to be a great power by this point.
14 As Britain alone would interact continuously with the U.S. on land through its Canadian colony and its control of the sea lanes through which American trade would flow.
16 Approximately 4.3 people per square mile, data available from 1810 Census, *U.S. Census Bureau*, last accesses July 22nd 2013 available from: http://www.census.gov/
determined to “recolonize” her commercial rival."^{17} This is highlighted by Stagg: ‘Britain’s possession of Canada was not only injurious in its effects on American foreign policy but also a danger to the integrity of the Republic.’^{18}

Offensive realist John Mearsheimer argues that land power is the most important form of power and that only armies can defeat an opponent by occupying their land and taking away their power base. ‘Armies are of paramount importance in warfare because they are the main military instrument for conquering and controlling land, which is the supreme political objective in a world of territorial states.’^{19} Therefore by denying the British their Canadian colony the United States would be more secure. This is because Britain would have lost this territory and the United States would have eliminated the British powerbase in North America, weakening their position and gaining territory for the United States.

Although this would not mitigate the power of the Royal Navy,^{20} Mearsheimer also argues that the stopping power of water ‘sharply limit an army’s power-projection capability.’^{21} Mearsheimer makes an important distinction between transporting troops across water to friendly territories and deploying them to a hostile territory ‘water is a forbidding barrier when a navy attempts to deliver an army onto territory controlled and

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^{21} Mearsheimer, The Tragedy of Great Power Politics p. 114
well-defended by a rival great power.\textsuperscript{22} So in denying the British control of Canada, it would reduce the Royal Navy’s ability to project power against the United States.

The securing of Canada would also cut the British off from an important source of lumber that the Royal Navy required in order to continue its construction program for ships in the war with France. With control of these lumber reserves the United States would have more economic leverage to force Britain to concede to its demands. The failure of the Embargo Acts\textsuperscript{23} had at least in part been caused by the long American border with Canada, where smugglers would often trade despite the decrees emanating from Washington, thus undermining America’s economic options in coercing Britain.\textsuperscript{24}

The other major security threat that the United States faced was from the Indian tribes that threatened its western border. It was felt by many in the United States that the British were agitating and encouraging the tribes, Roger H Brown argues, ‘on the exposed Michigan and Ohio frontiers settlers expected to be swept from their homes by a British-organised Indian uprising.’\textsuperscript{25} If the British could be removed from Canada then they would be unable to supply the Indians and this threat would be diminished.

Given the numerical disparity of the American armed forces, it would seem that war would achieve very little. At sea Britain would have a considerable advantage given that the

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid. p. 114
entire United States Navy had only twenty ships. As Latimer comments, a Royal Navy taskforce dispatched to capture Java was in terms of firepower ‘three times stronger than the entire U.S. Navy.’ The United States Navy was not without its own advantages however, the navy ‘aware of its numerical inferiority, learned to excel at sailing and gunnery-matters enhanced by its all-volunteer crews-which would improve their chances in single-ship actions.’ Further the United States had a qualitative advantage in ship construction of any given class as: ‘American frigates were superior to any other frigate afloat. The United States possessed boundless forests of fine quality so that only the very best wood was selected.’ In addition to this, every American construction yard ‘had an experienced captain on hand throughout construction, so that class-for-class they were guaranteed the highest possible quality.’

The War of 1812, although far more than a side show, also has to be put in the context of Britain’s war against Napoleon. Britain had been at war with France for nearly two decades, and saw the defeat of France as her primary foreign policy objective. During this conflict Britain had experienced a series of setbacks on land, but had, since the battle of

27 Latimer, 1812: War With America p. 85
29 Latimer, 1812: War With America p. 85
30 Ibid p. 85
31 Ibid p. 85
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Trafalgar been a hegemonic naval power. With the Royal Navy’s maritime dominance, the British could implement a blockade of Europe to prevent extra-European resources from reaching France and to prevent a French invasion of Britain.

It has also been argued that the United States could have taken advantage of Britain’s distraction in Europe in order to annex Canada and expel Britain from the North American continent. Latimer argues that this was the most important factor in the United States decision to go to war, for ‘the United States would not have entered the conflict had the defeat of Napoleon Bonaparte been foreseen.’ That the war was fought as an opportunity to attack Britain whilst it was in a weakened position is a logical argument, but it does however revolve around the notion that adding Canada to the Union was of benefit to the United States.

On closer inspection we can see that war with Great Britain would be just as likely to weaken the United States position as to strengthen it. Taking control of Canada in 1812 would have added yet more land to the United States, much of which was settled by Americans who had fled the thirteen colonies at the end of the revolution and had remained loyal to the Crown. Taylor argues that these ‘settlers were Loyalist refugees, fleeing from

35 Latimer, 1812: War With America  p. 2
defeat in the revolution. These settlers believed that the British Empire was the best way to protect their civil liberties viewing ‘Catholic and absolutist France as their traditional foe, the Loyalists understood the empire as a bastion of liberty and property from anarchy. Even if Napoleonic France presented a different government than the traditional enemy, many favoured ‘a social hierarchy and a strong government, the Loyalists cherished the king and the aristocracy as essential elements in a mixed constitution designed to preserve order and property from anarchy.’

To incorporate this population into the United States would not be easy, and would provide Great Britain with a recruiting ground for spies and malcontents within the United States. If we couple this with the New England States who were unhappy with the Union and courted with secession we can see that the Union’s integrity was at stake. For example on 9th March 1812 Madison released the papers of John Henry, a British spy, who had been ‘sent by the governor of Lower Canada during the embargo crisis of 1808-1809 to assess the possibility of the New England states seceding from the union.’

Preventing Britain from supplying Indian tribes was also less important than other studies have suggested. The amount of support that the Indians received from the British was exaggerated at the time, with Latimer arguing ‘during the first half of 1812, despite American accusations, he received no shot and considerably less powder from the British than previously.’ War with Britain would also increase the need for Britain to seek support from the Indian tribes to help offset the numerical superiority of the American forces.

37 Taylor, The Civil War of 1812, p. 21
38 Gustave Lanctot, Canada and the American Revolution, 1774-1783, (London: George Harrap and Co. 1967)
39 Taylor, The Civil War p. 21
40 Ibid p. 21
41 Stagg, Mr. Madison’s War p. 93
42 Latimer, 1812: War With America p. 48
In counter to the argument that the United States could exploit Britain’s weakness for its own benefit, we can see that weakening Britain further would not be in the interest of the United States. The war between Britain and France had diverted British attention toward Europe, and Napoleon’s need to fund that war had led to him selling the French territory of Louisiana. The focus of these powers would be on Europe until the end of the war. This meant that America’s freedom of action in the North American continent had been assisted by the prolonged conflict between Britain and France. As Perkins argues:

Many Americans believed that the chance to pursue isolationist policies depended upon a balance of power in Europe. They counted upon La Grande Armee and the Royal Navy to form a rough equilibrium, not only giving the United States diplomatic leverage but at the same time preventing either France or Britain from turning possibly threatening attention to the United States.  

This view was supported by President Jefferson who commented that this balance of power was:

...better than that one should rule both elements. Our wish ought to be that he who has armies may not have dominion of the sea, and that he who has dominion of the sea may be the one who has no armies. In this way we may be quiet.

Here Jefferson is making a fundamentally realist argument, that America does not need to intervene in the European conflict as long as no one nation has hegemony. It follows that as this would upset the balance of power, and as a consequence weakening Great Britain at a time when Napoleon was controlling most of Europe, it would not be in the interests of the United States to make war with Britain. In fact as the interests of the United States would be better served supporting the British, as this chapter has shown, the explanations of

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44 Perkins, Prologue to War p. 55
improving your strategic position and expanding your territory are not sufficient to explain this conflict, thus we must look for additional explanation for this conflict.

The second factor this section will discuss is the role of impressment in causing the War of 1812. This section will look at the banner under which the war was fought, the notion of free trade and sailors' rights. This interpretation of Madison's position was that economic coercion had failed and that the only way to make Britain respect the rights of the United States and her citizens was to resort to war. In his war message Madison emphasises the importance of impressments:

British cruisers have been in the continued practice of violating the American flag on the great highway of nations, and of seizing and carrying off persons sailing under it, not in the exercise of a belligerent right founded on the law of nations against an enemy, but of a municipal prerogative over British subjects.

The impressment issue is an important one, as it was both vital to the national interest of both countries and not easily reconciled. Here we can see a collision of the strategic interests of Britain and the economic interests of the United States. The British defences were reliant on the Royal Navy's ability to control the English Channel and Napoleonic naval warfare was manpower intensive. To this end the Royal Navy was in continuous need of new recruits. Also, effective naval warfare required the ability to sail ships, a skilled profession and Britain was unable to resort to the mass conscription that the

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French had used to build their armies. At the same time the successes of the Royal Navy had led to the destruction of the French merchant fleet and a corresponding growth of the American commercial fleet. This fleet had grown much faster than the United States could produce new sailors, which meant the American merchant marine needed to attract sailors from other merchant fleets. As Hickey argues ‘there was no shortage of volunteers because the pay and working conditions on American ships were so much better than on British warships or even British merchant vessels.’

This was not an easy situation to resolve, especially as the manpower needs of the Royal Navy had grown from sixteen thousand men in 1792 to one hundred and forty five thousand men in 1812 and Britain could not allow this vital force to be depleted.

Britain’s claim to the sailors who joined the American fleet was derived from the British definition of citizenship, which said that once a person was born a British subject you could not then voluntarily change your nationality as ‘every “natural-born subject” remained so for life.’ This was disputed by the American republic, which needed to increase its population via immigration. An exception was made by Britain for those who were resident in the United States at the time of independence but not those who resided there subsequently.

To complicate the issue, during the period after the end of the Revolutionary War, ‘about 30,000 Americans left the republic to seek land in Upper Canada.’ These

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49 Latimer, 1812: War With America
52 Taylor, The Civil War of 1812 p. 8
immigrants took an ‘oath of allegiance and received grants of Crown land’ thus showing when the situation was reversed the British government was willing to allow people to change nationality, if it served their needs. Taylor argues the British insisted on:

...their right to reclaim any subject found on the high seas and to make subjects of foreign-born sailors and of American settlers in Canada. This double policy angered Americans hypersensitive to any erosion of their new independence.

The infringement of the rights of the United States was an important debate in congress in the run up to the declaration of war. Congressman Jonathan Roberts, speaking in December 1811, argued that America faced two choices, ‘vigorous preparation for resistance’ or ‘unconditional submission.’

This situation was not a new one however; the Royal Navy had been conscripting sailors since the beginning of its conflict with France. The most serious incident involving the press ganging of sailors, which had occurred under the Jefferson administration, did not result in conflict. Traditionally Great Britain had not claimed the right to stop neutral warships or ships within neutral territorial waters. But in 1807 this tradition was broken by the Royal Navy, when it attacked the USS Chesapeake in order to recover ‘four men, one a deserter, the others impressed Americans who had fled British service.’ Traditionally an attack on the warships of a foreign power were considered an act of war and the events

53 Ibid p. 8
54 Alan Taylor, ‘The Late Loyalists: Northern Reflections of the Early American Republic’, Journal of the Early Republic, Vol. 27, No. 1 (Spring, 2007), pp. 1-34
55 Taylor, The Civil War of 1812 p. 9
58 Ibid, p. 437
60 Herring, From Colony to Superpower p. 118
surrounding the British attack on the USS *Chesapeake* would have given the United States sufficient *casus belli* to declare war if the rights of her sailors were the primary cause of the conflict. ⁶¹ There was also a public outcry at the actions of the British across the coastal states, as ‘mass meetings in seaport cities denounced the outrage and demanded satisfaction.’ ⁶² Jefferson’s policy of economic retaliation, which was to prove to be disastrous, was created as a response to this incident. It is clear that if the United States was determined to fight over impressment this would have been the time. That it chose an economic response shows that there were other more important factors that would drive the United States to war.

The third key point this section will discuss is the role economic motivations play in the conflict. The key arguments supporting economic factors for the War of 1812 are that the British blockade of Europe was detrimental to the American economy. That the United States had to act to protect its access to European markets which had been denied to American commerce by the blockade. However the British needed to maintain the blockade as part of the economic campaign against Napoleon. These differences were so distinct that there could be little recourse to negotiation. For Britain this was an issue of vital strategic significance. If Britain needed to blockade France and the areas it controlled, which in 1812 was most of Europe, in order to win the war, it would do so. ⁶³ Conversely America needed to trade with the same countries in order to grow its economy at home. ⁶⁴ As Britain was the world’s premier trading nation, any growth in America’s merchant fleet and trade would be

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⁶² Herring, *From Colony to Superpower*, p. 118
at the expense of Britain’s. Mahan argues that America was both an economic partner and an opponent to the British. As the United States possessed:

...an extensive shipping, second in tonnage only to that of the British islands, to which it was a dangerous rival on maintaining the commercial intercourse of Europe; while her population and purchasing power were so increased as to constitute her a very valuable market, manufacturing for which was chiefly in the hands of Great Britain.

The assumed need for America as an outlet for British manufacture was one of the factors in Jefferson’s policy of embargo, which is discussed in greater detail below. Brant argues that America’s primary objective in the war was to ‘compel England to revoke her Orders in Council, which had been employed for seven years to choke off American trade with the continent of Europe.’ Brant further argues that if Madison had known the Orders in Council would be revoked ‘there would have been no war.’

The economic motivations for the War of 1812 are interconnected with the domestic political motivations; Canada was a valuable target for resources as well an import point for British goods. The experience of the non-intercourse acts of the previous years had shown that any form of embargo against Britain was extremely difficult to enforce given the length and low population density along the border. Economic sanctions encountered further problems as Herring points out:

Jefferson’s greatest miscalculation was of his own people’s willingness to endure economic hardship for the sake of principle. Accustomed to fat profits and intolerant

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66 Alfred Thayer Mahan, *Sea Power in its Relations to the War of 1812* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1905) p. 149
68 Ibid p. 56
of government interference, fiercely individualistic Americans evaded the law at will
and resisted the stern measures used to enforce it.\textsuperscript{69}

It is perhaps a quirk of history that Thomas Jefferson, an ardent defender of personal
liberty in his writings, enacted policies that increasingly curtailed the economic freedoms of
American citizens. It also says much of the character of those on the American Border lands
that despite this increased effort, the attempts remained largely unsuccessful. Many along
the border between the United States and Canada were clearly uninterested in conflict. It is
clear that there were also strong economic motivations for negotiating with Britain and
coming to an accommodation.

An important source of economic friction was the Rule of 1756.\textsuperscript{70} As ships from the
United States were travelling to France, loading goods bound for the French colonies
travelling back to the United States and then re-exporting them and vice versa. The
effectiveness of the British blockade was being undermined, Britain’s strongest method of
attacking France’s economic position, although this did not necessarily provide a strong
economic argument for America to go to war. As the British Government was more
interested in obtaining a share of the profits than stopping the practice, so that ‘the point at
issue with the United States on this subject is not a question of great importance, but a
mere consideration of how the profit taken from the enemy is to be divided’\textsuperscript{71} a negotiated
settlement could have been reached. Some of the economic issues this chapter addresses
stem from the events that immediately followed the success of the American Revolution.
Previous to the revolution, the thirteen colonies were an integrated part of the Atlantic

\textsuperscript{69}George C. Herring, From Colony to Superpower p. 120
\textsuperscript{70} The Rule of 1756 was a British Naval doctrine which declared that any trade that was closed to other nations
in peace time it could not be opened up to neutral trade in war time in order to circumvent a British blockade.
\textsuperscript{71}Hickey, The War of 1812, p. 11
trading system. Britain had protected this trading system with the Navigation Acts to prevent foreign competitors gaining access to this market.72

Upon gaining their independence, the former colonies were no longer part of the Empire and as such were to be treated as a foreign nation. As Lord Sheffield wrote at the time ‘by gaining their independence, the Americans have at once renounced the privileges as well as the duties of British subjects-they are become foreign states.’73 This was especially true of trade with the West Indies, where British shipping had been facing stiff competition from that of New England. This attempt to exclude the new United States from British trade would be a hallmark of British policy. This is connected to the belief that Britain could continue to control the North American content economically through America’s need to export its goods. The events surrounding the decision to control the trade between the U.S. and the West Indian colonies reflect a belief that Canada could replace the former thirteen colonies’ in supplying raw materials to the empire. The British committee of trade concluded:

That the loyal colonies were already able to supply a large proportion of the lumber and provisions which the West Indies required and would in about three years be ready to furnish the whole. If they failed to consume all the rum for which the planters had to find an American market, the people of the United States, to whom it was indispensable, would be glad to purchase the rest. For the carrying trade British shipping, operating on the old three-cornered principle, would undoubtedly suffice. Retaliatory measures on the part of the Americans were not to be feared, and could

73 John Holroyd Earl of Sheffield, Observations on the commerce of the American states (United States: J. Debrett, 1784) p. 2
in any event be defeated by the ease with which goods might be smuggled into their country. 74

The ability of the loyalist colonies to absorb British goods and supply the Royal Navy would provide some economic impetus for the United States to attack the colony. If the United States could deprive Britain of such an outlet it would force British reliance on the United States.

But there are also several strong economic arguments that would dissuade the United States from going to war against Britain. Firstly the largest single market for cotton from the United States was to Britain. Before the war the United States ‘exported more than 46 million pounds of her cotton, and at least 80 per cent went to Great Britain.’ 75 Thus the cotton producing southern states were economically reliant on British markets. This is a key factor in why the non-intercourse act of 1809 76 failed to extract any meaningful concessions from Britain. Jefferson’s strategy hinged on the concept that the needs of British mill owners in Northern England would force the British to concede to American demands. In fact, British mills could source cotton from alternative sources such as Brazil. By the end of the war in 1814 Britain was importing ‘more than 100,000 bags of Brazilian cotton’, 77 cotton that could have come from the United States. The economic pressure the United States could bring to bear on Britain was offset by other regions of the world. As Kennedy argues:

British export economy could also be sustained by the great rise in trade with regions untouched by the continental system or the American “nonintercourse”

74 Herbert C. Bell, ‘British Commercial Policy in the West Indies, 1783-93’ The English Historical Review, Vol. 31, No. 123 (Jul., 1916), pp. 429-441
75 Perkins, Prologue to War, p. 25
76 This act forbade trade with the United Kingdom and France in an attempt to force them to respect American demands.
77 Perkins, Prologue to War p. 26
policy: Asia, Africa the West Indies, Latin America (despite all the efforts of local Spanish governors) and the near East.\textsuperscript{78}

It is clear that a singularly economic perspective does not explain the outbreak of the war. In fact, economically speaking, neutrality was far more beneficial to the United States than war with Britain. The British naval successes against the other great powers and the subsequent blockade had significantly helped the growth of the United States merchant fleet, the Royal Navy ‘by driving Britain’s enemies from the seas, had in effect conferred a huge commerce upon the neutral United States.’\textsuperscript{79}

The advantages of neutrality are clear, as the U.S. merchant fleet increases from ‘558,000 tons in 1802 to 981,000 tons at the end of 1810\textsuperscript{80} and the United States reduced its national debt from ‘$83 million in 1801 to $45 million at the opening of 1812.’\textsuperscript{81} This growth in shipping was possible in part because most European merchant ships were under blockade by the Royal Navy and the Royal Navy’s cannibalization of the British merchant fleet to supply men for its ships.

It can be argued that as a co-belligerent, greater trading opportunities would be available to the United States by using France to offset the losses incurred by the war with Britain. Upon closer inspection there is little evidence of the veracity of this argument. If we take the years 1801-1802\textsuperscript{82} as an example we can see that ‘Britain purchased goods worth twice as much as the American produce shipped to France.’\textsuperscript{83} When the war with France resumed, Britain continued to purchase American produce in ever greater quantities.

\textsuperscript{79} Perkins, \textit{Prologue to War} p. 28
\textsuperscript{80} Ibid p. 29
\textsuperscript{81} Ibid p. 29
\textsuperscript{82} This time frame covers the peace of Ameins which gives us a measure of the trade that could be sent to France if commerce were free of interference from the Royal Navy.
\textsuperscript{83} Perkins, \textit{Prologue to War} p. 30
Chapter Three: The War of 1812

Exports peaked in 1807 at $49 million\(^\text{84}\) whilst in 1806 France had imported only $2.7 million.\(^\text{85}\) There is little evidence to suggest that France could come close to replacing Britain in terms of a market for American goods\(^\text{86}\) even if Britain’s naval power had not been a factor.

Further the United States own fiscal situation would not be improved by a declaration of war. As the non-intercourse acts had shown ‘duties on foreign trade primarily funded the federal government.’\(^\text{87}\) Thus the embargo had already depleted the federal treasury; war with Britain would make the situation worse. Not only would America still be unable to collect revenues from trading with Britain but it would receive reduced revenue from its trade with the rest of the world, as it would be unable to defend its global trade from the Royal Navy. In addition, the sizable cost of a war would further diminish the federal government’s finances. Eager to keep the cost of the federal government down, ‘war seemed too expensive, given the republican phobia for taxes.’\(^\text{88}\) Even as late as 1807 Congress could only find the funds to support an army of ten thousand regular troops in order to keep costs down.

This section has discussed the debate surrounding the War of 1812, and how strategic and economic factors give us important insights into the conflict; they do not give a complete explanation for the American decision to declare war on Britain. The next section will show that the Wilsonian framework can improve our understanding of this conflict.

\(^{84}\) Ibid p. 30  
\(^{85}\) It is important to remember the ability of France to import from the U.S. had been hampered by the British blockade.  
\(^{86}\) Or that Napoleon would be keen to see that happen: François Crouzet, ‘Wars, Blockade, and Economic Change in Europe, 1792-1815’ The Journal of Economic History, Vol. 24, No. 4 (Dec., 1964), pp. 567-588.  
\(^{87}\) Taylor, The Civil War of 1812 p. 119  
\(^{88}\) Ibid p. 116
Wilsonian Factors

Analyses of the War of 1812 that concentrate on the strategic and economic considerations have overlooked the part Wilsonian factors have played in this conflict. Returning to the discussions of Wilsonianism in the first chapter we can see in this conflict represents both the role of democracy promotion and that of a rules based international system. Chief of these factors is the defence of the democratic system in an international system in which the great powers are hostile toward republican government. This conflict also shows the Wilsonian preferences that countries abide by international norms and rules and this school’s antithesis to those states that do not act in line with its approach. This section will show how Wilsonianism plays an active part in the decision to enter this conflict.

The Revolutionary War had been framed as a struggle of liberty against tyranny. In this section this thesis will argue that defending the democratic nature of the United States, and protecting the ideology that had formed the republic, was a key driver of this conflict. This section will show that if we revisit the Wilsonian factors, then we will gain a better understanding of why the war took place.

The first factor this section will consider is the defence of republican ideology that the United States had been founded on. The defence of republican ideology was a priority for the early governments of the United States, as Brown argues:

Never was a generation more deeply conscious of mission than the men who won independence from Great Britain and founded the American nation. Much more than a simple severance of colonial bonds, a breaking of the imperial tie, in American eyes the Revolution signified the beginning of a new political era, the opening of an
age that would exhibit to the world the transcendent blessings of a republican form of government.\textsuperscript{89}

Given the weakness and difficulty the young republic had suffered since independence the continued British affronts to the republic, in its impressment of seamen posed a more existential threat, than simply depriving the United States of commerce or valued sailors.\textsuperscript{90} Allowing the impressment of American sailors to continue was to undermine the principles on which the new American nation was born\textsuperscript{91}; ‘Madison genuinely believed seizure and impressment to be in violation of fundamental national and moral principle.’\textsuperscript{92} In a communication to congress Madison argues:

\textit{(impressment of sailors) is so far from affecting British subjects alone, that under the pretext of searching for these, thousands of American Citizens, under the safeguard of public law, and of their national flag, have been torn from their country, and from everything dear to them; have been dragged on board ships of war of a foreign nation; and exposed, under the severities of their discipline, to be exiled to the most distant and deadly climes, to risk their lives in the battles of their oppressors, and to be the melancholy instruments of taking away those of their own brethren\textsuperscript{93}}

The Wilsonian School is one that promotes the democratic ideals and the rights of its citizens. These rights are being impinged on by Great Britain and it is clear that Madison is concerned about this. In his address the previous year Madison had argued that:

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item[\textsuperscript{89}] Brown, \textit{The Republic in Peril} p. 1
\item[\textsuperscript{92}] Brown, \textit{The Republic in Peril} p. 12
\item[\textsuperscript{93}] James Madison, ‘Special Message to Congress on the Foreign Policy Crisis -- War Message (June 1, 1812)’, \textit{Miller Center}, last accessed July 19th 2013 available at: http://millercenter.org/president/speeches/detail/3614
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}

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With this evidence of hostile inflexibility in trampling on rights which no Independent Nation can relinquish; Congress will feel the duty of putting the United States into an armour, and an attitude demanded by the crisis, and corresponding with the national spirit and expectations.94

This objection to the impressment of the Sailors of the United States was not a new cause for Madison. As Secretary of State he had written on behalf of impressed sailors in 1805:

Sir, in perusing the inclosed Documents, that both the Cases are marked alike by several Circumstances of Enormity. In each Case the impressed Men were Citizens of the United States and produced documentary Proof of the Fact; and in each the Number of Men taken bore so great a Proportion to the whole Crew as to induce the Master to request that his Vessel might be taken Possession of by the British Officers, her safety after such a Deprivation being imminently endangered.

The immediate Object of laying these Incidents before you, is that of obtaining a proper Interposition with the Superiors of the Officers complained of, such as I am persuaded you will readily employ, and such as may have the Effect, without a circuitous Application in London, to liberate the Men and restrain in Future the Perpetration of Acts so immediately leading to Consequences injurious to the friendly Intercourse between the Two Government.95

As we can see from the above text Madison, has been attempting to resolve the issue of impressed American sailors before the declaration of war. This thesis contends that their impressment was a real concern for Madison and the effect this concern had on the decision to go to war is best interpreted using the Wilsonian School.

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The danger that the continued impressment of American sailors presented to the republic is amplified by the events across the Atlantic in France. The revolution in France received a tepid welcome in the United States, after ‘1793 the United States was sympathetic to France’s revolution, but the excesses of the Terror diluted this support.’ The Terror was superseded by the ideology of Napoleonic France ‘whose boundless ambition depended, politically and socially, on continuous warfare, and demanded war to finance itself,’ which seemed to be an antithesis of the ideology of the young republic. Further evidence of the United States’ poor relations with France is presented when the United States fought an ‘undeclared naval war with France from 1798 to 1800.’ Jefferson was initially supportive of revolutionary France but as the Terror and later Napoleon undermined the republican credentials of France, he ‘was even more determined than his predecessors to pursue and independent foreign policy.’

The second section will look at how the Wilsonian framework gives us a better understanding of the attitudes of many in the United States’ toward France even after the declaration of war against Britain. The United States would not make common cause with the French Empire, despite the strategic benefits of such an arrangement. The nature of the war was to be one of co-belligerency; war with Britain at the same time as France but not in alliance with France.

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97 Latimer, *1812: War With America*, p. 14
98 Ibid, p. 14
100 Latimer, *1812: War With America* p. 15
101 Herring, *From Colony to Superpower*, p. 95
common cause with the other belligerent. Kaplan argues that Madison’s wish ‘to exploit France coexisted with a horror at the idea of an alliance and its responsibilities. It was clear by 1812 that France was not ideologically similar to the United States. As Latimer argues:

Bonaparte used his self-styled empire as a bloody racket to sustain his own despotism and the military aristocracy that support it; at home he stifled free speech and purged political opponents.

These considerations are better understood if the conflict is revisited through a Wilsonian lens, whereas strategic logic would dictate that the enemy of my enemy is my friend. This is not the logic of the Wilsonian School and nor was it the logic of Jefferson, Madison and the young republic. That is not say the United States has never been allied with nations that are less than democratic; as the subsequent chapters will show both Korea and Kuwait would be supported by the United States. It does however contribute to our understanding of why in 1812 co-belligerency was the chosen path. Mead argues that “Wilsonians proclaim noble principles and sincerely plan to apply them - but then, alas, they sometimes lose policy battle.” In this case we can see that Wilsonian thinking is an important factor in the conflict. If we return to the democracy promotion element of Wilsonianism we can understand that by not supporting Napoleonic France the United States is not supporting an ideology to which it is opposed.

The ideological factors of the conflict can become confused, as both Britain and France claimed they were fighting for their conception of liberty. Although liberty was one

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103 Ibid p. 670
104 Kaplan, ‘France and Madison’s Decision for War,’ p. 669
105 Latimer, 1812: War With America p. 14
of the key slogans of the French revolution, the British government presented itself as the last bastion of liberty left in a Europe oppressed by Napoleon, ‘Englishmen honestly thought that in facing Napoleon’s challenge they fought for the entire world.’\textsuperscript{107} The Earl of Selkirk had said of British naval power that it was ‘the last stay of the liberties of the world.’\textsuperscript{108} British political leaders also felt that America was being protected from Bonaparte\textsuperscript{109} and should be grateful to Britain. In the words of the Earl of Liverpool, America ‘ought to have looked to this country as the guardian power to which she was indebted, not only for her comforts, not only for her rank in the scale of civilization, but for her very existence.’\textsuperscript{110} To citizens of the former British colony across the Atlantic, the altruistic nature of British power was less obvious.

To James Madison it was the United States that was the true defender of liberty, finding the claims of the mercantilist British Empire and the expansionist French Empire spurious.\textsuperscript{111} The belief that both of the warring powers were as bad as each other, and that America should if possible remain aloof from European conflicts to avoid being brought down to their level, was a strong one in the United States.

This sentiment was vocally expressed by the Republican Party ‘We wish not the deadly embrace of Gallic friendship, or the corrupted influence of the British cabinet; for the moment either become intermingled with our policy, from that moment we may date the

\textsuperscript{107} Perkins, Prologue to War p. 4
\textsuperscript{108} Ibid p. 5
\textsuperscript{109} In the sense that if Britain were not opposing Napoleon in Europe he would cross the Atlantic to conquer the United States.
\textsuperscript{110} Perkins, Prologue to War, p. 5
defection of our national prosperity and happiness.\textsuperscript{112} As early as 1805 George Campbell, a member of congress, had blamed European influences for trying to corrupt the American Republic with the sins of the European great powers. Campbell argues 'we should have had a fair prospect of continuing to flourish a free independent and happy nation, much longer than I fear will be our destiny to do if we become more and more entangled in European politics and intrigues.'\textsuperscript{113}

Both Madison and Jefferson saw that wars increased the power of government and these powers threaten the liberty of the citizens. Porter argues that the 'United States had emerged as the least bureaucratic, least militarist; least centralized-in short, the least \textit{statist}-large state in the world.'\textsuperscript{114} The early governments of the United States wished to keep it this way. A war with Britain would require a level of taxation that many found unpalatable. Further it would require the expansion of the army, which was to some as big a threat to the republican government as foreign powers. The \textit{Federalist Papers} show a need to maintain a small army 'the smallness of the army renders the natural strength of the community an over-match for it.'\textsuperscript{115} Thus if the United States were to risk the changes a war could bring then it would need to see its cause as worth the risk. That cause was found in opposing a Britain that was undermining the principle of liberty and commerce, by arbitrarily impressing American citizens.

\begin{footnotes}
\item[112] Perkins, \textit{Prologue to War} p. 55
\item[115] Alexander Hamilton, \textit{The Federalist No 8} Kindle Edition p. 545
\end{footnotes}
Limiting the arbitrary power of governments was the foundation that the American Constitution was based on. It therefore follows that if the new government of the United States could not defend the rights of its citizens from the arbitrary whims of foreign governments, it would threaten the concept of republican government as a whole, as Brown argues:

The Revolutionary generation understood that importance of showing conclusively that republicanism could lead to greater human well-being and happiness than hereditary monarchy or aristocracy. They had to prove that republican government not only assured liberty but could be consistent with security of life and property and with protection of national honor and independence.116

This is reinforced by Thomas M. Kane who argues that ‘Americans drew explicit connections between the country’s ability to protect its citizens and its integrity as a republic.’117

Thus we can see the ideological foundations of the United States were threatened by its inability to protect these rights. After the United States had gained independence it was a nation, and to many, an exceptional one bound to promote liberty. To that end it was dishonourable for America to continue to have her sailors impressed and her trade curtailed by Britain, a nation that continued to think of the United States as an “upstart colony.” So after a decade long attempt to reach an accommodation with Britain, which failed to redress several of the main differences between the two nations, many came to the conclusion that the only way to force Britain to respect the United States as a nation and not as a colony was to go to war. Many in Britain did nothing to discourage the American perception of British attitudes. Perkins argues that ‘on the whole, America was considered

116 Brown, The Republic in Peril p. 3
an infant among nations-uncouth, argumentative, boasting and essentially weak and entirely dependent on Britain." This is further supported by the views of one journal written in 1811: ‘It is British capital, which directly or indirectly, set half the industry of America in motion: it is the British fleets that give it protection and security.’ This type of publication was not uncommon and aided the American perception that Britain did not respect the United States or its republican government.

To this end the War of 1812 is sometimes seen as “the second war for independence.” As John C. Calhoun in 1812 says ‘this is the second struggle for our liberty.’ This is also argued by White who contends that ‘everything in the arsenal of diplomacy had been used, including negotiation, economic retaliation, and the threat of war and so the country reluctantly decided to take up arms.’ Having tried to coerce Britain through other means into respecting the rights of Americans, Madison was left with no choice but to go to war to achieve these ends. It is the Wilsonian School that allows us to understand why these factors are important in his reaching this decision. Wilsonianism follows the logic that states must abide by the rule of international law, if they are to function peacefully within the international system. This is something that Great Britain of 1812 is failing to do whilst at the same time threatening the very foundation of a democratic system, the rights of the citizen.

What does Wilsonianism add to the debate?

This section will revisit the conflict using the Wilsonian framework, developing a more nuanced understanding of how this framework adds to the traditional debates surrounding

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118 Perkins, Prologue to War p. 7
119 Ibid p. 7
120 ‘Debates and Proceedings in the congress’ p. 1399
121 Patrick C.T White, A Nation on Trial: America and the War of 1812 (Hoboken: John Wiley and Son, 1965) p. 1
these conflicts. This section will begin by establishing how much agency the United States had in deciding to go to war, by returning to the criteria laid out in Chapter One. It will then show how Wilsonian factors contributed to the decision to go to war and give a new understanding of how these Wilsonian factors were influencing policy since the beginning of the republic.

As has been established above, the United States was in a far weaker military position than the United Kingdom in 1812, and it would have seemed unwise to risk the fragile republic in conflict with Great Britain. The events of the Revolutionary War were still relatively recent and the underlying Anglophobia of the United States would remain. The poor relations the American republic had developed with Napoleonic France would prevent any alliance against Great Britain. These tensions would bring the United States close to declaring war on both powers in order to redress their grievances, despite the fact that the United States had succeeded in its revolution in no small part due to the assistance of the French army. Thus the United States government would be aware that it would be fighting alone on the North American continent.

Conversely, British actions did not threaten the American republic territorially, as the United Kingdom was already heavily committed to the war in Europe and an American theatre would only serve to stretch British resources even thinner. This was a conflict neither of pre-emption nor prevention as the military disposition of the armies of the United Kingdom was not one that would suggest invasion. Rather this was a war of Wilsonian principle designed to teach the United Kingdom a lesson and protect America’s republican ideology.

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Returning to the criteria that are laid out in Chapter One we can show that this conflict meets the definition of having agency in deciding to go to war. Returning to the first criterion we can see that the United States did not have its territory under attack in 1812 and as will be discussed below it was certainly not threatened with invasion nor was Britain likely to expend the resources on invasion given the situation in Europe. This shows that there is evidence that the United States had agency in going to war and as such we can revisit this conflict using the Wilsonian framework to add to our understand of why the United States chose conflict in this case.

As we can see from the above there is strong evidence to suggest that there were domestic ideological factors driving the conflict. If we revisit these factors through a Wilsonian framework then we can better understand the importance of these factors and how they inform our understanding of the conflict.

It would seem on the surface that James Madison, who was a close friend of Thomas Jefferson, and whose foreign policy followed closely in Jefferson's footsteps, would be best understood through the use of the Jeffersonian School. Jeffersonian foreign policy according to Mead 'does not scan the foreign policy horizon in a search for opportunities; rather, it mostly sees threats.'\textsuperscript{123} Jefferson saw foreign threats in terms of threats to American liberty and America would need to respond to these threats. This included a threat to ‘American citizens abroad - the impressments of seamen, the confiscation of property, piracy, extortion, mistreatment of diplomats- that the American government would have no alternative but war.’\textsuperscript{124} War was ‘the first and greatest evil’\textsuperscript{125} to Jefferson and was to be

\textsuperscript{123} Mead, \textit{Special Providence} p. 183
\textsuperscript{124} Ibid p. 185
\textsuperscript{125} Ibid p. 186
used only as a last resort. The Jeffersonian philosophy seems to offer a strong argument in understanding the conflict, after all the rights of American citizens were being infringed by a foreign power and the government had tried repeatedly to reach a settlement to secure these rights.

A Wilsonian framework however provides a more complete explanation for the events leading up to the War of 1812. At its core Wilsonianism argues that the United States has a right and a duty to take direct military action in defence of principle. Madison, a strong proponent of the separation of powers in the Constitution, was concerned to avoid the growth of the power of the executive branch when the Constitution was written. The growth of government power, which is common when a nation goes to war, is a major concern of the Jeffersonian tradition. The effect of wars on the power of the state had been shown to be the case in Great Britain during the previous century where Porter argues that ‘virtually every branch of the government expanded in response to the pressures of war and empire.’ Wars inherently require the state to construct an army with which to fight, large armies represent a threat to democracies as it gives the government a tool with which to enforce its will upon the people. This thinking was particularly strong for the revolutionary generation who had seen, what had in their opinion, had been legitimate concern over the rate of taxation ignored because the Crown could send its army to subdue

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127 As one of the collaborative authors of the *Federalist Papers*, Madison’s views on checks balances are explicitly laid out.
any opposition. This thinking was further influenced by the events in Europe where Napoleon had used his armies to forge an Empire out of what many Americans had hoped to be a sister republic. In going to war the young republic risked becoming the very state that Jeffersonians despised and this was a price that in the Jeffersonian tradition was not worth paying, even for the rights of those forced into British service. It is by using the Wilsonian framework that we can understand why the risks to liberty that came from fighting wars were justified.

Furthermore, by using the Wilsonian framework we can fully understand the importance of Great Britain’s actions in undermining the very concept of republican government in the United States. As this thesis discussed in Chapter One the Wilsonian School believes that there is an inherent benefit to a system of states made up of states of a democratic nature. The actions of Great Britain were undermining this form of government by depriving American citizens of their rights. There would be little chance of other nations following in America’s footsteps and adopting the type of government that Wilsonians could trust if it became the norm that republican governments would not act to defend themselves and their citizens. This concern was not Madison’s alone; in a letter by the citizens of the First Congressional District of Pennsylvania they express concern at the affront to republican government:

Yet as prefacing this last appeal, and for this, as we most anxiously hope the last time, it may not be improper briefly to sketch an Outline of that unparalleled,

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unmitigated, intolable series of National outrages against which after too long an
duration the only Republic extant is now at length about to Exhibit the Magnificent
Spectacle of an Empire of Freemen in the armour and attitude of defensive war—
War for their Sovereignty, their rights, their blessings—War for the reclamation of
their property, their persons—War for their homes and domestic altars—a War
staved off till every possible effort at reconciliation has been put to beggary and
shame—A War, to which not one distillation from the subtle and anti-republican
essences of ambition ... has contributed but which will flow pure from the rock of
self-defence—A War without which ... our Sovereignty is servility, our Commerce a
Colonial trade, our persons exposed to pillage, our property to piracy, our boasted
institutions piles of theoretical ruins, and peace itself, that most desirable of all
political enjoyments, a contumely and a Curse.  

Further, Wilsonianism advocates the propagation of a rules based international
system. If this system is to function then violators of those rules would need to be punished.

In 1812 we can see that the United States clearly saw Great Britain as a breaker of those
rules because it had violated the rights the United States had gained with its independence.

This view of Britain was expressed in a letter by the citizens of Virginia:

That ‘though Peace is dear, very dear, the rights and honor of our Country are still
dearer, to our hearts; that to avert the extremity of War, we have tried every means
of conciliation; our Government has exhausted every proposition of compromise, as
well as every other expedient of policy, and exhausted them in vain. It is time,
therefore, to fly to arms; to employ what may be emphatically styled the last resort

of Republics; and to wrest that reparation from Great Britain, which we have so long sued for in vain\textsuperscript{133}

Moreover Great Britain was not acting the way the United States expected it to act towards another sovereign state. If democratic states could be dismissed as somehow endowed with lesser status than their monarchical counterparts then this would delegitimise the system of democratic states that the Wilsonian School sees as an ideal system. Thus the United States tried to resolve the disputes and correct British behaviour towards a more Wilsonian approach.

As this thesis discussed in Chapter Two, the Wilsonian School interpreted Germany’s behaviour in the First World War as incompatible with the global order America desired. The same is true of Great Britain in 1812; the Wilsonian framework can give us an understanding of why these ideological factors are brought to the fore in 1812 and why Wilsonian factors must be considered in addition to the other factors discussed. As such, this section has discussed how Wilsonianism is an important factor in driving this conflict. Understanding why the Wilsonian factors need to be considered is an essential element if we are to get a more complete understanding of the reasons the United States went to war.

Conclusion

In conclusion we can see there are a complex set of factors at work when we investigate the origins of the War of 1812. There is a strong case for the strategic factors driving the American decision making process. The lure of excluding Britain from continental North America was a powerful one, supported by the realist paradigm of maximizing power. The

\textsuperscript{133} Letter from the Inhabitants of Richmond, Manchester, and Vicinity, \textit{The Papers of James Madison Digital Edition}, J. C. A. Stagg, editor. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, Rotunda, 2010.) Last accessed May 19\textsuperscript{th} 2014 available at: \url{http://rotunda.upress.virginia.edu/founders/JSMN-03-04-02-0458}
relative weakness of the United States however leaves this as an unsatisfying explanation. When this is coupled with the aversion to military spending from the Congress in the run up to the war and its direct contrast with the writings of the Founding Fathers and the policies of the United States in the preceding decades. The economic arguments also present us with a vigorous debate that the war was motivated by American economic interests. The need to secure Canadian resources as well as protecting America’s growing merchant fleet is a compelling argument. There is however a strong economic counter argument that shows us that the United States could have achieved these aims more efficiently through conciliation with Great Britain or even belligerency with France. It is because the above factors have given us a strong argument but seem to be lacking in a full explanation that we need to add the effect that Wilsonian factors are adding to the decision.

In 1812 the risks the young United States ran in declaring war in Britain were far greater than any gains that could be made from conflict with Britain. Only a more fundamental cause could bring the leaders of the United States to risk the rights and freedoms they had made in the Revolutionary War. This driver of conflict can only be understood within the Wilsonian framework, for it is only the Wilsonian dynamic that would lead the young republic to act to defend its republican ideology. As we have seen above, the Founding Fathers were more than aware of the failures of previous attempts at forming republican governments. There would be no hope for a future dominated by states that were liberal and republican in nature if the United States failed in its duty to defend republican government. The events in France had only magnified the lessons of history. Half a century before Lincoln proclaimed that ‘government of the people, by the people, for the
people, shall not perish from the earth.' Madison was forced to defend the very principle of the republican cause. The Wilsonian framework is one that gives us a coherent understanding of why that was important.

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Chapter Four: The Korean War

Introduction

This chapter will show how the Wilsonian framework can be used to give a better understanding of the reasons for the United States’ intervention in the Korean War of 1950-53. American foreign policy in the early Cold War period is inexorably connected to the Truman doctrine and the policies laid out by the National Security Council in National Security Report 68. These policies laid out what would come to be known as containment.

This is the third period of American power that this thesis will look at, one in which the United States is one of two superpowers in a bi-polar system. This chapter will look at the United States’ response to the North Korean invasion of South Korea in 1950. The Korean War gives another example of how we can add to our understanding of these conflicts using the Wilsonian framework.


This war is an example of the role that collective security has played in the Wilsonian tradition. It will look at how Truman was determined not to repeat the mistakes of appeasement in the 1930s and allow aggression to go unchecked. This section will also look at the role that democracy promotion has played in this conflict. It will look at how the religious views of Harry S. Truman can be interpreted through the Wilsonian lens to give us a greater understanding of the decision to go to Korea.

It is perhaps difficult given the strategic imperatives of the Cold War to understand why Wilsonianism has a role in the American decision making process. Korea is indeed a difficult case, but it is because it is a difficult case that it is important that this chapter demonstrates there is a Wilsonian dynamic at work. The Wilsonian focus on collective security is a key driver of this conflict. If a system of mutual defence were to function then North Korean aggression had to be checked. In addition if we are to add to our understanding of the need to contain communism and promote an Americanized liberal international system we must engage with the concept that the rhetoric of freedom was not just window dressing for strategic action. As with the other case studies, this chapter does not argue that Wilsonianism is the whole story, but that the Wilsonian framework did have a real impact on the decision to enter the conflict. As this chapter is primarily concerned with the events in Korea it will not discuss in detail the role Wilsonianism had in the greater Cold War.

The Korean War is an important case because it demonstrates the shift from the political manoeuvring of the immediate post World War Two period to a more hostile phase
of the Cold War.\(^3\) It is also important as it is an example of post-World War Two collective action by the United Nations\(^4\) of the kind that the Wilsonian School had long hoped would prevent aggressive non-democratic nations upsetting the international system. This forms a key part of understanding of why Wilsonianism gives us insight into this conflict. After all this war was exactly the kind of event the United Nations was designed to prevent. The next example of a United Nations sponsored action was not until the First Gulf War Conflict, discussed in Chapter Five. The fact that it is the only case of this approach to international security during the Cold War makes it a good case study to forward this thesis’s argument.

Beyond its importance as an example of collective action, it is important to remember that the Korean War is a significant conflict on its own merits. Even though the Korean War is often overshadowed by the other conflicts of the Cold War such as Vietnam\(^5\) we should not underestimate its importance. This conflict represents a significant commitment by the United States in both manpower and material – in fact the US committed over three hundred thousand troops to Korea.\(^6\) The casualties the United States suffered in the war are also significant, reported as ‘33,629 casualties.’\(^7\) The events of the Korean War and its inconclusive outcome echo to this very day with the Korean peninsula continuing to be a source of tension in the international system.


Chapter Four: The Korean War

This chapter will discuss how we can use the Wilsonian framework to better understand the conflict in Korea. It will begin by discussing the contemporary debate around the conflict and why the economic and strategic explanations in this debate do not wholly suffice. It will go on to show how we can benefit from adding the explanations based in the Wilsonian framework to further our understanding of the conflict.

The Debate

The Korean peninsula before the Second World War was occupied by the Empire of Japan. With Japan’s defeat a new political organization was needed for the country when it became an independent nation. The Soviet Union had agreed to declare war on Japan at the Yalta conference and so at the end of the Second World War the Soviet Union was the occupying power in the north of Korea. The Soviet campaign had ‘won military and political advantages’ with the speed of their campaign putting them in a position to capture the whole peninsular and leave the United States out of any post war arrangement. As the United States forces would not land until after the Japanese surrendered, the population did not see them actively fighting the Japanese forces and driving them off the

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peninsula. The Soviet Union did not want to ‘needlessly offend the United States when half the peninsula would in any case guarantee Soviet security.’

The Soviet forces in Asia were thinly stretched and Stalin feared that the ‘the Americans might cut a deal with the Japanese to continue to resist the Soviet advance in Manchuria.’ Stalin had ‘limited aims in China and Korea’ one of his objectives was the transformation of the Northern part of Korea into a planned economy. This planned economy was incompatible with the government set up in the U.S. Occupation Zone. These divergent paths would prevent the reintegration of Korea as one nation. As neither side was willing to accept the governmental system of the other nor were they willing to relinquish their claim to be the one true Korean government, it was only a matter of time before the border skirmishes broke out into hostility. This was recognized in a report to President Truman:

...under present conditions with no corrective action forthcoming, I would go so far as to recommend giving serious consideration to an agreement with Russia that both the U.S. and Russian withdraw forces from Korea simultaneously and leave Korea to its own devices and an inevitable upheaval for its self purification.

The realist argument explains the Korean conflict in terms of the balance of power. The first factor this section will address is the role the events of the 1930s made in the decision to intervene in Korea. Previous to the Second World War, Great Britain had been

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12 Cummings, The Origins of the Korean War p. 385
14 Cummings, The Origins of the Korean War, p. 386
17 Cummings, The Origins of the Korean War p. 211
the primary off shore balancer in the Pacific.\textsuperscript{18} The United States was forced to assume the role with the decline of the British Empire and the economic difficulties Britain was facing in the early 1950’s.\textsuperscript{19} The United States had been reluctant to perform this role in the run up to World War Two. However with the growth in power of the Soviet Union and its increasing threat in the pacific region, Mearsheimer argues that the Soviet Union had:

Scored a stunning military victory in Manchuria against Japan’s Kwantung Army in the final days of World War II, was a potential hegemon in Northeast Asia as well as Europe, and there were no local great powers to contain it.\textsuperscript{20}

The situation became worse when the Chinese communists seize power in 1949 and become allied to the Soviets.\textsuperscript{21} The Communist block was now in a position to dominate all of Asia and the United States alone had the power to contain this threat.

The events of Munich weigh heavily within the realist argument as they do within the Wilsonian motivations and they reach the same primary conclusion- that the United States did not act appropriately in the interwar period and as a result Germany was able to dominate the continent. This was especially true for Truman who said ‘when faced with a situation we must know how to apply the lessons of history in a practical way.’\textsuperscript{22} It is argued that as the United States failed to act as a balancing power in the 1930’s, Germany was

\textsuperscript{18} For a discussion of off shore balancing see: John J. Mearsheimer, \textit{The Tragedy of Great Power Politics}, (New York: Norton and Co. 2001)


\textsuperscript{20} John J. Mearsheimer, \textit{The Tragedy of Great Power Politics}, p. 260


allowed to become a potential hegemon.\textsuperscript{23} By failing to lend its support to Britain and France and continuing a buck-passing policy the United States had been forced to fight a costly war in Europe to defeat Germany and restore the balance of power.

The most important factor in the United States failing to contain Germany or Japan in the period running up to World War Two was the isolationist feeling within the United States itself. As this thesis has previously discussed, the post-First World War period had led to the widespread belief that the United States had been somehow tricked into the First World War and had not been fighting for the ideals that Wilson had espoused. These feelings had subsided by the end of the Second World War partly due to the acceptance of America’s role in the world and partly because Pearl Harbor had occurred despite an isolationist policy.\textsuperscript{24} One could not afford to be “Pearl Harbored” in a nuclear age.

Although China was not a potential hegemon in 1950, the Soviet Union was, and if it were to control the Korean peninsula through a Korean client state the United States would have no major land base from which to operate in North East Asia. In the event of war with the Soviet Union or the Chinese, the American forces in Asia would need to land amphibiously from bases in Japan. Given the difficulties of D-day and the United States island-hopping campaign in the Pacific, it would put the United States in a stronger strategic position if it could prevent a takeover of South Korea.\textsuperscript{25} Thus one of the classical arguments for defending South Korea was that it was a useful land base for conducting ground operations.

operations against China should they become necessary and could provide forward defence of Japan. However the usefulness of Korea as a strategic base is disputed by Lowe:

The Joint Chiefs of Staff assessed Korea in September and concluded that “from a strategic standpoint of military security, the United States has little strategic interest in maintaining the present troops and bases in Korea.” If war broke out in the Far East “our present forces in Korea would be a military liability and could not be maintained there without substantial reinforcement prior to the initiation of hostilities.”

This is especially true when considering the need to resupply forces in the face of Soviet air and naval power in the event of general conflict with the Soviet Union. As NSC 8 concludes ‘the U.S. should not become so irrevocably involved in the Korean situation that any action taken by any faction in Korea or by any other power in Korea could be considered a casus belli for the United States.’ Further the same difficulties that the United States would face in conducting an invasion would aid in the defence of Japan, which possessed far more economic and strategic importance than South Korea. The expansion of the United States’ naval presence and the deployment of air power would be a far more cost effective option. As McGlothlen argues, ‘containment could have begun -as the Pentagon clearly intended - at the Sea of Japan’ rather than the 38th parallel. Further from the larger position of the Cold War these troops would be better used in other areas where America’s strengths at sea and in the air would be less decisive such as in Europe.

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27 NSC, Korea Report 8 p. 12
Chapter Four: The Korean War

The next factor for discussion is the role of small state alliances in the decision to go to war in Korea. The realist approach would argue that the United States would need to prevent smaller powers from bandwagoning with the Soviet Union. To do this they had to believe that the United States was genuinely committed to defending them if they were attacked. There is much discussion of whether states seek to maximize power or security.\textsuperscript{30} In either case many of America’s smaller allies were located far closer to the USSR than the United States. With the obvious power of the Red Army the United States would need to reassure them and prevent them from defecting if the strategy of containment were to be effective.\textsuperscript{31} With this interpretation the Korean conflict can be seen as a conflict to set an example to America’s allies that the United States would support countries that were opposing communist aggression. This would both reassure its allies in Europe that the United States was committed to their defence and that it was willing to put its troops on the line to do so. This argument however assumes that the countries which the United States was trying to reassure were ideologically neutral in the Cold War and happy to ally with whichever side was offering the best deal. This may have been the case in some instances but overall many of the countries that were opposing communist aggression were themselves opposed to the communist system and sought alliances to protect themselves and were not going to “switch sides” if South Korea were to fall to communism.\textsuperscript{32}


A more convincing argument for the defence of South Korea is that it inextricably linked with the greater Cold War explanations of the balance of power. Mearsheimer argues that any great powers are bound to compete with each other because only other great powers threaten their existence. As all states must be concerned primarily with survival within a self-help system. If only two great powers exist within the system then they will focus their attentions on each other. In such a system power is zero-sum and as such any gains for an opponent will be losses for you. In this system the United States would be forced to defend Korea because it would move a potential ally into the enemy camp.

Further had the United States failed to act in Korea this might have encouraged the Soviets to push at American allies in other theatres. The Soviet Union had never been happy with the Western presence in Berlin and had previously attempted to starve the Western Allies out of the city. If the United States had not responded forcefully in Korea this may have shown the Soviets that the United States was willing to accept a military fait accompli.

Moving on from the strategic factors, this section will now consider the importance of economic factors and the revisionist arguments that have been made in understanding this conflict. The nineteen sixties and seventies brought a period of revisionism from scholars of international history that argue that the United States was an expansionist and
aggressive power in the early Cold War period that sought to encircle the Soviet Union.\(^{34}\) Many revisionist historians have claimed that Korea was an example of America’s neo-imperialism at work.\(^{35}\) Whereas the United States did not have a formal empire in the vein of the European great powers, many have argued that the United States pioneered a new form of informal empire operated through client states.\(^{36}\) These client states would serve the American empire by technically being independent states, whilst allowing American bases for America’s military needs and allowing American companies access to their markets thus furthering American economic dominance.\(^{37}\) In this case the defence of South Korea would be necessary both to maintain access to the market, which would be denied to the United States if South Korea were to become a command economy. Further the fear of the “domino effect” would threaten American markets in not just Korea but throughout the region.

This economic imperialist approach argues that the United States did not care what type of governments its clients had, just so long as they could deliver on the demands made of them by the United States. In return these local governments, which were often unsavoury, would be supported by the United States. This Marxist theory which is not


dissimilar to realism postulates that the United States needed to commit to the Korean War to prevent defection of its client states, only within this theory the motivations are economic not strategically motivated.

William Pemberton argues that the ‘both Kim (Il Sung) and Rhee were dictators, but Kim had the support of his people; Rhee relied on the support of the United States.’ The supporters of revisionist argument ask the question, if the protection of South Korea was the sole motivation for American action, why did President Truman order forces to move beyond the 38th parallel and attempt to rollback communism? With the North Korean forces defeated, the stated objectives had been achieved. The revisionist argument concludes that this is proof that the United States was expansionist and saw an opportunity to expand into North Korea.

Furthermore, revisionists reject the premise the Truman was acting in accordance with the principles of collective action, but instead argue that he was using the United Nations, an American created body, as a cover for America’s actions and that he would have sent troops whether he had U.N. approval or not as Pemberton argues:

Although Truman often said he had to intervene in Korea to avoid undermining the United Nations, he told Acheson that the United States would have intervened unilaterally if the United Nations had not acted.

The fact that Truman would have acted whether the United Nations had given its blessing or not does not undermine the Wilsonian nature of this conflict. Truman acted within the spirit

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39 It is also argued that the People’s Republic of China saw this as the motivation and acted to defend themselves see: Allen S. Whiting, *China Crosses the Yalu* (New York: Macmillan, 1960) and Chen Jian, *China’s Road to the Korean War: The Making of the Sino-American Confrontation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).
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of international agreements to protect small nations from aggression\textsuperscript{41} and to maintain the Wilsonian vision for the international system.

This section has discussed many of the key parts of the debate regarding American intervention in the Korean War. There are clearly strong arguments for these explanations. However there is also more to this conflict than these explanations would suggest, for this we need to look at the role the Wilsonian School plays in this conflict.

\textbf{Wilsonian Factors}

This section investigates how Wilsonianism contributed to the decision to intervene in the Korean War. By adding Wilsonian factors to the debate, we can gain greater insight into why the United States chose to act. The section begins by examining how much agency the United States had in deciding to go to war in Korea.

For Wilsonian factors to be important, the United States must have had agency in Korea. If the Truman Doctrine and NSC 68 had committed the United States to oppose communist regimes everywhere in the world then the United States would have no choice but to act. NSC 68 argues that the biggest handicap the west faced when confronted with the Soviet Union was its lack of policy options. It said that ‘the Kremlin is able to select whatever means are expedient in seeking to carry out its fundamental design’\textsuperscript{42} in comparison the United States had ‘no such freedom of choice, and least of all in the use of force. Resort to war is not only a last resort for a fee society, but it is also an act which

\textsuperscript{41}A nation is entitled to seek aid from other nations with or without Security Council approval.

\textsuperscript{42}NSC 68 p. 11
cannot definitively end the fundamental conflict in the realm of ideas.\(^{43}\) Here NSC 68 lays out a broadly Jeffersonian ideal that the use of force is a very last resort. When the United States went to war in Korea however the United States acted swiftly to military action in Korea. Acting under the president’s authority as Commander in Chief and without congressional approval, Truman clearly decided that he should act. Dean Acheson in a speech to the press club in January 1950 lays out a Wilsonian approach to international aggression:

... should such an attack occur-one hesitates to say where such an armed attack should come from- the initial reliance must be on the people attacked to resist it and then upon the commitments of the entire civilized world under the Charter of the United Nations which so far has not proved a weak reed to lean on by any people who are determined to protect their independence against outside aggression.\(^{44}\)

This commitment to a collective security approach is further reinforced in a telegram from John Foster Dulles:

To sit by while Korea is overrun by unprovoked armed attack would start a disastrous chain of events leading most probably to world war. We suggested that the Security Council might call for action on behalf of the organization under Article 106 by the five powers or such of them as are willing to respond.\(^{45}\)

Both of the sources above are pointing to a distinctly Wilsonian approach to dealing with armed aggression more generally and the Korean situation at hand. It is important to

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\(^{43}\) Ibid p. 11


\(^{45}\) John Foster Dulles and John Allison ‘Extract of Telegram to Dean Acheson and Dean Rusk, June 25, 1950’ *Truman Library and Museum* last accessed May 29th 2014 available at: http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/koreanwar/index.php
remember that the use of force in Korea by the United States was by no means inevitable. Support for South Korea amongst members of the Congress was not wholehearted:

... the President and his Administration suffered an embarrassing, if temporary, defeated on January 19, 1950. This was the defeat in the House of Representatives by a vote of 192 to 191 of a bill to provide $60 million in supplementary economic assistance to the Republic of Korea to be expended prior to the end of the fiscal year on June 30.\(^{46}\)

If Korea was a vital aspect of American foreign policy then there would have been less opposition to a relatively small amount of money to aid South Korea’s economy. Returning to the discussion of agency in Chapter One we can see that in this conflict the United States was neither under attack nor would it become unviable were it not to aid Korea. Thus if the United States could have chosen not to act we need a further explanation of why it did. NSC 68 makes it clear that when war does come, all possible effort should be made to prevent the war escalating to general war with the Soviet Union. As NSC 68 says ‘if we have the forces to defeat a Soviet drive for limited objectives it may well be in our interests not to let it become a global war.’\(^{47}\)

Although NSC 68 treats the primary enemy as the Soviet Union, it is clear that this policy of containing communist aggression with limited objectives by localizing the war is the policy that is later used in Korea. This limited war approach is one that is in line with Wilsonian thinking. With a limited conflict the United States could restore international order and punish the aggressive state without causing the system wide conflict that this school hopes to avoid by using collective security. The importance of a collective security approach to this situation is discussed in the State Department’s response to the National

\(^{46}\) Paige, *The Korean decision* p. 35
\(^{47}\) NSC 68 p. 11
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Security Council Report 76/1 where there is discussion of a course of action were the Soviet Union to directly intervene in the conflict. The State department in this instance recommend that:

... prior to the actual execution of war plans, careful consideration should be given to the following points, among others:

a) Appropriate action in the United Nations.\(^{48}\)

In the same document the National Security Resources Board consultant’s comments argue that, ‘United States action should be one of participation in UN retaliation against Soviet Russia.’\(^{49}\) This is a demonstration that the focus of many parts of the United States government was on trying to develop a U.N. centred response where possible.

As we have discussed the Wilsonian School is one that postulates that democracy is the best form of government. The limited war approach, when understood through this lens, is a useful strategy as the United States need only wait until democracy’s inevitable victory if it can stop aggressive and non-democratic states from overrunning the democratic ones. As Frank Ninkovich argues, the underlying assertion was that ‘if war could be avoided, history would render a favourable verdict. At some point in the future, the hollowness of communism would be evident to all’.\(^{50}\) In Korea war had come to the west. If the Truman administration were to allow the Korean peninsula to be overrun this strategy would fail and the West would suffer defeat-in-detail.

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\(^{49}\) Ibid

The events in China had, to many in the administration, shown that the communist block was seeking to expand.\textsuperscript{51} The recriminations over how the United States “lost” China to the communists were exposed in the claims by the Republican Party that ‘communist sympathisers in the State Department’\textsuperscript{52} contributed to the decision to act in Korea. The United States had supported ‘Nationalist China all through World War II’\textsuperscript{53} and had expected Chiang Kai-shek to be victorious over the communists after the war. After all it was the United States that had pushed for China to gain a permanent seat on the Security Council and this was not intended to be for a second communist power. The nationalist defeat was attributed to the involvement of the Soviet Union, although in actual fact there was far less Soviet support for the Chinese communists than one would expect if there were a monolithic Soviet plot to establish a friendly government:

... it is reported that the Soviets captured from the Japanese about 300,000 rifles, nearly 5,000 machine guns, 1,226 artillery pieces, 369 tanks, and 925 aircraft. Much of the artillery and small arms, and some of the tanks and aircraft, were then acquired by the Chinese Communist forces in the spring of 1946.\textsuperscript{54}

Independent of actual figures on the ground the Wilsonian framework can give us an understanding of why this perceived loss of China was important. As the entire concept of democracy’s ultimate triumph was grounded in preventing outside forces from overthrowing what the Wilsonians saw as the natural ebb of history.

The Wilsonian framework further enhances our understanding when we place it in the context of the wider Cold War. As Kane argues:

... those who portray the great East-West contest as a routine incident of rivalry, misunderstanding and mutual suspicion among powerful states are ignoring some of the most important principles that guided both leaders and the led in all the countries that participated in the conflict.\(^{55}\)

For Truman, who had fought in World War One and presided over the end of World War Two, the United States was the only nation that could prevent global tyranny under the Soviet Union.\(^{56}\) This was not only because the United States was the only nation materially capable of containing the Soviet Union,\(^ {57}\) which it was, but because it was the only nation that would be able to rally the Free World because of its unique position within the international system. Quinn argues that:

... the Truman administration made the case for, and commitment to, a new American internationalism on the basis of revival of Wilsonian principles of liberal universalism and the Rooseveltian [Theodore] argument for accumulating armed strength in the defence of a righteous civilizational cause.\(^{58}\)

The policy of containment was based in both the balance of power and the ideological commitment to defeat communism.\(^{59}\) It is this thesis’s contention that America’s intervention in Korea can be better understood by revaluing the role the defence of

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America’s vision of a liberal democratic world in which the prevailing norm is democratic government. It is the Wilsonian framework that gives us the best tool for understanding this factor. In his inaugural address in 1949 Truman said:

Above all else, our people desire, and are determined to work for, peace on earth—a just and lasting peace-based on genuine agreement freely arrived at by equals. In the pursuit of these aims, the United States and other like-minded nations find themselves directly opposed by a regime with contrary aims and a totally different concept of life. That regime adheres to a false philosophy which purports to offer freedom, security, and greater opportunity to mankind. Misled by that philosophy, many peoples have sacrificed their liberties only to learn to their sorrow that deceit and mockery, poverty and tyranny, are their reward. That false philosophy is communism.  

This is in the best tradition of the Wilsonian School. The Cold War shows us a period where American foreign policy, as Perlmutter argues, ‘was conducted on a high moral and ideological plane, which was politically meaningful, and an American national consensus was established around the fight against the “evil empire.”’  

The fear that communism was a growing threat to the West is demonstrated in a memorandum of July 17th 1950 where the Secretary of State informs the French Ambassador that ‘the Korean Situation had made it seem all the more important for us to proceed energetically and rapidly to the rearmament of the Atlantic Pact nations.’ It is the Wilsonian School that allows us an

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understanding of this ideology and why it is important for the United States to pursue this conflict.

When investigating the role of democracy promotion it is important to note there is some debate over whether South Korea was a democracy in the 1950s. There had certainly been elections which 'was observed by a United Nations commission but was confined to South Korea because the puppet communist officials of North Korea refused to let the United Nations commission travel north of the 38th parallel' and it had been the goal of the United States to 'establish a unified, self-governing and sovereign Korea as soon as possible, independent of foreign control and eligible for membership of the U.N.' Even if we conclude that Korea was not democratic, by opposing communist expansion on the Korean Peninsular the United States was undermining communist power and by inference making the world more hospitable to democracies and creating the possibility for democracy to succeed in South Korea. Anne R Pierce argues that Truman:

Placed himself within the internationalist tradition and described his indebtedness to Woodrow Wilson. Although Truman emended that tradition and deviated from the

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64 Truman Papers, ‘The Truth About Korea, ca. 1950. President’s Secretary's Files’, *Truman Library and Museum*, Last accessed August 4th 2013 available at:

https://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/koreanwar/documents/index.php?documentdate=1949-03-16&documentid=kr-7-7&pagename=1
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path Wilson laid out from him, throughout his presidency he praised and referred to Wilson more than he did any other president.\(^{66}\)

By using the Wilsonian framework we can see that the defence of democracy was a factor in Truman’s decision making. If we return to Mead’s argument\(^{67}\) that the Wilsonian School views other democratic states as more reliable partners- as discussed in Chapter One- we can see that Truman shared this belief and it was certainly a factor in Truman’s foreign policy. As Pierce argues:

Truman was just as articulate as Wilson in demonstrating the practical advantages to both individuals and nations of leading a virtuous (democratic) life. Truman warned, however, against treating our democratic ways as mere means to an advantage. He taught that democratic principles should guide democratic interests, and not the other way around.\(^{68}\)

If one looks at the actions of President Truman after the death of Franklin Roosevelt in 1945, they indicate he was keen to take a tougher line with the Soviets than his predecessor. At the time \textit{NSC 68} was published the Truman administration did not foresee a situation where both the communist and democratic world can exist without being hostile to one another. Indeed the actions of the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe had to Truman proved that the Soviet Union could not be trusted much like Imperial and Nazi Germany before her. In a very public denouncement he says ‘the government of the United States has made frequent protests against coercion and intimidation, in violation of the Yalta agreement, in Poland, Rumania and Bulgaria.’\(^{69}\)

\(^{67}\) Mead, \textit{Special Providence} p. 162
\(^{68}\) Pierce, \textit{Woodrow Wilson and Harry Truman} p. 135
\(^{69}\) Harry S. Truman, ‘Message to Joint Session of Congress March 12, 1947’, \textit{Our Documents}, last accessed 4\textsuperscript{th} August 2013 available at:
Further this response also proves that Truman was less willing to accept the spheres of influence approach.\footnote{Lloyd C. Gardner, \textit{Spheres of Influence: The Great Powers Partition Europe, from Munich to Yalta,} (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1994), Melvyn P. Leffler, ‘Adherence to Agreements: Yalta and the Experiences of the Early Cold War’, \textit{International Security}, Vol. 11, No. 1 (Summer, 1986), pp. 88-123 and S. M. Plokhy, \textit{Yalta: The Price of Peace}, (New York: Penguin Books, 2010)} Pierce argues that this created ‘tension between the spheres-of-influence approach to world affairs which Truman inherited from Roosevelt and the internationalist approach he inherited from Wilson.’\footnote{Pierce, \textit{Woodrow Wilson and Harry Truman} p. 124} These instances show that Truman was indeed influenced by the ideas espoused by the Wilsonian School and shows that these ideas are a real factor that give us a greater understanding of his actions.

Harry Truman’s speeches showed that he believed that American ideology was superior to that of his Soviet opponents and that America could win the ideological struggle if the military expansion of the Soviet Union could be contained. Here we see in his speech in Chicago in 1949:

\begin{quote}
Some people would have us believe that war is inevitable between the nations that are devoted to our concept of international organization and the concept that now bears the name of communism. This is not the case. I am optimistic as I look toward the future, because I believe in the superior attraction for men’s minds and hearts of the democratic principles which have been tried and tested in free nations, and which are now winning the allegiance of men throughout the world.\footnote{Harry S. Truman, ‘Address in Chicago Before the Imperial Council Session of the Shrine of North America. July 19, 1949’, \textit{The American Presidency Project}, last accessed 4th August 2013 available at: http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=13248}
\end{quote}

This faith in the democratic system is a cornerstone of the Wilsonian School that all things being equal democratic government will be the preferred choice for any nation. This concept increases our understanding of the Korean War because South Korea would be a nation that was denied its choice of government by the invasion of communist forces. This is
reinforced by the Truman Doctrine in 1947 where Truman argued that the Soviet Union was imposing its system upon countries against their will ‘the peoples of a number of countries of the world have recently had totalitarian regimes forced upon them against their will.’ 73 As these countries did not have the ability to resist the Soviets on their own the United States should commit to helping these countries resist Soviet or Soviet backed aggression ‘I believe that it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjection by armed minorities or by outside pressures.’ 74 This ideological commitment to stemming the spread of the Soviet system is a defining Wilsonian influence for the United States commitment to defend South Korea.

Truman was determined not to repeat the mistakes of the interwar years, and allow aggression to pay off whilst the democratic states sought to appease an aggressive and expansionist regime in order to avoid conflict. The National Security Council addresses these fears of a new Munich directly in a memorandum on July 6, 1950:

The British refused to face up squarely to the menace of Nazism until the invasion of Poland. Some might feel as late as the invasion of Norway. The President carefully avoided that mistake when he electrified the country and the world by backing, with the support of the United Nations, the republic of South Korea. 75

As Truman ‘came to equate Soviet totalitarianism with the Nazi form of totalitarianism, he became more determined to curb and limit Soviet aggression.’ 76 This line of thinking is fundamental in understanding Truman’s decision to commit troops to Korea. The North

73 Truman, Message to Joint Session of Congress March 12, 1947
74 Ibid
76 Pierce, Woodrow Wilson and Harry Truman p. 124

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Korean forces were viewed, by Truman, as pawns of the Soviet Union and the invasion of South Korea was seen as akin to the German takeover of Czechoslovakia. In this analogy, the criticism of British and French policy had been that they sold Czechoslovakia\textsuperscript{77}, a democracy, out at the Munich conference in order to avoid war with Germany. This consequently led to encouraging Hitler and his absorption of the rest of Czechoslovakia and eventually his invasion of Poland.\textsuperscript{78}

Pierce argues that 'if the United States had been more involved [in Europe], Truman believed, World War II could have been prevented.'\textsuperscript{79} The events in Europe in the 1930’s showed a failure of the League of Nations. The Wilsonian framework shows us however that Truman did not interpret this as a failure of collective action as a theory but as a demonstration that the United States was indispensable in making this system work.\textsuperscript{80}

Further he had concluded that ‘after what the administration considered to be the “fiasco” of Munich, no one could claim that each nation was not to some extent “responsible” for the actions of others.’\textsuperscript{81} Given that the Second World War had laid waste to most of Europe and British power was in severe decline only the United States of all the democracies could stand up to the Soviet regime and prevent another Munich. By using the Wilsonian

\textsuperscript{77} Igor Lukes, \textit{Czechoslovakia between Stalin and Hitler: The Diplomacy of Edvard Benes in the 1930s}, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996)


\textsuperscript{79} Pierce, \textit{Woodrow Wilson and Harry Truman} p. 126


\textsuperscript{81} Pierce, \textit{Woodrow Wilson and Harry Truman} p. 127
framework to understand this policy we can see that ‘support of democracy abroad is not only a moral duty for the United States but a practical imperative as well’.

What does Wilsonianism add to the debate?

We will now investigate what Wilsonianism adds to the debate on the Korean War and why it is important that we include these factors in the discussion of the causes of this conflict. As we have seen above the Wilsonian factors are a key part in our understanding of the Korean War. The Wilsonian framework allows us to understand why these factors were important to Truman. By understanding that his objective was to establish a more peaceful world in the post war period and it is the Wilsonian framework that gives us the understanding of why Truman believed it would not be possible to achieve this if communism was allowed to expand. This section will begin with a discussion of the role that Wilsonianism’s belief that the United States had a role in the defence of democracy abroad. It will then look at Harry S. Truman’s religious beliefs and how the Wilsonian framework can help us to understand how these effected his decision. It will then discuss how Wilsonianism adds to the debate about appeasement and the role of the United Nations and collective security.

As this thesis has outlined above, it is the Wilsonian School’s belief that the United States has a role in defending the world order that Truman was trying to create and the democratic system of government beyond its own shores. The existence of the Soviet Union and the beginning of the Cold War posed a significant threat to this system. This adds to the debate in a key way because it shows that there is substance in Truman’s speeches and

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82 Mead, Special Province p. 164
declarations and he is not merely justifying his actions. Ninkovich argues that America’s Cold War policy as one ‘that expressed the abiding belief in the continued vitality of a progressive world society’\(^{83}\) and that we need to add this to our understanding to the debate over American entry into Korea. It is the Wilsonian lens that lets us understand why Truman felt it was the obligation and duty of the United States to defend Korea because it was defending a system of collective security that promotes democracy as a form of government. Not only was Truman disturbingly short of strong militarily ready democratic countries that could give effective military aid to South Korea, but for Truman it remained the United States’ duty to do its part in this struggle.

To understand the role that the Wilsonian School plays in Truman’s decision to go to war in Korea it is also important to understand the role religion played in his understanding of America’s role in the world and its obligations as the most powerful nation. Much like Wilson before him Harry Truman was a devotedly religious man. He believed that totalitarian regimes grew out of dysfunctions within a society. Truman believed that the Nazi ideology of the 1930’s should not have been allowed to flourish because it lacked morality and that it had succeeded because of the military weakness of the other European states. Pierce argues that:

> Truman recognized, however, that if Germany’s use of force was inspired by philosophy which fed on material and spiritual problems, its military successes were allowed by the military situation in Europe.\(^{84}\)

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\(^{83}\) Ninkovich, *The Wilsonian Century* p. 150

\(^{84}\) Pierce, *Woodrow Wilson and Harry Truman* p. 137
Truman believed that the guiding force behind having a spiritually strong country was religion. These lines of argument lead to a distrust of the Soviet Union which was at its core an atheist state.

If Nazi Germany had committed atrocities because of its ideology then in Truman’s mind the Soviet Union, which already violated many of its citizen’s human rights would be capable of the same. Germany had taken advantage of the military weakness of the countries of Europe in the 1930’s Truman saw no reason the Soviet Union would not do the same. Kennan argues this in the Long Telegram, that ‘they [the Soviets] have learned security only in patient but deadly struggle for total destruction of rival power.’

It was also apparent to Truman that the United States of 1945 was far more vulnerable to attack than the United States of 1939. With the technological developments of the Second World War, the advantage of America’s geographical isolation was diminished and it was clear that the United States could not return to its previous policy of quickly demobilizing after a war and maintaining the smallest possible military in peace time. It could no longer use its distance from other nations to give it time to construct an army in war-time.

Truman held that religion and democracy were linked together as inseparable parts of the ideology of the free world. In a speech to the Federal Council of Churches in 1946 he

argued that the recently defeated Axis forces had fought to defeat not only democracy but that of religion as well. Truman himself makes this connection saying:

Both religion and democracy are rounded on one basic principle, the worth and dignity of the individual man and woman. Dictatorship, on the other hand, has always rejected that principle. Dictatorship, by whatever name, is rounded on the doctrine that the individual amounts to nothing; and that men and women and children were put on earth solely for the purpose of serving the state.  

This is clearly aimed at the nature of the Soviet Union which epitomizes the role of the state over that of the individual. As a man who viewed religious freedom as an essential part of the democratic way of life, Soviet oppression of religion contributed to Truman’s distaste of the Soviet Union specifically and communism generally. These beliefs fuelled Truman’s determination to prevent the spread of communist regimes. Thus we can see with the invasion of South Korea a fulfilment of Truman’s worst fears, that the societies that had fallen under the sway of communism would follow an expansionist path.

Further, the Wilsonian School has often been entwined with the American religious tradition. Mead brings this to the fore ‘the very concept of a global civil society comes to us out of the missionary movement.’  

The Wilsonian framework provides a powerful tool for understanding the role these beliefs played in the decision for war. Mead highlights Korea for special mention as an area where missionaries were important ‘during and after the Korean War the churches and the foreign missions were important in the construction and stabilization of the South Korean state’  

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88 Mead, *Special Providence*, p. 146
89 Ibid, p. 156
large over the post war world.\textsuperscript{90} The lesson Truman had learnt was that aggressive regimes could not be deterred by weakness. As McCullough argues ‘he was steadfastly against appeasement.’\textsuperscript{91}

We see then how the Wilsonian framework is important in explaining why the events of Munich could not be repeated. The Wilsonian School adds to this debate because it shows us that rather than interpreting these events as a simple case of deterrence and balance of power we can understand the importance of a democratic state showing that authoritarian states cannot threaten and bully to get their own way. The United States had failed to do this in the 1930s when Wilsonianism was at low ebb, but Truman had a chance in Korea to show that aggression cannot be the norm and that the Wilsonian strategy of war prevention and international order will improve the international system.

The Wilsonian School also provides us with greater insight into why the United Nations had a role in this conflict. Like Wilson before him, Truman saw that collective defence was an important part of maintaining peace within the international system. Truman’s policy was not a carbon copy of that espoused by Wilson but a revisited form of Wilsonianism that had learnt from the lessons of the intervening decades. Pierce argues that:

\begin{quote}
Truman sought channels through which the United States might live up to its responsibilities and attempted to define for Americans just what those responsibilities were. In doing so, he tied postwar foreign policy firmly to the
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{91} David McCullough, \textit{Truman} (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992) p. 486
internationalist tradition and in doing so, he expounded a decidedly Wilsonian philosophy and rationale.92

The Wilsonian tradition deplores conflict and seeks to prevent war through the use of international institutions. The Korean War was fought under the auspices of the United Nations and the first example of a major collective action approach to the defence of a country that had been invaded. The United Nations security resolution that committed to the defence of South Korea says:

Having noted from the appeal from the Republic of Korea to the United Nations for immediate and effective steps to secure peace and security. Recommends that the Members of the United Nations furnish assistance to the Republic of Korea as may be necessary to repel the armed attack and to restore international peace and security in the area.93

This resolution asks the members of the UN to restore peace and security, and is an example of a collective security response by the United Nations, a subsequent resolution proposes that:

All Members providing military forces and other assistance pursuant to the aforesaid Security Council resolutions make such forces and other assistance available to a unified command under the United States of America.94

This would be an operation where the United States would lead the forces of the United Nations in a collective security operation. Mead argues that Wilsonians are willing to make war on states they see as violating another nation’s sovereignty with an armed attack. In

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92 Pierce, Woodrow Wilson and Harry Truman p. 128
Chapter Four: The Korean War

Mead’s words they will make ‘war against states that make war on the international order.’

The collective security element of this conflict is discussed in a memorandum on Truman’s conversations with senior staff on June 26th 1950:

Mr Acheson said that the Security Council would meet tomorrow afternoon and that the Department had prepared a further resolution for adoption. Our reports were that we would now get full support. He noted that even the Swedes were now supporting us.

Sweden’s support as an officially neutral country adds to the evidence suggesting this is a conflict from the broader Wilsonian ideals of collective self-defence, and not just one fought to simply further American interest. This is a line of thinking that Truman himself had argued before the crisis in his 1947 State of the Union address: ‘we have a higher duty and a greater responsibility than the attainment of our own national security. Our goal is collective security for all mankind.’ As we can see in Korea Truman acts on this to defend South Korea and his principle of collective security. In further correspondence with Truman we see more evidence that the administration was thinking of this conflict in terms of a collective security approach. Clark Clifford, an advisor and confidante of Truman, wrote in June 1950:

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95 Mead, *Special Providence* p. 163
I think every effort should be made to avoid the appearance that this is a contest between two nations but it should be made to appear what it is, i.e. a contest between one aggressor nation and the rest of the peace-loving world.\(^98\)

The concept that aggressor nations should be dealt with by the international system in unison is the clearly Wilsonian idea- that collective security is a real force that will overturn military aggression. The State Department’s own overview of the situation highlighted the role of the United Nations:

> We immediately asked our United Nations representative in New York to contact the Secretary-General, informing him that we view the North Korean aggression as a threat to the peace and asking him to call the Security Council into special session to consider the Korean situation.\(^99\)

Wilsonians had always envisioned an international body that had the teeth to enforce the will of the international community against aggression. The State Department’s overview furthers the evidence that the United Nations’ own organisations considered this a case of aggression, ‘UNCOK drew the Secretary-General’s attention to the fact the situation was assuming the character of a full scale war which might endanger the maintenance of international peace and security.’\(^100\) Dean Acheson clearly believed that the United Nations credibility as a collective security organisation was an important part of the operations in Korea, when he writes to Paul Nitze, Director of Policy Planning, ‘It seems too abstruse to


\(^{100}\) Ibid
ask the country to sacrifice men and money to retake Korea to support the UN, and let it slip away by default.'

When examining the role of collective security as part of the Wilsonian doctrine one can look to the Korean conflict as an example of collective action in the defence of a small nation. Even though the United States provided much of the military power behind the United Nations effort the war was still fought by a multinational taskforce. This conflict can appear to differ from the classical Wilsonian approach as the United Nations was enabled to act by the absence of the Soviet Union from the Security Council. Although this end run around the processes of the United Nations is not entirely within the Wilsonian creed it is clear that Wilsonian style collective security was primarily to function within a system of democratic states. It was not intended to deal with the existence of a revisionist great power that was opposed to the Wilsonian precepts of liberal capitalist democracy. As such the absence of the Soviet Union can be seen as reaffirming the Wilsonian belief that non-democratic states are the cause of conflict within the international system because collective action could not have functioned when the Soviet Union was removed. George Kennan in his long telegram suggests that the Soviets do not have the best of intentions when they joined the United Nations ‘Russians will participate officially in international


102 In protest over that the Republic of China (Taiwan) representing China on the Security Council rather than the communist government of the People’s Republic of China.

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organizations where they see opportunity of extending Soviet power or of inhibiting or diluting power of others.\textsuperscript{104}

Even though this conflict should primarily be considered an example of the collective security element of the Wilsonian approach it there was also an element of democracy promotion in the conflict. The Truman administration clearly thought that the conflict was part of some greater plot organized by the Soviet Union. In this light the Korean conflict can be viewed as part of a wider move to protect the non-communist world from communist expansion. In his statement on Korea ‘the attack upon Korea makes it plain beyond all doubt that communism has passed beyond the use of subversion to conquer independent nations and will now use armed invasion and war.’\textsuperscript{105} In the same announcement Truman lays out plans to shore up anti-communist forces from the invasion of Formosa, and the Nationalist forces from invading the main land, as well as strengthening forces in the Philippines and assisting the French in Indochina.

The South Korean Minister of Foreign Affairs wrote to thank the United States for its efforts in Korea, saying ‘the Government and people of Korea feel sure, and I know you do, that now is the time and Korea is the place to demonstrate to the world once and for all that democracy is the only way of peaceful life.’\textsuperscript{106} The emphasis that the South Korean government put on the role of defence of democracy played in this intervention is important in supporting the argument that the Wilsonian School is more than just camouflage for American national interest, but is an active force that contributes to the

\textsuperscript{104} Kennan, \textit{The long Telegram} p. 9
\textsuperscript{105} Harry S. Truman, \textit{Public Papers of the President of the United States} Vol January 1\textsuperscript{st}-December 31\textsuperscript{st} 1950, (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1965) p. 492
\textsuperscript{106} Niles W. Bond, ‘Niles W. Bond to Eben Ayers, With Attached Telegram, July 14, 1950’, \textit{Truman Library and Museum}, last accessed May 22\textsuperscript{nd} 2014 available at: http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/korea/large/documents/pdfs/ki-17-6.pdf#zoom=100
decision to intervene. One of the key criticisms that are levelled at the Wilsonian motivations for an American intervention in Korea is one of a lack of consistence. If the Truman administration was committed to the defeat of communism, why did it not intervene militarily to prevent the Soviet takeover in Eastern Europe? This would have been a massive military operation that would require total war against the Soviet Union. The Truman administration was not one of zealous ideologues that would proceed with their mission independent of the practical realities. In fact NSC 68 suggests that the Soviet Union would have sufficient strength by 1950 to ‘overrun Western Europe.’ Pierce argues that:

> Although believing in the special mission of the United States as fervently as did Wilson, Truman was much more willing to recognise instances where the United States could not interfere in the affairs of others.\(^{108}\)

Quinn argues that Truman believed that ‘the Soviet sphere might exist in practice, but it should be opposed in principle by the United States.’\(^{109}\) Thus when the North Korean armies cross the 38\(^{th}\) parallel in 1950 there was a chance to oppose the Soviet Block militarily whilst containing the war to the Korean peninsula.

> A war in Eastern Europe would not serve Truman’s ideological ends; in fact to Truman the actions of the Soviets highlighted the difference between the United States’ view of the world and that of their Soviet opponents. The United States had bases in other countries by invitation.\(^{110}\) Truman would follow a policy of living up to the commitments made during Roosevelt’s presidency even if he thought these agreements were a mistake.

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107 NSC 68 p. 17
108 Pierce, *Woodrow Wilson and Harry Truman* p. 155
109 Quinn, *National Ideology from the Founders to the Bush Doctrine* p. 125
110 The clear exception here is West Germany and Japan, although this thesis contends that there are enough mitigating circumstances given the events of World War Two for this not to be seen as an inconsistency. Especially as both nations later invite the U.S. to establish bases once they are returned to self-rule.
Conclusion

We have reviewed several key explanations for this conflict. There are clearly strong strategic reasons for the United States to intervene in the Korean conflict. Allowing the communist block to expand without opposition could have undermined the American position in Europe and Japan. Allowing an expansionist power to go unchecked in the region would encourage the communist block to push at the boundaries of American resolve. The need to push back against provocation was a strong one whilst the United States was involved in a global conflict in which there were many connected events. The revisionist approach gives a more economically founded explanation for the conflict showing that the United States had a vested interest in maintain open markets for its produce.

It is the Wilsonian School however that gives us an important insight to understand this conflict; the expansionist nature of North Korea and the dangers this poses to international peace are brought to the fore using the Wilsonian lens. The lessons of Munich, when perceived this way, are not that Hitler gained too much power, but that he was encouraged by the lack of a determined international effort to stop his expansionist agenda. It is Wilsonian factors that support the application of a collective security approach to prevent a repeat of this situation. The Wilsonian School makes the argument that non-democratic states are by their nature expansionist and aggressive but that a strong international response can deter this aggression. North Korea’s actions were ones that were clearly in opposition to Wilsonian ideals. The economic argument is not an unimportant one but it is important to understand that to the Wilsonian School a command economy, such as the one that North Korea would impose upon the south, would be used to suppress the very freedoms that Wilsonians held most dear. South Korea may not have been a model
democracy at the time of the invasion but North Korea certainly was not. Further, these events are contiguous with the United States’ attempts to establish stable democracies in the defeated Axis states. If the United States was truly committed to the success of these projects it would need to prove to Japan and West Germany that the path they were on would provide them with prosperity and security. This belief that democracy will be beneficial to every state and to the international system as a whole is a key pillar of the Wilsonian School. Wilsonianism also promotes the use of collective security as a method for dealing with the problems of aggression, conducted by non-democratic states. This conflict is an important demonstration of how both these pillars are present in this conflict.

The Korean conflict is a unique opportunity for those that support the Wilsonian School to achieve their objectives whilst minimising the risks of a global conflict with the Soviet Union - an opportunity it did not have during the Soviet takeover of the Eastern Bloc countries and missed in the Chinese Civil War. This chapter has shown that the Korean War serves as an important example of the collective security doctrine that is a fundamental part of the Wilsonian School. There is strong evidence that the United States supported the role of the United Nations in this conflict as part of a genuine commitment to the organisation’s role as a collective security body. Although in this case the democracy promotion pillar of the Wilsonian School is less prevalent, it remains a consideration for the president. As such we should consider Wilsonian factors an important part of this conflict and its influences a real consideration in the motivation for the United States to go to war.
Chapter Five: The Gulf War

Introduction

This chapter will discuss the final case study of this thesis, the First Gulf War (1990-1). In the years since the successful liberation of Kuwait there has been much debate over the handling of the crisis, both critical and supportive of President George H. W. Bush. This chapter will show that there are important Wilsonian factors that contribute to the American decision to go to war. The Wilsonian approach allows us to understand President Bush’s need to set an example and establish that the post-Cold War world would be one where collective security would work as the Wilsonians intended. In this new system the United States would lead the United Nations in collective action to deter authoritarian states from aggression.

With the First Gulf War we enter the final phase of American Power addressed in this thesis, that of unipolarity. Although the Soviet Union was still in existence at this time, its economic problems at home and the dissolution of its empire in Eastern Europe had by 1990 made it clear that the Cold War was over. The Soviet Union remained important on the international stage but was no longer a serious great power competitor to the United States. For the first time in modern history one nation stood as great power with no

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obvious peer competitor.³ This, coupled with the ostensible success of American ideology, would lead to the coining of the term American hyperpower later in the decade.⁴ It was apparent to the administration of George H.W. Bush that they would be setting the tone for the international relations in the post-Cold War World.⁵

In the following chapter this thesis will argue that the collective security pillar of the Wilsonian framework gives us a better understanding of this conflict and that President George H.W. Bush believed that, if the United States could act as a guarantor of the New World Order⁶, then there could be a shift in the way nations conducted their international relations and that this shift would be along Wilsonian lines. With the end of the Cold War the United States is presented with an opportunity, much like the ones that had existed in 1918 and 1945, to reshape how nations would relate to each other and to promote the international norms of liberal capitalism and democracy.⁷ Wilsonians had been

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⁴ This term is famously used by French Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine, ‘Speech to the Association France-Ameriques 1999’, New York Times Website, last accessed August 14th 2013 available at: http://www.nytimes.com/1999/02/05/news/05ihtfrance.t_0.html?module=Search&mabReward=relbias%3Aw.


disappointed on both previous occasions,\(^8\) because the international institutions they had inspired had previously been hamstrung by their non-democratic members.\(^9\) Thus the importance of this conflict as an example of a United Nations-led response is best understood using the Wilsonian framework.

Operations in the Middle East would create their own set of difficulties for the administration. For military action to be viable, American forces needed a land base from which to operate in the Middle East—namely bases in Saudi Arabia. In addition the U.S. needed overflight rights from many N.A.T.O. countries and the co-operation of the Soviet Union both on the United Nations Security Council, so that it did not veto any resolution authorizing America to act and undermine the response as a U.N. centric operation. It was also important that the U.S.S.R. did not give any aid to Iraq. White House Chief of Staff John Sununu made it clear that ‘Saddam no longer has the Soviets as a friend.’\(^10\)

This chapter will begin by discussing the current debate surrounding the First Gulf War. It will then go on to show how revisiting this conflict using the Wilsonian framework can add to our understanding. The third section will discuss what Wilsonianism adds to the existing debate.

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\(^8\) And unfortunately would be again as the post-Cold War world took shape.
Chapter Five: The Gulf War

The Debate

This section will deal with the contemporary debate surrounding the causes of the American decision to liberate Kuwait in 1991. This section will begin with the discussion of the strategic interest of the United States then go on to discuss economic considerations at work in America’s decision to intervene.

The first debate this we will address is how the domination of Kuwait by Iraq would give Saddam Hussein’s Iraq control of a significant proportion of the world’s oil supply. This would have given Iraq a significant influence on the price of oil and its availability. Consequently this would have adversely affected the United States’ position as the dominant global power because oil contributed significantly to the health of the American economy.¹¹ Allowing Iraq to control of these reserves would give it the power to influence American policy and would significantly weaken the global U.S. power structure.¹² Richard N. Haass, a member of both the George H.W. Bush and George W. Bush administrations, describes this conflict as representing a more traditional approach to American foreign policy. Often described as realist, he argues that the:

… interests at stake-preventing hostile domination of the lion’s share of the world’s oil, setting a constructive precedent for the era of international relations just dawning in the wake of the Cold War—were truly vital, and neither diplomacy nor


sanctions (both of which were tried) nor anything else other than resorting to force to safeguard them.\textsuperscript{13}

The strategic necessity of a secure oil supply has been the driving realist argument to explain the decisions to go to war in Iraq in 1991. An extract from a meeting of the NSC meeting on August 6th 1990 shows that the effect on oil was an important factor to be discussed by Richard Darman from the Office of Budget Management:

Darman: either way, you have to get this guy out of there

The President: Yes --- that is the bottom line

Director Darman: The bottom line is that Saddam with Kuwait is a long term problem

General Scowcroft: That is the reason for the president’s policy

The President: Darman is making a point I agree with, that all will not be tranquil until Saddam Hussein is history.\textsuperscript{14}

The effect that the Iraqi government would have on control of world oil supply is reiterated: by Darman ‘he would be in control of world oil prices with Kuwait plus Iraq. Without a physical takeover, he will gradually do this if he is not undone.’\textsuperscript{15} The oil issue was clearly an important one; Iraq alone had reserves of one hundred thousand million barrels of oil (42 U.S. Gallons per barrel).


\textsuperscript{14} National Security Council, Minutes from NSC Meeting, August 6, 1990, on the Persian Gulf, (Washington DC: National Security Council, 1990) available at George Bush Presidential Library, Texas p. 4

\textsuperscript{15} National Security Council, Minutes from NSC meeting, August 3, 1990, on the Persian Gulf (Washington DC: National Security Council, 1990) available at George Bush Presidential Library p. 4
The Graph above shows the amount of proven reserves in millions of barrels of oil that Saddam would control in comparison to the United States oil reserves in 1990. As we can see, even if Saddam only controlled Iraq and Kuwait he would have access to billions of dollars in oil revenue. Haass argues that:

... the concern for oil was strategic i.e., that it be available in adequate amounts and at affordable prices (and free of political conditions) to fuel the American and global economy. The U.S. government was not motivated by the commercial interests of American oil companies.

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17 Ibid
18 Haass, War of Necessity, War of Choice p. xviii
And because of this:

... the United States had vital national interests at stake. A Saddam who controlled Kuwait would dominate the oil-rich Middle East, given the value of Kuwait’s oil and the likelihood that other Arab states would fear standing up to him lest they suffer Kuwait’s fate.  

The second strategic factor for the United States to consider is the balance of power in the region. Although Iraq was not likely to become a peer competitor to the United States on the global stage it was a threat to the regional balance of power and could become a regional hegemon. Defence Secretary Dick Cheney considered that the strategic situation would be unfavourable to the United States if Iraq were to retain control of Kuwait. He expressed his views at the NSC meeting held on August 3rd 1990:

He [Saddam] has clearly done what he has to do to dominate OPEC, the Gulf and the Arab world. He is 40 Kilometers [25 miles] from Saudi Arabia, and its oil production is only a couple of hundred kilometers away. If he doesn’t take it physically, with his new wealth he will still have an impact and will be able to acquire new weapons, including nuclear weapons. The problem will get worse not better.

Thus the invasion of Kuwait from a realist point of view presents several problems for the United States. First the increased wealth of Iraq as discussed above would allow her to build an even more powerful military than she already possessed. Iraq in 1990 was in possession of the world’s fourth largest standing army at ‘900,000 men, 63 divisions, over 5,700 tanks.’ Not only did this pose a significant threat to other gulf states and to Israel but this that would increase should Saddam be able to convert his oil revenues into greater military power. Further if the other Gulf states thought that the United States would not act in the

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19 Ibid p. 112
20 National Security Council, Minutes from NSC meeting, August 3 p. 3-4
21 National Security Council, Minutes from NSC Meeting, August 4 p. 2
Chapter Five: The Gulf War

region then they would be forced to band wagon with Iraq as there would be no regional
colalition that could balance against it.\(^{22}\) This would make Iraq a significant regional player
with the ability to exert global influence on world oil supplies. Returning to Figure 1 it can be
shown that the volume of oil that Saddam would control either directly or through
intimidation would be significant. From a realist perspective it is imperative that this not be
allowed to transpire.

This is in line with neo-realist thinking as Mearsheimer predicts that ‘if the local great
powers cannot contain the threat, however, the distant hegemon would move in and
balance against it.’\(^{23}\) Given the decline of the Soviet Union and the weakening of its global
presence the only distant hegemon that could balance against Iraq was the United States.\(^{24}\)
Beyond the immediate need to balance the Iraqi threat, this invasion presented the
opportunity for the United States to permanently damage Iraq’s ability to threaten the
region. Returning to Mearsheimer:

... although its main goal would be containment, the distant hegemon would also
look for opportunity to undermine the threat and re-establish a rough balance of
power in the region.\(^{25}\)

The third factor this chapter will address is the strategic opportunity that presented
itself with Saddam’s decision to go to war. Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait provided such an
opportunity. Couched in the language of Munich the United States would be in a unique

\(^{22}\) For discussions on balancing in general see Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*.

\(^{23}\) Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* p. 141

\(^{24}\) David Howard Goldberg and Paul Marantz, *The Decline of the Soviet Union and the Transformation of the
Collapsed in the Soviet Union?’, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 28, No. 45 (Nov. 6, 1993), pp. 2443-244,
David Satter, *Age of Delirium: The Decline and Fall of the Soviet Union*, (New Haven : Yale University Press,
2001).

\(^{25}\) Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* p. 141
position to destroy Saddam’s military power whilst it was acting in defence of international law. Further consideration should also be given to the timing; the Soviet Union was in a weak position and would be unable to support Iraq even if it was advantageous to do so, especially in light of the strategic shifts in Europe and the economic problems the Soviets were facing. The argument that the United States acted to restore balance in the region and prevent Iraq becoming a regional power is given further credence by the decision of the Bush administration to stop without removing Saddam from power. The swift and total military defeat of the Iraqi forces in the field had removed the threat Saddam posed because he no longer had the military power to threaten the region, but he had been left with enough military force to retain control in Iraq and therefore not leave a power vacuum that would allow another power such as Iran to become a further threat to regional security and become a potential hegemon.

Finally, the successful coalition building that had gone before the conflict had also managed to defer a lot of the costs the United States would incur during the operation. Many of the troops came from allied nations such as the United Kingdom and France, with countries that were unable to deploy troops directly for political reasons such as Japan, providing financial aid to the operation. The president references Japan in his conversations to Prime Minister Hawke of Australia ‘they can pitch in one way or another. They may be limited in any defensive capability but they have a lot of money.’

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27 The White House, Telcon with Bob Hawke, Prime Minister of Australia on August 9, 1990, (Oval Office: Memorandum of Telephone Conversation, 1990) available at George Bush Presidential Library, Texas. p. 3
Further, the clear cut aggression presented by Saddam would give the United States a large amount of international support and the president, who had a ‘public approval ratings in the 80 per cent range,’\textsuperscript{28} would have far more domestic support than he would have had if the decision had been made to attack Iraq and remove the threat to regional balance. Also, the invasion of Kuwait presented a clear and present danger to Saudi Arabia, which would be needed as a land base for the invasion of Iraq.\textsuperscript{29} As such, the threat Saddam presented would also spur the Saudi royal family into allowing American troops to deploy into Saudi Arabia.\textsuperscript{30} This was previously difficult as much of the public opinion in Saudi Arabia, was against the deployment of non-Muslim troops into the country that contained Islam’s holiest sites. Without the external threat of Saddam it seems unlikely the Saudis would have taken the potential domestic risks.\textsuperscript{31} Even with the threat, it was difficult to persuade the King of Saudi Arabia to oppose Iraq and not work out a deal with Saddam. As President Bush says:

King Fahd’s hesitation rang alarm bells in my head. I began to worry that the Saudis might be considering compromise, that they might accept the new status quo on their northern border if there were guarantees from Iraq...in these early hours of the crisis, with so much going on, I had to wonder if, under pressure, they might be inclined to strike some kind of behind-the-scenes arrangement with Saddam.\textsuperscript{32}

\textsuperscript{28} Larry Berman and Bruce W. Jentleson, ‘Bush and the Post-Cold War World.’ In \textit{The Bush Presidency: First Appraisals}, by S. J. Rockman, Bert A Rockman and Colin Campbell (eds), (New Jersey: Chatham House, 1991.) p. 118
\textsuperscript{29} For discussions of the stopping power of water see: John J Mearsheimer, \textit{The Tragedy of Great Power Politics}, (New York: Norton, 2001)
\textsuperscript{31} One of those upset by the presence of U.S. troops was Osama Bin Laden see ‘Declaration of War against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Places.’ \textit{PBS website} [Translation] last accesses April 3\textsuperscript{rd} 2014 available at: http://www.pbs.org/newshour/updates/military/july-dec96/fatwa_1996.html
\textsuperscript{32} Bush and Scowcroft, \textit{A World Transformed}, p. 321
Chapter Five: The Gulf War

This is an example of the type of bandwagoning that Mearsheimer predicts a nation will attempt if it believes it would be too costly to balance against the potential hegemon. It is clear that the president needed to reassure the Saudis that he intended to balance against Iraq before they would risk a potential conflict.

The final strategic argument this chapter discusses is the retention of the Amir of Kuwait after its liberation. It is clear from the outset of the conflict that the president was determined to see the restoration of the Amir of Kuwait and not hold elections in to ensure a democratic regime returned to power. This is evidenced in the conversations between the president and King Fahd of Saudi Arabia:

King Fahad: First, the only solution must involve the return of Amir to Kuwait

The President: I am glad to hear you say that. We’re for you and will stand with you on that as the only solution. That’s good thinking.\textsuperscript{33}

An argument that reinforces the view that the United States was acting for strategic reasons is that the president viewed the only solution as the restoration of the Amir. There is no broaching of elections or to any other form of government. This suggests to those who support the realist interpretation of events that the Bush administration was not devoted to a greater ideology of democratization of the Middle East but more focused on the realist precepts of considering a nation’s internal political structure as less important in how it acts internationally than democratic peace theory would posit. As such the Bush administration was happy to return a friendly and hopefully grateful monarchy to power as long as it provided stability in the oil supply and provide a reliable ally in containing Iraq once the current conflict was over.

\textsuperscript{33} The White House, \textit{Telcon with King Fahd of Saudi Arabia August 4, 1990} (Camp David: Memorandum of Telephone Conversation, 1990) p. 2
Chapter Five: The Gulf War

The arguments above clearly demonstrate that there were strong strategic arguments for the United States to act in defence of Kuwait. This chapter will demonstrate however that we can expand our understanding of these events if we revisit them through a Wilsonian framework. As we can see there are some important strategic factors to consider within the debate over this conflict. Below we will discuss the economic factors that have been suggested for this conflict.

The role that economic factors play in this conflict is also important in the discussion; oil is of vital importance to both the United States and world economy. Any one country controlling too greater amount of world supply could force up prices as well as reducing the competition within the international oil markets, and lead to a recession in the United States. The effects of the invasion were discussed by the National Security Council. Secretary Brady said:

The financial markets are down badly. The price of oil is rising. The effect of petroleum and home heating oil price increase is already .5% in the CPI, or .6-.7% of GNP. This would bring our growth down to zero. It would also have a big effect on our import bill.\[36\]

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This was the effect from the invasion and the threat of oil supplies being cut. If Saddam permanently controlled these supplies he would be able to use the leverage this gave him to extract demands from the West and artificially increase prices.


**Figure 2**

As we can see, from the above graph Iraq would control 16% of the world’s proven reserves. As we can see the economic effects of the invasion of Kuwait were significant the Economic report of the president in 1991 says:

In the second half of 1990 the world economy was hit with sudden oil price increase reminiscent of 1970’s. From an average of about $17a barrel in June 1990 the price of oil rose to an average of $36 in October, before declining in November and December and again in January 1991. This oil price shock by the invasion of Kuwait, and the U.S.-led response to this act of aggression averted an even larger and longer lasting oil price shock.

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38 Ibid


184
It is clear that the invasion had serious consequences for the American economy. Robert Lieber argues:

... the temporary run-up of prices proved costly in terms of inflation and in tipping a weakening American economy into a serious recession. Moreover, one lesson of the, 1973-74 and 1979-80 oil shocks is that markets often over-shoot, and that inelasticities of both supply and demand for energy can make the adjustment process long and very costly.\(^{40}\)

If we compare the total amount of proven reserves in the world in 1990 compared to the total possessed by Iraq and Kuwait, (Figure 2) we can see that Iraq in possession of Kuwait would be in a position to influence world oil prices to an unacceptable extent.\(^ {41}\) Iraq would also be in a position to extract demands from the international community lest it significantly cut oil production and force the price of oil to sky rocket and damage the world’s major economies. If the objective was to prevent long-term threats to the oil supply and bring down oil prices then leaving Saddam in power was clearly not the best course of action.

If the United States was concerned about Iraq controlling such a large share of the world’s oil reserves and using its monopoly to force up oil prices then it should be equally concerned about the influence of Saudi Arabia. As Fuller and Lesser argue that America has tolerated the power Saudi Arabia has over oil production which ‘already possess monopoly-

like control over production and pricing.\footnote{Robert J Liber ‘Oil and Power after the Gulf War’ International Security, Volume 17, Number 1, Summer 1992 p. 169} Further if the motivations were purely economic we also need to factor in the costs of actually removing Saddam from Iraq, although international financial support was forthcoming for Operation Desert Storm. Fuller and Lesser writing in 1997 calculated that the long term costs of containment:

... the Pentagon pays out between $30 billion and $60 billion a year for defense of the Gulf (depending on how you cost it), a formidable sum for protecting the import into the United States of some $30 billion worth of oil.\footnote{Ian O. Lesser and Graham E. Fuller ‘Persian Gulf Myths’ Foreign Affairs 76 No. 3 (May 1997) p. 43}

If the United States was driven by economic motivations, then European countries and Japan would be even more driven to act as they received far more of their oil imports from the Middle East. According to the United States Energy Information Agency ‘the Asia-Pacific region now relies on the Middle East for almost 90 per cent of its imports’\footnote{United States Energy Information Agency, ‘Energy Information’, United States Energy Information Agency Website accessed May 11th 2011 available at: http://www.eia.gov/} yet powers from these regions are not the primary offshore balancers in the region. The United States is of course more capable of the role, but if economics was the overriding factor then other nations more economically dependent on the region would logically want to secure it for themselves.

In contrast however the United Nations sanctions had embargoed the sales of both Iraqi oil and Kuwaiti oil on the international market.\footnote{United Nations Security Council, ‘United Nations Security Council Resolution 661, United Nations’ Website, last accessed August 26th 2013 available at: http://www.un.org/docs/scres/1990/scres90.html.} As a consequence, the oil of these countries was removed from the world oil supply. By decreasing the supply available, the price would inevitably increase. This effect was magnified by the threat of conflict with
Saudi Arabia, as the threat of a further reduction in oil production would have led to a significant shortfall in the world oils supply and driven the price up as markets predicted scarcity.

The shortfall from the Iraq/Kuwait embargo was going to continue as long as Iraq was occupying Kuwait. Sanctions would take a long time to work, thus it would be logical to remove the Iraqi forces from Kuwait to return the supply to the world market. There was also concern among the NSC that the longer the embargo went on the more likely countries were to subvert the embargo in order to gain access to cheaper Iraqi oil, as this conversation between Secretary of State James Baker and Secretary of the Treasury Nicholas Brady shows:

Secretary Baker: We also need to discuss cheating. The Central Bank of Jordan is allowing Iraq to use Jordanian accounts. We called in the Jordanian ambassador and warned him.

Secretary Brady: I agree. Jordan is our biggest problem.

Secretary Baker: Also, Mark Rich is offering storage for Iraqi crude with the help of Swiss banks.

The President: Now, with international law on our side, we should lean on them.

General Scowcroft: We also ought to think about publicizing what they are doing.

Director Darman: With time, cheating will go up. If things work, the value of cheating will go up. Unless the Saudis increase production, the effect on us will be recession. The SPR is not a perfect substitute, as it is a depletable resource. In fact, depleting the SPR will increase prices given the influence of market expectations. Democracies and market-orientated economies are less prepared to wage this kind of battle than
non-market economies, especially given that modern communications will affect us more than it will them.\textsuperscript{46}

This conversation shows that the NSC was concerned about the effects of the oil embargo on the price of oil and how it would have difficulties in forcing Saddam out of Kuwait with sanctions alone. It also shows the difficulties of enforcing the oil embargo for a long period of time as countries see the benefits of subverting the embargo. It would therefore be rational to move quickly against Iraq so as to keep momentum going and prevent cracks in the international response from appearing and allowing Saddam to exploit these cracks to maintain his control of Kuwait.

The economic argument fails to explain several key events of the crisis. A purely economic motivation would not explain the United States failing to push on into Iraq and removing Saddam from power. By leaving him in power the United Nations was obliged to continue its embargo on oil preventing it returning to the world market.

\textit{Wilsonian Factors}

Having discussed the debates surrounding this conflict, this section will discuss the Wilsonian aspects of this conflict. The preceding section has presented the strategic arguments for the American decision to fight in 1991. It is important to address why we need further explanations than those presented by the realist case. This section will discuss how we can revisit the events of 1991 using the Wilsonian framework to show how these factors are an important influence on the decision to go to war. Although the realist argument is a strong one and has much merit, Hybel and Kaufman argue that ‘one of its

\textsuperscript{46} National Security Council, \textit{Minutes from NSC Meeting, August 6} p. 3
fundamental deficiencies lies in its inability to account for disparities in response by
different leaders within the same state to similar international problems.’ This position is
further discussed by Yetiv who argues that:

... it is hardly axiomatic that the United States was destined to confront Iraq. History
is seductive in this sense. In retrospect, events seem so logical that we sometimes
assume that they had to happen that way, or could not have happened in numerous
other ways.

The first aspect the Wilsonian School adds to the debate is a better understanding of
President Bush’s approach to the conflict. The President had articulated views in line with
the Wilsonian School’s approach- ‘I did know for sure that the aggression had to be stopped,
and Kuwait’s sovereignty restored.’ The sovereignty of nations is one of the core parts of
the Wilsonian framework; if nations are allowed to invade each other with no comeuppance
from the international community then the entire premise of Wilsonian collective security is
for naught. The president found this invasion truly objectionable, as he recalls ‘at some
point it came through to me that this was not a matter of shades of grey, or of trying to see
the other side’s point of view. It was good versus evil, right versus wrong.’

The Wilsonian School echoes in these words, as the need to right an obvious wrong
are hallmarks of this school. The minutes of the National Security Council of August 5th 1990
show that both military and non-military options are discussed. ‘My sense is that Iraq does
not believe we will act. Saddam is riding an emotional high. Maybe if he sees it is not

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47 Alex Roberto Hybel, Justin Matthew Kaufman, The Bush Administrations and Saddam Hussein: Deciding on
49 Bush and Scowcroft, A World Transformed p. 315
50 Ibid p. 375
business as usual he will change.\textsuperscript{51} This response is in line with the Wilsonian framework, not a rush to war nor is war the first choice but a clear understanding that if the international order is not restored then the United States must respond. At the same meeting General Colin Powell discussed the military options available and time scales involved in both an operation to defend Saudi Arabia from further aggression and the forces necessary to liberate Kuwait should the diplomatic pressure fail.\textsuperscript{52}

The second element the Wilsonian School adds to this conflict is an understanding of the importance that intervention in the Persian Gulf was driven by George H. W. Bush’s belief that a new American-led internationalism would replace the Cold War adversarial system. In the future aggressive states would be met with collective action lead by the United States. The New World Order is a term that lacks clear definition, but it represents a policy of American-led internationalism based around the co-operation of nation states. This was an attempt to move to a more collective form of security:

In the minds of key leaders worldwide, collective security stood at the center of the new world order. In this sense, it was vital to prospects for creating a more stable, predictable, safe world.\textsuperscript{53} Engel argues that with regards to the Bush presidency it has been difficult to ‘label grand articulations of strategy (“containment”, “a world safe for democracy”, “axis of evil”)\textsuperscript{54} and that without a catchphrase it has to some appeared that the elder Bush’s foreign policy had no clear direction or underling ideological basis but was simply crisis management. Indeed the most famous term in reference to Bush senior’s foreign policy

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{53}Steven Yrtiv, \textit{Persian Gulf Crisis}, (West Port: Greenwood, 1997) p. 94
\textsuperscript{54}Jeffrey A. Engel, ‘A Better World... But Don’t Get Carried Away: The Foreign Policy of George H.W. Bush Twenty Years On’ \textit{Diplomatic History} 34, No.1 (2010) p. 27
\end{footnotes}
was the New World Order. It has been said that the president did not articulate directly what he meant by a New World Order but we can see from his speeches that there were two underling concepts, that the post-Cold War world would be based on collective action, and that this order would be democratic with the United States *primus inter pares*.

In Chapter Four we discussed how the Wilsonian School approached the Cold War from the premise that democracy would inevitable triumph over its communist opponents if the Soviet Union was not permitted to expand. The end of the Cold War was seen a validation of this Wilsonian belief. In order to describe this new state of affairs President Bush coined the term New World Order, much as Wilsonians had seen the League of Nations as the entity that would deal with interstate conflicts and that democracy within states would lessen the conflict between states. In the minds of the Wilsonian supporters of the New World Order, the United Nations would finally be able to act in the way they had always hoped.\(^55\)

This is clearly a policy derived from the collective security pillar of the Wilsonian School. It is also clear that President Bush saw the United Nations and democratic norms as the foundation of this new order: ‘The world can therefore seize this opportunity to fulfil the long-held promise of a new world order-where brutality will go unrewarded, and aggression will meet collective resistance.'\(^56\) This theme of America leading the world in collective action, with the United Nations as the instrument through which this is achieved, is the pinnacle of this pillar of the Wilsonian school. President Bush shows his support for

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this approach in many of the speeches and interviews that the president makes regarding this issue. In the same address he articulates his view that:

Among the nations of the world, only the United States of America has both the moral standing and the means to back it up. We’re the only nation on this Earth that could assemble the forces of peace. This is the burden of leadership and the strength that has made America the beacon of freedom in a searching world.

This argument is supported by Engel, who argues that:

Bush believed it was American-led international resolve and America-led leadership of an international coalition of democracies that had secured the great victories of Bush’s own youth and that had set the stage for the free world’s triumph over communism. The grand challenges of his own post-Cold War world would, he believed, be best won in a similarly grand and international fashion.

The decision to get a resolution explicitly authorizing the use of force, rather than use of the collective self-defence provision of the United Nations charter, lends further credence to the notion of this American led internationalism. For this intervention Korea would be held up as a model for rallying the world to oppose Saddam Hussein. Richard Haass meeting with the president, suggests ‘we may be able to do something along the lines of the Korean War model of a U.S. led multi-national force.’ Smith argues that President Bush ‘showed his respect for the importance of international institutions. He involved the

58 George H.W. Bush, State of the Union Address (January 29, 1991)
59 Engel, ‘A Better World’ p. 11
Soviet Union, and so seemed to be paving the way for a later collective security agreement with Moscow. This position is supported by John Ballard who argues that:

Scowcroft was concerned that the other policymakers within the NSC were not seeing the bigger picture he felt that this first major intervention of the post-Cold War world had enormous ramifications, and in their discussions the president agreed with him.

Miller and Yetiv argue that the Gulf crisis itself was the catalyst for Bush’s vision of a New World Order and that the situation clarified the need for American-led internationalism in a way that had not been clear before:

The end of the cold war and the Gulf crisis contributed fundamentally to the development of the concept of the new world order. The end of the cold war created conditions that made a new world order possible in theory.

In their argument the ‘Gulf Crisis allowed the New World Order concept to be developed and executed. Indeed, prior to the crisis the notion of a new era was in the air, but it was ambiguous nascent and unproven.

When on August 2nd 1991 Iraqi forces invaded and quickly overran the country of Kuwait, important events were taking place in Europe. As a result, many in Washington at the beginning of the crisis were focused on German unification. These events are not unconnected; with the fall of the Berlin wall and the lifting of the Iron Curtain the Soviet

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62 Smith, America’s Mission p. 318
63 John Ballard, From Storm to Freedom p. 3
65 Miller and Yetiv, ‘The New World Order in Theory and Practice’ p. 57
Union was no longer in a position to rein in Saddam Hussein. Brands argues ‘the Soviets had
been Saddam’s sponsor and hence his potential watchdog. But the recent turmoil in the
Soviet Union had prevented their keeping the leash tight.’ The decline of the Soviet empire
in Eastern Europe and the decline in the Soviet Union could have triggered a unilateral
response to Saddam’s invasion. It was George H. W. Bush’s concept of an international
response that moulded the attempts to generate a collective international effort to resolve
the crisis. This approach is particularly important when we compare it to the Korean War
that was discussed in Chapter Five. Operations in Korea were only possible because of the
absence of the Soviet Union. In this conflict the international response was backed by the
U.S.S.R, as Amnon Kapeliouk argues:

... for the first time since the end of World War II, the Soviets and the Americans
were in the same camp. The traditional Soviet-American rivalry in the Middle East
brusquely seemed to disappear, and the two powers acted in concert, deciding to
work together to prevent any escalation in the regional conflicts hence- forth
considered as the principal source of danger for world peace.

The Wilsonian framework furthers our understanding of why this is an important
shift. Domestically the Soviet Union of 1990 was a long way from the Soviet Union of 1950.

An understanding of why these relations changed significantly can be found in the Wilsonian
schools’ approach to state relations. The Soviet Union at this time was undergoing a

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transformation to a more democratic form of government. As the domestic nature of the Soviet state changed so did the Wilsonian’s view of how disruptive a state it would be to international peace. Those that had supported the democracy promotion pillar of the Wilsonian school had long argued that it was non-democratic states who were the fundamental cause of conflict within the international system. The end of the Cold War and Soviet reforms seemed to validate these assumptions. At the Houston economic summit the G7 declaration announced:

We welcome the intention of the Soviet Union to move toward a democratic political system, as well as Soviet attempts to reform their economy along market principles. We commit ourselves to working with the Soviet Union to assist its efforts to create an open society, a pluralistic democracy, and a market-oriented economy. Such changes will enable the Soviet Union to fulfill its responsibilities in the community of nations founded on these principles. We are heartened by indications that a constructive dialogue is underway between the Soviet government and the Baltic states, and we urge all sides to continue this dialogue in a democratic spirit.70

With the Soviet Union no longer acting as an obstruction in the United Nations, Wilsonians could further the second pillar of the school and pursue a collective security approach. If we return to the concept of the New World Order, and its role in President Bush’s response to the crisis as a collective security response, there existed a need to ensure the Soviets were comfortable with the function of the system as this would be an important part in getting the system to work. President Bush says in conversation with President Gorbachev in June of 1991:

We seek a democratic, market-oriented Soviet Union, integrated into the world economy, having found a resolution of the problems between the center and the republics. The latter is essential for capital flows. We also seek cooperation on all global issues. I know your historical relations with Iraq and appreciate the bold decision you made on the Gulf.\textsuperscript{71}

It was important to the Bush administration that the response to the Gulf crisis could be used as a template for how an international crisis should be resolved. To this end the Bush Administration halted ground operations whilst significant assets of the Iraqi military were still intact. The United States had followed its mandate from the United Nations and not made the mistakes that it had during the Korean War of extending the mission to removing the aggressor from power. If the ‘United States wanted the Gulf crisis to set a precedent for collective action, it made sense to stay within the parameters of that mandate.’\textsuperscript{72} It was this desire to make internationalism under American leadership work, which was part of the decision not to try to remove Saddam, and as a result as Mead argues ‘Wilsonians could call it a war for international law, with the U.N. Security Council acting as Wilsonians has always hoped it would’\textsuperscript{73} Bush makes it clear when he announces the suspension of hostilities ‘No one country can claim this victory as its own. It was not only a victory for Kuwait but a victory for all the coalition partners. This is a victory for the United Nations, for all mankind, for the rule of law, and for what is right.’\textsuperscript{74}

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\textsuperscript{71} Department of State, ‘Memorandum of Conversation, Mikael Gorbachev July 17 1991’ Bush Presidential Library and Museum, last accessed June 6\textsuperscript{th} 2014. Available at: http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/pdfs/memcons_telcons/1991-06-17--Gorbachev.pdf
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\textsuperscript{72} Miller and Yetiv, ‘The New World Order in Theory and Practice’ p. 64
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\textsuperscript{73} Walter Russell Mead, Special Providence: American Foreign Policy and How it Changed the World (London: Taylor and Francis, 2002.) p. 269
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President Bush reiterates this position in a speech to the United Nations General assembly:

This is a new and different world. Not since 1945 have we seen the real possibility of using the United Nations as it was designed: as a center for international collective security. The changes in the Soviet Union have been critical to the emergence of a stronger United Nations. The U.S.-Soviet relationship is finally beyond containment and confrontation, and now we seek to fulfil the promise of mutually shared understanding. The long twilight struggle that for 45 years has divided Europe, our two nations, and much of the world has come to an end. Much has changed over the last 2 years. The Soviet Union has taken many dramatic and important steps to participate fully in the community of nations. And when the Soviet Union agreed with so many of us here in the United Nations to condemn the aggression of Iraq, there could be no doubt -- no doubt then -- that we had, indeed, put four decades of history behind us. We are hopeful that the machinery of the United Nations will no longer be frozen by the divisions that plagued us during the cold war, that at last -- long last -- we can build new bridges and tear down old walls, that at long last we will be able to build a new world based on an event for which we have all hoped: an end to the cold war.75

These comments above demonstrate both of the key pillars of the Wilsonian School. In this speech it is President Bush’s assertion that the change in the relationship between the superpowers is due to its change toward a more democratic form of government, a clearly Wilsonian explanation for the end to the confrontation. This speech also demonstrates the role of the Wilsonian approach in the President’s resolution of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and his support for a collective security, through the United Nations. For this Wilsonian vision to work successfully Bush would need to ensure that the great powers

of the post-Cold War world would co-operate. This was particularly important to the Permanent Five members of the United Nations Security Council. If the United Nations was to be the body to co-ordinate this post-Cold War it could not suffer from the deadlock it had experienced during the Cold War period. Thus through the Gulf Crisis we see the continual consultations with the Soviet Union despite its weakened state. It is further testament to George H.W Bush’s vision that the post-Cold War period would be one of consensus finding. If the president came out strongly against the invasion and the United Nations demanded Saddam withdraw his forces and subsequently the invasion became a *fait accompli* then it would be proven that the United Nation was no more capable of acting in the post-Cold War world than it had been in the Cold War. The Wilsonian framework will show why this contributed to America’s decision to intervene. Understanding that the core of Bush’s foreign policy and vision for the post-Cold War world was internationalism under American leadership is a critical part of understanding the American response to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. It is the Wilsonian framework that adds to the understanding of why this is important.

The fourth way the Wilsonian framework influenced the Bush administration in opting for conflict is the understanding of why the failures of the 1930s were seen as a warning and a guide to how the president should act. As was discussed in Chapter Four, the events of Munich would cast a long shadow over American foreign policy. It is important to remember that President Bush fought in World War Two, and was keen not to repeat the mistakes of the 1930’s. We can see from his use of language in his public addresses that this analogy to the behaviour of Hitler’s Germany was very much in the president’s mind. Demonstrated in President Bush’s description of the Iraqi advance ‘which stormed in
blitzkrieg fashion through Kuwait in a few short hours.\textsuperscript{76} The president goes beyond this however as he continues his address he shows that he believes that there has been both a change in international relations and that the world should learn from the 1930’s:

\begin{quote}
We succeeded in the struggle from freedom in Europe because we and our allies remain stalwart. Keeping the peace in the Middle East will require no less. We’re beginning a new era. This era can be full of promise, an age of freedom, a time of peace for all peoples. But if history teaches us anything, it is that we must resist aggression or it will destroy our freedoms. Appeasement does not work. As was the case in the 1930’s, we see in Saddam Hussein an aggressive dictator threatening his neighbors.\textsuperscript{77}
\end{quote}

Further, in his own recollections of the events the president comments that ‘I saw a direct analogy between what was occurring in Kuwait and what the Nazis had done in Poland.’\textsuperscript{78} The failure of the League of Nations descended directly from its inability to deal with nations flagrantly violating its rules. Bush, like Truman, was determined that these mistakes would not be repeated. Also like Truman, Bush took the lessons of the 1930’s to be that none of the Western powers was willing to take the lead in opposing Germany. Indeed the United States was not even a member of the League of Nations, but in this instance President Bush was the first President that could truly attempt a collective security response to an aggressive dictator.

The focus of the Bush administration’s response was on restoring Kuwait to the status quo ante-bellum, defeating Iraqi aggression and trying to limit the disruption to the United States economy. This is not to argue that the president was not interested in

\textsuperscript{76}George H. W. Bush, ‘Address on Iraq’s Invasion of Kuwait (August 8th 1990)’, Miller Center, last accessed August 28\textsuperscript{th} 2013 available at: http://millercenter.org/president/speeches/detail/5529
\textsuperscript{77}Ibid
\textsuperscript{78}Bush and Scowcroft, A World Transformed p. 375
democratic expansion but it is important to remember that the First Gulf War took place in a period of transition from a multipolar order to the unipolar of the post-Cold War period. The Cold War was over and the Soviet Union was drawing its last breaths. Engel argues that the end of the Cold War was ‘a validation of American values and policies.’ President Bush was not alone in his assumption that the tide of history was flowing towards democracy-many scholars, such as Francis Fukuyama, heralded the end of communism as a new phase in international relations where a democratic peace would replace the competitive international system, an argument the Wilsonian School had long made. This meant that there was little need for active regime change in non-democratic countries. Simply by waiting these regimes out the U.S would prevail much as it had done in the Cold War. Only if a nation upset the status quo, such as Iraq had, would America need to act. President Bush argued that:

I did not think we should impose democracy on Kuwaitis-rather; it was something that had to grow from within. We could not allow a dictator to be the one to alter their domestic political structure. Above all, we could not give Saddam any measure of political gain from the invasion. Had we insisted on imposing democracy as part of the restoration of sovereignty, Saddam could portray himself as a catalyst for Kuwaiti political reform.

Tony Smith agrees with this assessment, as he argues:

Democracy was not the issue; neither in Iraq nor in Kuwait could there be much hope of fostering so Western a style of government. Nevertheless, here was a challenge to regional stability in an area of special interest to the United States, so

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79 Engel, ‘A Better World’ p. 10
81 Bush and Scowcroft, A World Transformed, p. 376
that in acting decisively, Bush might give still more shape to what he now called a “new world order” to be crafted by American leadership.\(^{82}\)

Despite the long term failure of the New World Order, which goes beyond the scope of this chapter, the administration’s actions in Kuwait show an attempt to establish this order, through an insistence on the respect for national sovereignty as the basis of this order. This brought him in to conflict with the French Premier Mitterrand who said ‘I would not risk the death of one single French soldier if it was exclusively in order to restore an absolutist system.’\(^{83}\)

It may seem counter intuitive to suggest that the Wilsonian School would not wish to install democracy in the nation of Kuwait.\(^{84}\) This conflict demonstrates the ascendency of the collective security pillar in this conflict, ensuring that the United Nations would be able to act as the organisation to facilitate this collective security. As such it was important in gaining the support of regional powers for the action to return the Amir to power.

Although the democracy promotion pillar of Wilsonianism appears to have taken a back seat in this conflict we can also view this in the light of the successful approach to the Cold War. As we have discussed above, the events in Eastern Europe had presented a vindication of the Wilsonian School’s approach with evidence of the inevitability of the victory of democratic government of communism.\(^{85}\)

The President in a joint press conference with British Prime Minister John Major comments:


\(^{83}\) Bush and Scowcroft, A World Transformed p. 376

\(^{84}\) For a discussion of how different regimes come to democracy see: Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, Dictatorships and Double Standards: Rationalism and Reason in Politics (New York: Simon & Schuster Books, 1982)

Chapter Five: The Gulf War

What’s different is we are not facing one aggressive international Communist force; that's what's entirely different. Democracy is on the move in these various countries you talk about. I don't know that any one of them wants to now turn its back on democracy, and some of those who have not been particularly democratic are saying they are.\(^86\)

Supporters of Wilsonian ideals had waited over forty years for democracy to spread to Eastern Europe, it could bide it’s time for it to reach the Middle East. The Wilsonian approach is a patient one.

This willingness to allow democracy to spread at its own pace also shows a distinct difference from the neoconservative approach. Those that support the Wilsonian approach are far more sceptical over the efficacy of the concept of imposing democracy at the point of a bayonet.\(^87\) The above section shows that the Wilsonian School had a significant impact on the United States actions, and that the strategic and economic motivations do not, on their own, explain this conflict Wilsonianism is a powerful influence on the president’s decision and we must consider this influence to fully understand this conflict.

**What does Wilsonianism add to the debate?**

The Wilsonian School has contributed in numerous ways to improving our understanding of this conflict. Using this framework enhances the debate on the topic in a number of key


ways. This section will discuss how by adding these factors we can enhance this understanding.

The first is to consider how much agency the United States had in intervening in this conflict. Of all the wars discussed in this thesis, this war is perhaps the hardest to show that the United States had agency. The role of oil and its importance- both economic and strategic- is a powerful factor that could be considered a vital interest of the state. General Scowcroft himself says:

I was frankly appalled at the undertone of the discussion, which suggested resignation to the invasion and even adaptation to a fait accompli. There was a huge gap between those who saw what was happening as the major crisis of our time and those who treated it as the crisis du jour.\(^88\)

Even if we assume that Scowcroft is exaggerating slightly, it remains true that members of the United States government had considered no action. This suggests there must be some agency at work. As for the other criteria this thesis discussed in Chapter One, it was clear that the United States was not under attack nor was there an imminent threat of attack on American soil and there were clearly other options other to war. The United States could either allowing Iraq to occupy Kuwait, rely on diplomacy or adopt a policy of containment of Iraq.

The second way in which Wilsonianism adds to the debate is not to dismiss oil as a factor in the decision making process but to emphasise why it was important that Iraq not control Kuwaiti oil. The United States imports a considerable amount of its oil from foreign

\(^88\) Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*  p. 320
countries\textsuperscript{89} many of which are not democratic.\textsuperscript{90} The Wilsonian framework however contends that democratic states are not aggressively expansionist. If democratic states were to expand their control of world oil this would not be of concern to Wilsonians. The dictatorship in Iraq however, from the Wilsonian framework’s point of view, would be an irresponsible custodian of this oil. By revisiting the conflict through the Wilsonian framework we can see that as a dictatorship Iraq was going to turn its additional wealth into military power.\textsuperscript{91} Militaristic states will disrupt the international system as only ‘democracy guards against one of the most dangerous forms of misrepresentation and mis-governance: the domination of the state by a military elite. Such military states may, and frequently do, prefer war to peace.’\textsuperscript{92} In National Security Directive 45 Brent Scowcroft recognises the importance of oil and recommends that the United States ‘will support the individual and collective self-defense of friendly countries in the area’\textsuperscript{93} and in the same document he argues that this must be done ‘in concert with the international community through the United Nations and other fora’\textsuperscript{94}

The third important factor that Wilsonianism adds to the debate is that it emphasises the structure of the post-Cold War world. President Bush believed that through


\textsuperscript{92} Mead,\textit{ Special Providence}, p. 163


\textsuperscript{94} Ibid
example he could establish new norms of how nations would behave in international
relations. In a speech to the West Point Class of 1993, the president argues that:

... in the wake of the cold war, in a world where we are the only remaining
superpower, it is the role of the United States to marshal its moral and material
resources to promote a democratic peace. It is our responsibility; it is our
opportunity to lead. There is no one else. 95

Although Mead believed that ‘George H.W. Bush’s administration steered a largely
Hamiltonian course’ 96 the events of the Gulf War were a direct challenge to this perceived
order. In the previous section of this chapter the Wilsonian understanding of how the new
international system would be different to the old was discussed. This belief adds to our
understanding of the debate because the actions of Iraq were so much in contrast to the
expectations of the system. The Wilsonian School was ‘in the first flush of joy following the
collapse of European Communism believed that their deepest dreams were closer than ever
to realization.’ 97 The actions of Iraq are in such contrast to this approach that it emphasises
these elements of Iraq’s behaviour and highlighted that Iraq was not just challenging the
region but the New World Order in general. The Wilsonian contribution to understanding
the Gulf War is important; the United States had led the United Nations Security Council, in
responding in a collective way to the invasion of Kuwait. Like Wilson, George H.W. Bush
wanted to act inside a concert of democratic nations but would also act in tandem with
other regimes as long as they respected and abided by international law.

95 George H.W. Bush, ‘Remarks at the United States Military Academy in West Point’ Bush Library and Museum
last accessed 6th June 2014 available at:
http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public_papers.php?id=5156
96 Walter Russell Mead, ‘The Carter Syndrome’, Foreign Policy, last accessed August 30th 2013 available at:
http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2009/12/18/the_carter_syndrome
97 Mead, Special Providence p. 282
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It is important to remember that although this conflict was over in a relatively short period of time this was a major military operation. Even with the cooperation of its allies, the use of Saudi bases and the consent of the Soviet Union the military operation would be expensive and Iraq was not militarily weak, General Colin Powell, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, presented the difficulties to the National Security Council of reversing the military situation in Iraq:

This would be the NFL, not a scrimmage. It would mean a major confrontation. Most U.S. forces would have to be committed to sustain, not for just one or two days. He is a professional and a megalomaniac. But the ratio is weighted in his favor. They also are experienced from eight years of war.\textsuperscript{98}

The swift defeat of Iraq was not as obvious at the time as it may appear in hindsight. Brune argues that Iraq’s army ‘was considered at the time to be the world’s fourth largest army led by Soviet-manufactured tanks.’\textsuperscript{99} Thus the president was investing quite substantial political capital in supporting this operation. The Wilsonian School adds to our understanding of why George H.W. Bush chose to invest this capital. Not only did the president have to deal with the logistical difficulties but he also faced domestic opposition to military action.

Congressmen Jim Bates (Democrat California) wrote to the president with his concerns:

By making such a large commitment, you have put American prestige directly on the line. You have made the eventual withdrawal of American forces from the Gulf entirely dependent on unconditional Iraqi surrender of Kuwait. Weather there will be war or peace is a decision that now rests firmly with Saddam Hussein.\textsuperscript{100}

\textsuperscript{99} Lester Brune, United States and Two Gulf Wars Prelude and Aftermath (Piscataway: Gorgias Press, 2008) p. 20
\textsuperscript{100} Jim Bates, Letter to the President November 14, 1990 (Washington DC: Congress of the United States, House of Representatives, 1990)
The Wilsonian School adds to our understanding of why the president would go to such
effort to liberate a small country. It is the Wilsonian School that allows us to understand
why Iraq’s actions were so aberrant to the administration. Ninkovich argues that ‘because it
was no longer possible to imagine a world founded on principles superior to triumphant
liberal ideas, the only task remaining was to universalize liberal democracy throughout the
globe.’\textsuperscript{101} The Wilsonian lens allows an understanding of why this liberalization agenda is an
important one.

In conclusion we can see that the Bush administration was determined to change the
international order in the post-Cold War world to one more in line with that which the the
Wilsonian School had intended to in the aftermath of the First World War. There are clearly
important insights that revisiting the debate about this conflict can add to our
understanding of events.

Conclusion

In conclusion we can see that there is significant evidence that George H.W. Bush was
motivated by a desire to create a rules-based international system, where the United States
would lead the world in collective action against aggressors. In this New World Order the
United Nations would also take a central role in providing a collective security function. This
was in line with the principles of the Wilsonian framework that had always supported the
use of an international organisation to keep the peace.

\textsuperscript{101} Frank Ninkovich, \textit{The Wilsonian Century: U.S. Foreign Policy Since 1900 },(Chicago: Chicago University Press,
1999) p. 282
The Bush administration had hoped that in light of the Cold War ending the democratic norms of the West would become global democratic norms. This conflict can be seen as a way to show that those norms that included resolving your differences with other states through peaceful means and not through conflict would be enforced in the post-Cold War world.

Many have argued that this intended New World Order was nothing more than a cover for post-Cold War American hegemony and that if a New World Order was important then the subsequent Bush years would have seen a more concerted effort to establish this order. However the events of this period show great restraint by the United States on how it used its power, especially with the final collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, as well as the large humanitarian effort in Somalia in 1992.

This is not to dismiss the clear threat that Iraq presented to the region, which of course played a significant part in shaping the American response to the crisis. During the crisis the president went to great lengths to consult other world leaders and to attempt to find a non-military solution to Iraqi aggression. But at no point did the president consider that there would be any solution that left Iraq in position of Kuwait. By revisiting these events using the Wilsonian framework we can gain understanding of why the threat was resolved the way it was. Finally, the coalition was not an easy thing to hold together, with various internal tensions threatening to tear it apart. Thus if the United States had not responded as it did with the genuine threat of force, and acted when it did to forcibly remove Iraqi forces from Kuwait, then the consensus may have collapsed at which point the whole sanctions regime would have fallen apart and Iraq could reap the rewards of
aggression. It is the larger Wilsonian framework that helps us understand why the president was motivated to act.
Chapter Six: Conclusion

Introduction

This thesis has shown that Wilsonian factors have been overlooked in previous explanations and are an important part of understanding the conflicts that this thesis has addressed; the First World War, the War of 1812, the Korean War and the First Gulf War. This thesis has argued that the two key pillars of Wilsonianism, democracy promotion and collective security were an important and influencing factor in the decision to wage war and are an important component of the U.S. foreign policy debate. The influence of these factors must be acknowledged if we are to gain a more complete understanding of these conflicts.

This thesis has addressed the question of whether Wilsonian factors are an important consideration in the decision for the United States to enter these conflicts. In each of the case studies we can see that to that the two main pillars of Wilsonianism, are represented and contribute in a meaningful way to the debate over why the United States enters these conflicts. As part of this analysis this thesis has answered several subsidiary questions which provide us with further insight into these conflicts. In each of these case studies this thesis has discussed how we can gain a better understanding of these conflicts if we examine the role Wilsonian factors have played. In doing so it has shown that the democracy promotion pillar and the collective security pillar have both contributed in a meaningful way to the president’s decision to enter the wars discussed. In doing so it has shown that the Wilsonian factors discussed in each case study go beyond being a mere smoke screen but should be considered as genuinely contributing to the United States entering the conflict. Finally, having examined cases across the span of American history, this thesis has shown that these different aspects of Wilsonianism are present before
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Wilson came to the White House and are not dependent on the power the United States possess within the international system.

This chapter will begin by bringing together the arguments from the previous chapters to show that there is a consistent application of Wilsonian principles and they have played a key role in the thinking of American leaders since the beginning of the republic. Although the Wilsonian influence has been more acute in some presidents, and relegated to secondary considerations by others, it remains an important framework for our understanding of the reasons why America chose to wage war in the conflicts that these case studies discuss. The first section will address why Wilsonian factors give a more complete understanding of the conflict. This chapter will then address how these factors are important and more than a justification of American actions and the third section will discuss how these factors have existed before the presidency of Woodrow Wilson and are not dependent on American power. The next section will address key contributions that this thesis makes to the literature on the foreign policy of the United States.

The Main Arguments

In each of the case studies examined in this thesis there are Wilsonian factors that contributed in a meaningful way to the decision to enter the conflict. The main principles of Wilsonianism as laid out in Chapter One are that there are two key pillars of the Wilsonian School. One that argues that democracy is the best form of government and the United States should promote this form of government in other states. The other is that collective security is a viable way to prevent aggression in the international system and that international organizations can be used to deliver this approach.
The first conclusion this thesis has reached is that the Wilsonian framework is an important one that gives a more inclusive picture of why the United States chose to enter these wars. In each of the case studies there is clear evidence to suggest that there were elements of democracy promotion and collective security at work in the decision to go to war. These considerations are best explained using the Wilsonian framework - the Wilsonian School has a coherent and rational understanding to why the United States should support these concepts.

In Chapter Two this thesis discussed Woodrow Wilson’s vision of making the “World Safe for Democracy” and how his motivations were driven by the actions of Imperial Germany. The actions of the German government in its conduct of the First World War were at odds with the Wilsonian understanding of how nations should behave. The Wilsonian School has a distinct understanding of what makes a state a good member of the international community. Chief among these are these virtues are a democratic form of government and a dedication to the peaceful expansion of a democratically run world order, which would consist of sovereign states that do not use force unless provoked. From the perspective of the United States in 1917, Imperial Germany had none of these qualities. The use of unrestricted submarine warfare only added to this notion of Germany as an aggressive state. The concept of attacking civilians at sea without warning was both morally objectionable and violated Wilsonian concepts of international law.

In the event of a German victory the United States would be forced to deal with a Europe that was dominated by two Imperial States. A victory by the Hohenzollern and Hapsburg dynasties would not further the Wilsonian School’s interests in the expansion of democracy as a form of government in the world. In the defeat of the German Empire the
United States could propagate the concept of self-determination and to the Wilsonian School there would be no other choice than self-determined peoples becoming democracies. Thus by defeating Germany the United States would be promoting the expansion of democracy in Europe. The First World War also gives us a demonstration of the significance that the president’s belief that democracy was superior as a form of government played in his decision to declare war. Woodrow Wilson’s sympathy for the Allies was rooted in the perception that they were more democratic than the Central Powers. This was magnified after the revolution in Russia and the removal of the Tsar.

The collective security element of the Wilsonian approach is also served by the United States entry into the war. As part of the conflict Wilson was able to make the formation of the League of Nations a part of the peace settlement at the end of the conflict. This organization would be at its heart a collective security organization in the Wilsonian mould, one that would act to prevent further aggression in the international system. It is only the Wilsonian framework that allows us to understand why these factors were important. Indeed Wilson’s penchant for democratic government and his concept of the League of Nations is a key reason why in the Wilsonian School shares his name.

The War of 1812 clearly shows that leaders in the United States believed that its democratic form of government was superior to that of the monarchy of the United Kingdom. Madison’s belief in the need to protect this democratic system that the United States had founded in the revolution is evident in his decision to go to war. The events in France following the Terror and the eventual rise of Napoleon had only served to reinforce the concept that democracy was the superior form of government. Democratic government was far from the dominant system of government in the world of 1812 as the history of
republics had not been a happy one and the hopes that France would join the United States by forming another republic had been dashed with the rise of Napoleon. For this generation of American leaders, the United States represented more than just a nation state; it was a representative of a whole system of government based on choosing leaders from amongst the governed. If the Wilsonian dream of an international system populated by states that were of a similar political disposition to the United States were to be fulfilled, then it was up to the United States to show that these states were a viable form of government. The democracy promotion pillar in the War of 1812 is primarily demonstrated by setting an example of how democratic governments should behave and how they should be treated by other states. Democracy at its simplest level is a system for ensuring that the views of the citizens of a state have a say in its operation and that it is in general run for their benefit. The behaviour of Great Britain during the War of 1812 was unacceptable to the United States. Allowing what was effectively the kidnap of American sailors and forcing them in to service of the British Crown was incompatible with their perceived rights as citizens of the United States. It may seem difficult to demonstrate that the defence of the citizens of the United States is a way of spreading democracy to other nations. However if we return to the above argument that the United States was seen, by many of its leaders to be a model for other states that wished to become democracies, then protecting the rights of its citizens is a central concept. If the abandonment of its citizens were to become associated with the democratic system of government then it would reduce the likelihood that the subjects of other nations would give up this security even if they were to gain liberty. The actions of Great Britain indicated that it continued to think of the United States as a colony and its citizens as subjects of the Crown. Thus the United States needed to act to dispel Great
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Britain’s illusions of the relationship it could have with its former colony and reassure other countries looking to become independent republics that they would not be treated this way.

The Korean War and its part in the greater Cold War clearly shows that Truman was committed to the use of collective security as a tool to dissuade aggression and that he believed a democratic system was superior to its communist opponents. To Truman, the Soviet Union represent the worst elements of modern ideology; an all-encompassing state that subsumed the rights of the individual within service to the government. This need for state control, in Truman’s mind, showed utter contempt for the very principles which the United States stood for; the free market, individual rights, freedom of speech and religious liberty. In Korea we see the distaste that the Truman has for communism only reinforces its concept of the importance of democracy and the need for it to be the dominant force in the international system. Through a Wilsonian lens the actions of the United States in the 1930’s and policy of isolationism had been a mistake as the inaction of the United States was one of the key factors in the failure of the democratic word to use collective security to stand up to the fascists in time to prevent the Second World War. Now that the communist system was making its bid for global hegemony the Wilsonian School believed that the United States should be more proactive in its opposition to expansionist powers. Democracy’s future had been threatened by the rise of fascism in Europe because there had not been a state powerful enough to defend the weaker democracies of Europe from being absorbed by Germany. If the Western democracies which had been considerably weakened by the Second World War were to survive then the United States must act in their defence. Further the United States hoped that South Korea would eventually become a full-fledged democracy. It could not do this if it were part of the communist bloc. The whole strategy of
containment is premised on the idea that democracy will, all things being even, be the chosen form of government for all the peoples of the Earth. Truman’s decisions to support South Korea, is one that is in line with the collective security approach, under the auspices of the United Nations. Thus we can see that the Wilsonian School gives us insight into the approach that Truman took in Korea.

The Gulf War is a time of global advance for democracy, with the Soviet Union undergoing reforms toward a more open society and the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe seen as a validation of the American strategy during the Cold War. The invasion of Kuwait by Iraq did not fit well with the Wilsonian view that the post-Cold War world be substantively different to that of the Cold War. In this conflict the collective security pillar of the Wilsonian School, is the dominant aspect of Wilsonianism. With the advent of the post-Cold War world the United States remained as the last of the superpowers. The end of communism and the spread of democracy in Eastern Europe after the fall of the Berlin Wall had radically altered the international system. No longer was there a realistic threat of the communist block and its ideology becoming the dominant philosophy in the international system. The Wilsonian School had hoped that the wave of transformation which had spread through Eastern Europe would go on to encompass the globe. The invasion of Kuwait by Iraq was a hard landing for those who believed that the death of communism would be the end of the threat of war between states. The First Gulf War is also a case in which the expansion of democracy is a lesser factor, but it remains true that the United States sought to prevent the expansion of aggressive states through the use of collective security.

The second conclusion this thesis has reached is that these are real considerations and more than justifications for the actions of the United States. We established in the
introductory chapter that it is often claimed that the ideals presented in the Wilsonian discourse are used as a justification for the Wilsonian school. It has been this thesis’ contention however that these factors play a more significant role than that and are real considerations. The ideas of the Wilsonian school are derived from the liberal domestic nature of the United State and attempts to appeal to the better angels of those who make the decisions to take America to war. But we need not see this school as naïve or idealistic, as its precepts are ones that a routed in a logical conception; namely that the international system would be more peaceful and predictable if all states were democratic in nature and they had an organization that could effectively resolve disputes amongst them. The United Nations for all its fallibility and problems is at its heart a Wilsonian concept, as are other international institutions of its ilk. Democratic government has become an aspiration for nearly all of the members of the United Nations. In fact the United Nations global issues page opens with the claim that ‘democracy is a universally recognized ideal and is one of the core values of the United Nations.’ The progress the Wilsonian School has made should not be underestimated.

To contemporary Wilsonian observers, the international system before the outbreak of the First World War was the primary cause of the conflict, due to the balance of power logic that had created the alliances battling for superiority in Europe. The Wilsonian School believed that the only way to prevent a repeat of the events of 1914 was to bring about a fundamental shift in the structure of the international system. This new post-war system would, from the Wilsonian perspective, need to be one reconstructed along Wilsonian lines and this would need direct American involvement in the peace process. Germany’s unrestricted submarine warfare had been abhorrent behaviour and a violation of all the
customs of war. States that were such flagrant violators of these customs must be punished and this kind of behaviour could not be allowed to be seen as beneficial. The First World War was a unique opportunity for the Wilsonian School to reshape the international system in the Wilsonian image. The creation of the League of Nations and new agreements on public treaties were clearly Wilsonian in their origins. Thus in fighting the First World War we can see that the United States is at least in part fighting for the Wilsonian principles of international law and an international institution to enforce it.

Returning to the War of 1812, Wilsonianism lets us understand the importance of the impressment issue. It is the Wilsonian belief that the international system should be governed by a set of rules that is of consequence in this case. The kidnaping of these sailors was a clear violation of the rights of an equal sovereign state. The right of self-determination of American citizens not to serve in the Royal Navy was from the Wilsonian School’s perspective a fundamental part of the rights and one that the United States could not let go. Thus we can see how an understanding of these Wilsonian factors is essential in having a complete understanding of the events of 1812. As we have discussed, this not only violated the United States rights but the norms of international relations at the time. The United Kingdom was a nation that needed to be censured for it behaviour. The United States in this instance is engaged on behalf of the Wilsonian values of international law. As there was clearly little chance of a Wilsonian style international body to enforce these laws from the Wilsonian perspective it would be necessary for it the United States to enforce them itself.

The enforcement of international law and the support for the Wilsonian view of international institutions to keep the peace are important factors in understanding the
Korean War. The Cold War serves as an important influence on this conflict. The Wilsonian School clearly saw the threat of global communism as a threat to the world order that they were trying to establish. As a world in which the non-democratic and oppressive communist states were a significant part of the international system could never fulfil the potential that the Wilsonian School envisioned. To this school, the communists were just another brand of the aggressive and authoritarian states, like those which had previously thwarted a Wilsonian world. So when the Wilsonian School saw the North Koreans cross the Thirty Eighth Parallel, it saw yet another case of an authoritarian state using its military power for aggrandisement and territorial expansion. To the Wilsonian School this was no different to the actions that German had undertaken in the years before the outbreak of the Second World War.

To this end the United States had established the United Nations to act as a collective security body to prevent smaller states being gobbled up by their larger neighbours. The realities of the Cold War world had stymied the hopes of Wilsonians that this institution would be sufficient to prevent the expansion of the communist system. The Korean War however was a unique opportunity for collective action to be used in the way it was intended. With the absence of the Soviet Union from the United Nations Security Council, there was a window for action that could be exploited. It is the Wilsonian School that adds to our understanding of why Truman acted through the United Nations. This is a strong example of supporting the Wilsonian belief that the United States should support the spirit of international intuitions and the laws which they represent.

Returning to the First Gulf War it is apparent that, in the early 1990s, the Wilsonian School hoped the decline of communism would mean that the United Nations would finally
be able to function as Wilsonians had intended it to. In the concept of the New World Order, the international system would be run on broadly Wilsonian lines. If the United States wanted to ensure a world order were collective security would be the dominant framework, then it would need to set an example in Iraq. This situation could hardly have presented the United States with a clearer cut example of aggression. If the United States did not respond to the Iraqi invasion in a way that would force Saddam to back down and remove his troops from Kuwait then that would spell the end of the new collective security system before it had even begun. The Wilsonian School had always seen the United States as the leader of the democratic states with the primary responsibility for ensuring the collective security would work. We can see the Wilsonian School’s influence in President Bush’s decision to rally the international community and to ensure that there would be a strong and international response to this infringement of sovereign states’ borders.

As we can see in each of these cases the promotion of democracy and the enforcement of collective security are serious considerations when engaging in these conflicts. In each of the above wars there was a legitimate interest in promoting these concepts and a serious attempt to do so.

The final question this thesis sought to answer was if these factors existed before the presidency of Woodrow Wilson. The theoretical framework of this thesis argues that the liberal nature of the United States is a key element in the origins of the Wilsonian School and as such these concepts are independent of the power of the United States within the international system. In order to demonstrate the validity of this conclusion this thesis has presented a series of case studies from across the history of the United States. Starting with the War of 1812 and ending with the Gulf War, these conflicts run the gamut of American
power from a weak state in a system of much stronger states to the single hyperpower in a unipolar system. This peregrination through American history has given us a comparison of different conflicts in different distributions of power throughout the international system.

In 1812 it would be difficult to justify the United States as even a second tier power in terms of its military capability, and even its economic strengths paled in comparison to Great Britain and the French Empire. Even the perennially backward Tsarist Russia would by most objective measures, be considered more powerful than the new and fragile republic that clung to the Atlantic seaboard of the New World. As the United States entered the Twentieth Century it is clear that it had become an economic powerhouse. It remained however militarily weak and had expanded to encompass a landmass from the Atlantic to the Pacific. With the relatively easy defeat of Spain in the Spanish-American war of 1898 the United States had clearly earned a seat at the top table of international relations, but it had been reluctant to sit down. By the end of the Second World War, the once proud European empires had been laid low by two exhaustive industrialised conflicts and nationalism had undermined their grip in their colonial possessions.¹ This left two states in the international system far more powerful than the rest. The United States and its ideological nemesis the Soviet Union would spend the rest of the Twentieth Century locked in a battle for whose system would survive. When the Cold War thawed, the United States was left as the lone power with global reach, thus we see in the Gulf War the beginning of what Krauthammer calls the unipolar moment.² The case studies have shown that there is a strong Wilsonian influence in each of the wars described, whilst there has been a steady increase in American


power. This indicates that the Wilsonian impulse is not one that is directly connected to the power of the United States. Wilsonianism has been a factor in the foreign relations of the United States since its inception and is tied to the ideology of the United States. This thesis began with a discussion of what we mean by American ideology. This is a difficult, yet important concept. Pining down this ideology is a difficult task and could perhaps occupy an entire thesis or book series. In Chapter One this thesis outlines the concept of what we can understand to be liberalism in the context of the United States; we can best understand the term liberalism as the concept that forms the borders of the discussion and the perimeter of the debate. Liberalism as a concept is a broad church encompassing many views and opinions and this confusion is not helped by the nomenclature of the contemporary debates within the United States today. The terms liberal and conservative have been adopted within the American political zeitgeist as diametrically opposed concepts that can never coexist. Within the greater family of ideologies however these traditions are arguing over the fine details. More specifically the political debate in the United States is over which type of liberalism will be dominant.\(^3\) Having established that the basic American creed is confined to the liberal paradigm, this chapter established how this domestic ideology would affect the foreign policy of the United States. The thesis that Walter Russell Mead presents is that there are competing schools of thought on how the United States should conduct itself in its relations with other states. These schools have all been defined by American domestic political culture and present competing forces which pull American foreign policy in various directions. Mead explains the course of American foreign relations as the resultant vector of these forces. The effect of these schools is not always evenly distributed and so we sometimes get decisions which suit the preferences of one school over the others. These

discussions have clearly demonstrated that the Wilsonian framework has been an important one in the traditions throughout the history of American foreign policy.

Key Contributions

This thesis makes a number of contributions to the literature on the foreign relations of the United States. This thesis revisits conflicts that have often been explained by realist and economic explanations and demonstrated Wilsonian explanations are an important factor that should be considered alongside other explanations. This thesis has also explored the concept of Wilsonianism as an influence that has existed since the beginning of the republic. Using case studies from across the history of the United States it has added to the understanding of this concept as one that is not invented by Woodrow Wilson but has been a force in the foreign policy of the United States since its earliest days.

Previous literature has focused on understanding the Wilsonian School and its influence on American foreign policy as a whole. For example Walter Russell Mead concentrates on explaining the interaction of Wilsonianism with his other schools to construct explanations of a broader foreign policy, whilst Tony Smith has written extensively on the United States’ efforts and successes in promoting democracy abroad. Frank Ninkovich has written about Wilsonianism as a response to world events and John Inkberry has brought together a valuable collection on the role that Wilsonianism has

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4 Mead, Special Providence
played in the George W Bush administration.\footnote{John G. Ikenberry, Thomas Knock, Anne-Marie Slaughter and Tony Smith, *The Crisis of American Foreign Policy: Wilsonianism in the Twenty-first Century*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011)} This thesis fills a gap in this literature by focusing on how we can understand Wilsonianism as an explanatory tool for augmenting our understanding of specific conflicts, particularly those which have not traditionally been accepted as having a Wilsonian element.

Finally this thesis adds to our understanding of what Wilsonianism is and how the two key elements of it, democracy promotion and collective security, are both at work in these case studies and that each of these elements can become the dominant factor in each case.

**Summary**

This chapter has brought together the key argument that this thesis has made that Wilsonian factors in each of these conflicts have often been overlooked or dismissed as irrelevant. This thesis has argued that this is not the case and that the consideration of Wilsonian factors is an important part of understanding the motivations behind these conflicts. If these factors have influenced United States decision making since the creation of the republic then understanding them will not only add to our understanding of the conflicts involved but allow us greater understanding of future American actions. It is for these reasons this thesis has expanded our understanding of this important framework.
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