

## INTRODUCTION

### Know Thyself: What Is “Wilsonianism”?

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The world must be made safe for democracy. Its peace must be planted upon the tested foundations of political liberty. . . . 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. It must be a league of honor, a partnership of opinion. . . . Only free peoples can hold their purpose and their honor steady to a common end and prefer the interests of mankind to any narrow interest of their own.

—Woodrow Wilson, *April 2, 1917, asking Congress for a declaration of war against Germany*

American liberal internationalism is in crisis. Its dedication to the promotion of human rights and democratic government abroad, its trust in the general prosperity that an open, integrated international economic system could bring the world, its commitment to multilateral institutions to promote international peace, its claims that America is “exceptional” because its power serves our country’s national security and democratic institutions by promoting global peace—this enormous agenda is today endangered by a foreign policy unable to restrain itself from excesses built on the success of these very endeavors during the cold war.

For the purposes of this book, the most notable problem has been a succession of American imperialist wars based on a self-confident and self-righteous claim that democracy has a “universal appeal,” and that since “our interests and values are one” we have a right to invade at will countries that fail to live up to their “responsibility to protect” and to set them right. Where did such a set of assumptions come from? How could ancient civilizations, or

societies proud of their histories yet riven by deep cleavages, respond positively to these vainglorious assaults, combining as they do calls to rework not only political and economic relations but social, cultural, and family relations as well? Can we doubt that since 2002 the West, led by the United States, has unleashed a “clash of civilizations” freighted with enormous negative consequences? Combine this with America’s manifest inability to put its financial house in order in a period of slow growth combined with arguably the most sustained period of unequal wealth distribution in the country’s history—a condition that threatens not only our international standing but also our democracy at home. On the economic inequality front, no solution is in evidence, with the toll this must take on our political institutions. More, we appear to have lost the war on drugs while our health-care system lags far behind other rich countries in terms of coverage and expense. As the economic and social evidence accumulates after 2007, how could this country continue to fancy itself, as John Winthrop foresaw nearly four centuries ago, a “shining city on the hill”?

We risk exaggerating the negatives when in fact the tenets of liberal internationalism (a term synonymous with “Wilsonianism” because of Woodrow Wilson’s formulation of this framework for American involvement in world affairs) underlay the greatest achievements in the Republic’s history with the democratization of Japan and Germany and the subsequent victory in the cold war over proletarian internationalism sponsored by Moscow. But with victory in the cold war, Washington pushed its achievements promoting the liberal agenda too far. Republicans following President Ronald Reagan (1981–1989), their first unabashedly liberal internationalist (much as he disliked the “L” word), took the lead both in greatly deregulating the economy at home and abroad and later by laying the groundwork intellectually and emotionally for an aggressive agenda abroad, touting the contribution to world peace of what since the days of President Bill Clinton has been called “free market democracy.” In both instances, the Republicans were strongly seconded by most Democrats, members of the party historically most closely identified with liberal internationalism. In the 1980s, a bipartisan team began an unprecedented market opening of corporate capitalism, and this with disastrous results two decades later that remain with us years afterward in the form of an income inequality that reflects the domination of banks and business that in his calls for a “New Freedom” Woodrow Wilson had explicitly warned could undermine democracy. On the international political front, in the 1990s the expansion of the European Union and the North Atlantic

Treaty Organization raised concerns of overextension that were quickly eclipsed by forms of progressive imperialism justified as attempts to promote democracy in the Muslim world that had virtually no chance of bearing fruit.

Machiavelli’s admonitions from nearly half a millennium ago (1531) in his *Discourses on Livy* (2:27) should be recalled: “Men always commit the error of not knowing where to limit their hopes, and by trusting to these rather than to a just measure of their resources, they are generally ruined.” After triumphs over international fascism and communism for which the nation can justly be proud, America’s worst enemy over the past quarter century—and one could make much the same case for the European Union—has ironically (or better, tragically) turned out to be none other than itself.

At the origin of both the triumph of the fifty years that stretch roughly from 1941 to 1991, and the tragedy since 2001, was a variety of forces, the most evident of which was a set of ideas called American liberal internationalism. (We need to insist on the “American” designation both because of its association with President Woodrow Wilson, who first put together the package of concepts that then came to bear the name “Wilsonianism,” as well as because of the claim of “exceptionalism” for the United States that they contained, which was not necessarily shared by liberal internationalists in other parts of the world.) When concepts are systematically organized in such a way that they give individuals and peoples a sense of their common history, their place in world events, and the purposes they should pursue, ideas have consequences, especially when they have a religious cast (even if secular, nationalist, and patriotic) that inspires their followers to aggressive behavior, often of global, and thus historical, importance.

It is often debated whether America is “in decline.” Perhaps the emergence of an imperial presidency, working with a Congress dominated by corporate influence and using its power in foreign adventures, will not add up to decline in this country’s international position. It might instead herald to some a continued era of “greatness.” What is nonetheless evident is the obvious decline of American liberal internationalism as a progressive force even if Washington itself continues to dominate global affairs.

To make such an assertion rather obviously requires having a defensible definition of liberal internationalism’s agenda, a matter admittedly challenging to confront. For concepts as complex as those possessed by Wilsonianism not only necessarily change over time in terms of the conditions they confront, but in any case inevitably have blind spots, often turn out to contradict rather than to complement one another, or may run in separate directions

however much they may at times synergistically interact. Change and incoherence may be as real as continuity and congruity. Nor do intellectual concepts themselves necessarily serve as a primary motive for action. Instead, material interests or powerful emotions may manipulate ideas for their own purposes, so that ideas may be thought of as the agents of more dynamic forces than they possess in and of themselves. Hence, to say that today Wilsonianism is in decline—that it appears liable to meet the same fate and to disappear as did its rival ideological competitors, communism and fascism—requires a definition of the subject.

The problem of capturing liberalism's identity was best expressed by the great Protestant theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, who put his finger on liberalism's "fortunate vagueness," which applied to Wilson as well as to his cold war followers. As Niebuhr wrote in 1952, "In the liberal version of the dream of managing history, the problem of power is never fully elaborated." Here was the happy fact that distinguished us from the communists, who assumed, thanks to their ideology that posited "iron laws of history," that they could master events such that world revolution under their auspices would bring about universal justice, freedom, and that most precious of all promises, peace. In contrast, Niebuhr declared:

On the whole, we have as a nation learned the lesson of history tolerably well. We have heeded the warning "let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his strength." Though we are not without vainglorious delusions in regard to our power, we are saved by a certain grace inherent in common sense rather than in abstract theories from attempting to cut through the vast ambiguities of our historic situation and thereby bringing our destiny to a tragic conclusion by seeking to bring it to a neat and logical one.<sup>1</sup>

Yet despite Niebuhr's salute to the "fortunate vagueness" of liberal internationalism, "saved by a certain grace inherent in common sense rather than in abstract theories," with victory in the cold war American Wilsonianism in the 1990s became something of a "hard" ideology—more certain than it had ever been before that it indeed had the key to progress in world affairs and that, given Washington's status as the capital of the only global superpower, American policy-makers could use this key to good effect. With its new conceptions of "democratic peace theory" (that democracies do not fight each other), "democratic transition theory" (that with the cold war over, democracy was the only game in town and would be widely appreciated as such by

peoples under authoritarian rule), and a “Just War” doctrine eventually labeled “The Responsibility to Protect” (that allowed liberal states to attack authoritarian states for their domestic policies with the aim of democratizing them), “fortunate vagueness” was fast becoming a thing of the past.

The result of moving beyond fortunate vagueness was the birth of “neo-Wilsonianism,” a combination of neoliberalism (whose theorists had established to their satisfaction the major concepts of the new world order Washington should preside over and who were mostly Democrats) and the neoconservatives (who could militarize and popularize such ideas and were mostly Republicans). Here was exactly the development that Niebuhr most feared for his country:

If we should perish, the ruthlessness of the foe would be only the secondary cause of the disaster. The primary cause would be that the strength of a great nation was directed by eyes too blind to see all the hazards of the struggle, and the blindness would be induced not by some accident of nature or history but by hatred and vainglory.<sup>2</sup>

Some are tempted by the failures of the past quarter century to reject liberal internationalism in its entirety. They would replace it with a Realist agenda stressing narrow American self-interests based on military prowess and diplomatic retrenchment. “National interest,” not “world order,” should be our ambition.<sup>3</sup> Sage as this advice most surely may be in some respects, the temptation to jettison liberal internationalism altogether should be avoided. We must not forget the historic accomplishments of the Wilsonian tradition from the mid-1940s to the early 1990s.

What this book would encourage is the conviction that we need to work as best we can for the continued survival (in reformed ways) of the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization; engage in domestic economic reform that revitalizes the economy while ending the dramatically growing income and wealth inequality that has few parallels in our history and that threatens both our relative national strength and the social basis of our democracy; and pursue an agenda of promoting human rights and democratic reform abroad where our influence may count. The ambition of this book is exactly this: to establish a more secure footing for the American variant of liberal internationalism by reminding it of its origins in the thinking and policies of Woodrow Wilson and to maintain that it may find there the prudence and insight that today his intellectual great-grandchildren so often forget to our peril.

## WILSONIANISM, THE AMERICAN VARIANT OF LIBERAL INTERNATIONALISM

How can the liberal internationalist project be salvaged as a framework contributing positively to American foreign policy? A good part of the current crisis is due to the simple but important fact that American liberal internationalism has only a vague sense of its identity (much as Niebuhr affirmed). A review of what American and British historians have had to say over the past decade in defining the tradition makes the point. No one I have read has tried with any seriousness to define what “Wilsonianism” means in a way that commands general assent; several historians have suggested that while some usages may be more fortunate than others, none is terribly persuasive.

So we must ask a delicate question: Is there in fact a Wilsonian tradition, or is the existence of “Wilsonianism” a figment of the collective imagination? Thus, historian John A. Thompson subtitles an essay on Wilsonianism “the dynamics of a conflicted concept” and includes a section devoted to the topic of “a creed at war with itself.” For his part, historian Stephen Wertheim caustically points out, in an essay entitled provocatively “The Wilson Chimera,” that “‘Wilsonianism’ is at once ubiquitous in usage and deeply contested in substance: ‘everyone affirms that it matters but few agree what it means.’” In an extended commentary on the matter, historian Thomas Knock concludes, after reviewing a string of articles and books by noted authors who he finds most certainly “have had something worthwhile to say,” that the term nevertheless has a “protean nature . . . in danger of becoming what literary critics call a ‘free-floating signifier’—that is, one constantly deployed, yet stripped of any consistent meaning or historical context.”<sup>4</sup> As Knock suggests, the term “Wilsonianism” has as many definitions as it has writers who employ the word. Perhaps here is the reason that the Realist school of analysis of international relations is often referred to with a capital R, signifying that it is a coherent body of discourse whose theorists debate its concepts within the parameters of a consensus on what this approach to world affairs assumes in common, whereas liberal internationalism is usually left lower-case, an indication that the field is too fluid to have an internal discourse based on any serious unity to its assumptions.

A personal example illustrates the problem. In 2007, Princeton political science professor John Ikenberry invited Anne-Marie Slaughter, Thomas Knock, and me to write essays for a volume to which he would also contribute, asking simply that everyone answer his question: “Was George W. Bush

the heir of Woodrow Wilson?” The resulting debate appeared as a book in 2009 entitled *The Crisis of American Foreign Policy: Wilsonianism in the Twenty-first Century*.<sup>5</sup> Our four-sided debate centered over whether to privilege democracy promotion or multilateralism as the defining characteristic of Wilsonianism, but we came to no convincing conclusion on the question.

Worse, we most certainly had not exhausted the range of possible answers to Ikenberry’s question. Had someone of a Marxist bent been invited to the discussion, that person would surely have emphasized instead the open door international economic policy promoted by Wilson as the distinguishing characteristic of American liberal internationalism, and related it to the question of the Bush administration’s concern with Middle East energy reserves. At the same time, a Realist would presumably have insisted that the entire package Wilson proposed was either a thin disguise for the exercise of American leadership (or domination) of world affairs under the self-righteous claim of this country’s exceptionalism or an exercise in political naïveté of the first water. Realists were, in fact, the primary—and therefore best—critics of the invasion of Iraq before it actually occurred, and many did not hesitate to relate Bush’s policy to Wilson’s allegedly noxious influence.

The problem that remains is evident. More than a century after Wilson became president of the United States, his country is still not certain how to understand the important legacy for this country’s foreign policy of the tradition that bears his name.

But why does it matter? Are there not many other “isms” whose identities are the object of sharp debate? What is to be gained by acquiring a better grasp on an approach to world politics that by its very nature may best be left “fortunately vague”? The answer is that Wilsonianism remains (unlike communism and fascism) a living ideology whose interpretation continues either to motivate, or to serve as a cover for, a broad range of American foreign-policy decisions. However, if there is no consensus on what the tradition stands for, or, worse, if there is a consensus but its claims to be part of the tradition are not borne out by the history of Wilsonianism from his day until the late 1980s, then clearly a debate is in order to provide clarity and purpose to American thinking about world affairs today.

If liberal internationalism in its “classic” form was articulated by Woodrow Wilson, then used to good effect from the half century that stretches from Pearl Harbor to the implosion of the Soviet Union, why have we failed to study our past to gain insights for today? One point is clear: Wilson himself would surely have wished such an investigation.

## A RETURN TO THE SOURCE OF AMERICAN LIBERAL INTERNATIONALISM

To engage in an exercise in self-understanding, I suggest that we go back to the presidency of Woodrow Wilson (1913–1921), generally recognized as the father of the American variant of liberal internationalism, and to the thinking that informed his view of world affairs for more than three decades before he took high office. We should not attribute too much originality to Wilson, to be sure. Aspects of his thinking were already readily apparent at the time of the American Revolution. Nor has liberal internationalism ever been a monopoly of the United States alone. Indeed, Great Britain may lay claim to being its original homeland (and Britons its most articulate supporters after 1900). So, too, as names such as Vaclav Havel, Nelson Mandela, Oscar Arias, Kim Dae Jung, and Pope John Paul II vividly attest, individuals from around the globe have thought of themselves as political liberals without for a moment thinking that they thereby were following in the footsteps of the man who was the twenty-eighth president of the United States, or that they were necessarily reflecting in their convictions the sentiments of the Revolution of 1776.

Indeed, Mikhail Gorbachev's name should perhaps be at the head of the list of notable liberal internationalists. In May 1992, in Fulton, Missouri, on the anniversary of Winston Churchill's famous address in 1946 in that very place warning that an Iron Curtain was falling across Europe, Gorbachev declared that the end of the cold war was "a victory for common sense, reason, democracy. [The United Nations] should create structures . . . which are authorized to impose sanctions, to make use of other means of compulsion when rights of minority groups especially are being violated." Gorbachev then went on to underscore "the universality of human rights . . . the acceptability of international interference wherever human rights are violated. . . . Today democracy must prove that it can exist not only as the antithesis of totalitarianism. This means it must move from the national to the international arena. On today's agenda is not just a union of democratic states, but also a democratically organized world community."<sup>6</sup>

If Gorbachev, Havel, Kim, Arias, and other world leaders of the 1990s were undeniably liberal, in its American context the term "liberal internationalist" is interchangeable with "Wilsonian." For it was Woodrow Wilson who was the first president to articulate such an agenda, and the force of his ideas and policies created the tradition of Wilsonianism (the only "ism" to be at-

tached to a president’s name in the history of our foreign policy). More, he made one claim that only the United States would assert: that without American leadership the liberal agenda of securing a stable global peace of benefit to all would be impossible to achieve, a claim that can be said to lie at the basis of the American claim to a special privilege of action in world affairs, one that other countries should defer to for the sake of the greater good.<sup>7</sup> To read any of the Inaugural Addresses of those becoming president of the United States since World War II (to which could be added their State of the Union speeches) is to be struck by the way American nationalism finds expression in a confident internationalism resting on the conviction that whatever the issue, the buck stops in Washington, and this for the common good of all humanity.

If we think of liberal internationalist ideas as existing in what might be called “pre-classical” form before Wilson—the vaunting of democratic government, the opposition to mercantilism and imperialism, the conviction, in Abraham Lincoln’s oft-quoted words that the United States was “the last, best hope of earth”—it was nevertheless Wilson who linked these notions together into a coherent framework for American foreign policy. His achievement was to usher America out of its isolationist fear of what Thomas Jefferson in his Inaugural Address of 1801 had warned could be “entangling alliances” (an argument that was basic to George Washington’s Farewell Address of 1796) and so to give to American nationalism an internationalist vocation. Wilson’s tenure as president thus constitutes the “classical stage” of liberal internationalism.

During the half century that stretched from Pearl Harbor in December 1941 to the final implosion of the Soviet Union in December 1991, American liberal internationalism became possessed of such vision and purpose that historians and social scientists since have spoken with confidence about “Wilsonianism” as a relatively coherent approach to the role this country should take in world affairs (even if defining the word has proved difficult). We might label this period the “hegemonic stage” of liberalism, for its terms were willingly shared by leaders and populations of many other countries, and they became embedded in multilateral institutions covering the full spectrum of international concerns from military security to economic relations.

By the early 1990s, however, an “imperialist stage” that should be called neo-Wilsonianism (combining neoliberalism and neoconservatism) had emerged, a phase that remains with us today even if in somewhat less aggressive fashion under President Barack Obama than had been the case with his

immediate predecessor in office. The resiliency of this tradition over generations of American leaders thus deserves close attention. Following Niebuhr, it is at once our glory and our vainglory.

## THE WILSONIAN VISION IN THEORY

Let us start by delimiting the question of identifying a coherent logic to liberal internationalism by setting out what it is *not*. A first point of agreement may be located in the distinctiveness of the liberal approach to the understanding of world affairs in comparison with other approaches to the study of international relations, such as Realism, Marxism, or Constructivism (which includes feminism). All of these perspectives are similar in their hope of grasping the logic for war in world affairs, but their ways of understanding the causes of conflict and its solution are quite different. The result is that although liberal internationalists may differ among themselves on how we define the several concepts that guide our studies, we nevertheless feel a commonality of identity when confronted with rival paradigms of explanation.

Thus, unlike Realism, which posits the relative power position of states within the international system as the primary explanatory variable of their behavior, liberalism focuses instead on what is today called “regime type,” or on the character of governments as the best predictor of conduct in world affairs. To the liberal mind, democratic peoples and states are different in fundamental ways from authoritarian political cultures and institutions: democracies are relatively well equipped to work out their differences among one another in a way that makes war unlikely, whereas authoritarian peoples and governments are inherently possessed of militaristic dispositions both domestically and internationally (although allowance may be made for moderation among some of them). With the advent of democracy in domestic and international history, the possibility is open for a dramatic shift in the conduct of political life from one that is frankly Hobbesian to one that is proudly Kantian.

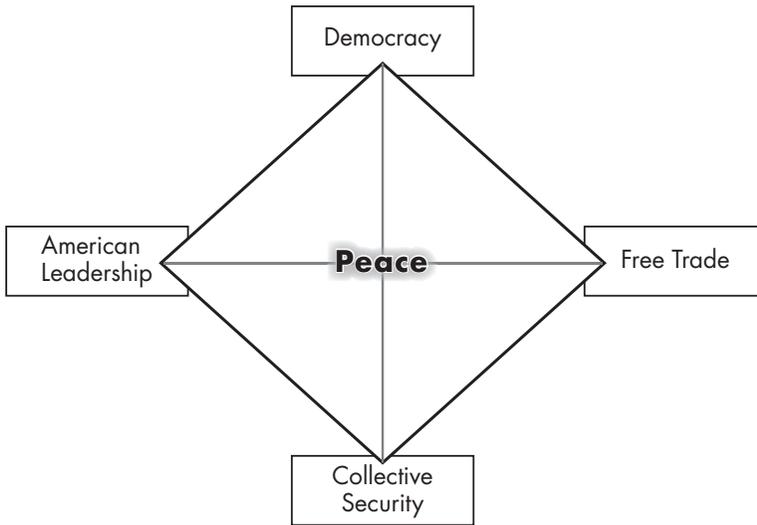
As a result, for liberals, the relative power positions of democratic peoples are of no serious importance. “Balance of power” considerations, the hallmark of Realist thinking, belong to a historical era that needs to be superseded. Mutual respect expressed through institutions that allow negotiation, compromise, and mutual understanding should be counted on to work out an amicable settlement. The failure of Realists to appreciate how the special character dispositions of democratic regimes and popular cultures predispose

people to act in world affairs means that their models of war proceed from narrow national self-interest that cannot grasp the character of democratic ways. Until its Hobbesian attitude toward the world is replaced by a Kantian appreciation of the virtues of international liberalism, Realism constitutes something of a self-fulfilling prophecy: there will never be an end to war because Realist theory anticipates distrust and balance-of-power calculations in such a fashion that its thinking leads to the very behavior it seeks to control.<sup>8</sup>

Or unlike Marxism, which insists that economic interests as defined by the needs of the ruling class drive a country's foreign policy and this more often than not into armed conflict, liberals instead focus on different types of political order as acting on the global stage as a consequence of their inherent character. More, where Marxists find capitalism to be a source of struggle both on the domestic and international fronts, liberals argue that, if properly regulated, capitalism may be a force for democracy and peace. For capitalism contains the promise of prosperity, which underlies the strength of the middle class (the historic bearer of democratic interests and values), while the integration it can give to peoples may create trust and mutual understanding. Liberals maintain as well that Leninism (which is not necessarily allied with Marxism but nonetheless has shown itself to be quite compatible) is inherently opposed to social freedom and so to the ennoblement of thought and purpose that makes democracies able to live in peace with one another.

Finally, unlike Constructivism, which sees ideas as molding history, liberals maintain that as important as ideas and values surely are, they must be grounded in democratically functioning institutions both domestically and internationally. A homogeneity of values and ideas alone (which Constructivism centers on), even if achievable (which is unlikely), is far from adequate for keeping the world from war. Liberals insist that values, interests, and ideas must be embedded in political organizations, and they underscore the difficulty of establishing and maintaining democratic ways. Constructivists may appreciate the way social institutions are the necessary forums in which ideas emerge as social constructs, such that of all the theories that may be contrasted to liberalism it is the most similar. Still, to liberals, the lack of a sustained focus on the creation of a complex of social and political institutions that operate both domestically and internationally makes Constructivism appear, theoretically speaking, to be rather lightweight.<sup>9</sup>

If we can establish what liberalism is *not*, it nonetheless remains our task to see what holds liberal internationalism together internally as an approach



to defining America's place in the world. In hopes of working toward a consensus, I propose that four separate, but interrelated, elements constitute its essence: (1) cooperation among democratic governments, (2) linked through economic openness, (3) negotiating differences and common interests through well-structured multilateral institutions that foster a robust sense of the importance of economic integration, international law, and a commitment to mutual defense, and (4) dependent on an America that willingly assumes the responsibilities of leadership of a community of nations pledged to peace through collective security, even if this means going to war to preserve it.

To envision the integration of the concepts that typify liberalism more graphically, imagine a four-sided diamond, each point of which represents one of the elemental features of liberal internationalism (see figure).

Each facet of the diamond has its own distinctive quality, yet each relates to the other three in ways that are not only mutually reinforcing but that also actually work to mix the characteristic features of each element into compounds that are equally distinctive. More, the synthesis created by the integration of the four elements yields an effective unity greater than the mere sum of its parts. *For the promise of this unity is mutual defense and peace*, which no aspect alone can be expected convincingly to deliver, but whose possible establishment, thanks to the interaction of these various developments, is the prime tenet of liberalism's secular faith.

Hence, when the admixture of these forces is achieved in practice—when theory is embodied in values, interests, institutions, and policies that endure over time—the result is what came by the 1990s to be called a “pacific union,” a “zone of democratic peace.” Today the European Union is the leading historical example of the freedom, prosperity, and peace that liberal practices may bring—although others have looked at American-Canadian relations or at the cooperation apparent in Mercosur, founded in 1991 in the southern cone of Latin America. The brilliance given by the facets of the diamond of synergistically related forces arises from the radiance of its promise—Immanuel Kant’s “perpetual peace,” a conviction shared by a variety of American presidents from Woodrow Wilson’s time on, including most especially Franklin D. Roosevelt, Ronald Reagan (who made the approach firmly bipartisan), George W. Bush, and Barack Obama.<sup>10</sup>

If this definition is fortunate enough to pass muster with most students of the question of how to lay out a workable definition of the constituent elements of Wilsonianism, differences are nonetheless sure to surface in efforts to explain how these elemental forces interact with one another to create an identity in theoretical terms that is convincingly unified. Some may favor a leading position for economic openness and integration; others may prefer multilateralism; still others will opt for American leadership; while others (including this author) emphasize a confederation of democratic peoples and states. Let us look at each of these elements in turn, then see why the argument that favors giving pride of place to the phrases “a pacific union” and “a zone of democratic peace” deserves special commendation.

## WILSONIANISM AND ECONOMIC OPENNESS

Let us begin with the character of the role of economic openness and integration in the liberal paradigm, which some authors consider the principal force behind the liberal diamond. One may either condemn or salute this process of world economic integration. Many on the political left who are hostile to liberalism see in its embrace of “the Open Door” the dynamic power of corporate global capitalism driving all else before it. They interpret liberal appeals to the fostering of human rights and democracy as camouflaging a self-interested, predatory global economic system that enriches the few, keeps weak “democratic” states that are beholden to corporate influence, and manipulates multilateralism to augment American power—a process that in due course will feed conflict domestically, regionally, and globally in a manner

that may well sap the strength of the United States as well as democratic government itself.

By contrast, liberals who endorse a leading role for international economic integration stress the pacifying interdependence such arrangements encourage. They can point to the experience of the European Union (born in important measure as a result of the Marshall Plan and the changes imposed on West Germany under American occupation) as a demonstration of the proposition that prosperity gives strength to the middle class (perhaps the most potent social force favoring democratic culture and government), while interdependence increases the harmonization and sharing of sovereignty that over time can reduce, possibly even eradicate, the differences in interest and perception that give rise to armed conflict. Following in the steps of Presidents Franklin Roosevelt (and the Bretton Woods agreements of 1944) and Harry Truman (with the Marshall Plan especially), the administrations of Presidents George H. W. Bush and Bill Clinton might be cited as promoting the expansion of what the latter first called “free market democracies” (a term picked up by subsequent presidents), so making economic issues the dominant aspect of their liberal internationalist agendas.<sup>11</sup>

There should be no doubt but that the importance of economic openness to world peace was a definite concern of Wilson’s.<sup>12</sup> In his juxtaposition of democratic with authoritarian states and people, Wilson described the latter as inherently protectionists and, as a result, militaristic imperialists, while the former were not. To end balance-of-power competition and the threat of war, an open, integrated international economic system was of fundamental importance. His important proviso, however, was that democratic states needed to regulate not only the domestic but also the international economy, failing which globalization could become a danger to freedom and stability worldwide.

## WILSONIANISM AND MULTILATERALISM

Arguments may also be heard for the dominant position of multilateralism in the liberal agenda. In a politically plural world supposed by the character of sovereign democratic nations linked through pacts of mutual defense and ties of economic interdependence, rules-based international regimes capable of authoritative determination as to the rights and obligations of member countries are an imperative need. Multilateralism (to the point of what is sometimes called a “pooling of sovereignties”) is thus both cause and effect

of political pluralism and market integration—especially in the domain of international law, which some liberals see as a form of world constitution-building.<sup>13</sup>

Hence, while multilateralism maintains its independent identity as a distinct aspect of liberalism for analytical purposes, in practice its character melds into hybrid features with other forces. Indeed, for some liberal theorists, the result is to make multilateralism the dominant variable of the liberal internationalist framework, and so they insist on the centrality of the League of Nations as Woodrow Wilson’s greatest contribution to world peace.<sup>14</sup> Woodrow Wilson’s notions with respect to “collective security” were clearly the high point of his multilateral ambitions. But as we shall see in chapter three, while the League’s basic premise was the need for a mutual defense pact to unite its members against the threat of war, this organization itself was designed to be a seedbed of democracy under American leadership. There is good reason, then, to consider Washington’s appeals for multilateralism as a disguised way of asserting American unilateralism, given the control it would wield over the member states. Hence to credit its identity as existing apart from other features of the Wilsonian peace is not theoretically tenable, however fundamental international institutions and laws are to its existence. More, to ignore multilateralism’s dependence on, and contribution to, democratic statecraft is to miss the essence of the Wilsonian message.

## WILSONIANISM AND AMERICAN LEADERSHIP

A third aspect of the liberal agenda is American leadership. For those given to talking of American exceptionalism, here is the key variable in the liberal project. By virtue of recognizing its dominant position in world affairs, the United States has assumed the role of representing not only its own self-interest but also the common interest of a region, if indeed not all the globe, in its foreign policy. American nationalism is thus transmuted from being parochially self-interested into being universal in its concerns. Washington’s efforts to create a world order dominated by free-market democracies linked by multilateral organizations under its leadership are thus the essence of the liberal promise for peace. At its inception, Wilsonian schemes of multilateralism would necessarily be run under American auspices, in which case we should speak of a *Pax Americana* and not a *Pax Democratica*, even if the latter were its eventual goal.

America’s ordained role hereby becomes the primary force in the pursuit

of world peace because Washington, D.C., alone has the power, the character, and the interest to act in this manner. (Others may argue that with a universal mission, America becomes the primary imperialist actor on the world stage, unleashing a “clash of civilizations.”)<sup>15</sup> Other aspects of the liberal agenda include the promotion of democracy abroad, the opening of the world’s economic markets to commercial integration, and the growth of multilateral institutions to deal with an increasingly plural world politically concerned with economic harmonization and peace. But all this can be accomplished only through Washington’s leadership, failing which crisis upon crisis is sure to occur. American patriotism thus becomes a form of internationalism, giving unity to the nation through its promise of a world mission.<sup>16</sup> Such a claim for a privileged role for Washington began with Woodrow Wilson and has been the refrain of presidents and secretaries of state for over three-quarters of a century now.

## WILSONIANISM AND DEMOCRACY PROMOTION

Nevertheless, it is the fourth aspect of liberal theory, democracy promotion, that I maintain is the prime moving force of the Wilsonian agenda. From Wilson’s day until ours, the chief argument in the liberal internationalism project for promoting world peace has been that democratic peoples and governments have the capacity to maintain an enduring mutual respect among themselves based on their character as individuals, groups, and political units. Other elements that are part of the liberal agenda—economic interdependence, multilateral institutions, and American leadership—each has its own identity, and together they synergistically complement democracy as constituent elements of the project. Of that there should be no doubt. Yet in theoretical terms their contribution is secondary to the key role played by the spirit and institutions of peoples living in constitutional democracies.

To make the case that democracy is the key element that guarantees world peace, let us look at the way the importance of democratic peoples dominates each of the other constituent aspects of liberal internationalism. Consider first the proposition that an indispensable aspect of the liberal agenda is the creation of an open, integrated world economic system. Yes, it is. But a critical element of such a process of integration is that it requires, multilaterally in the world arena, regulation under democratic governments working individually at the domestic level. Otherwise the economic integration might fail to contribute to be the common good and even be a force for imperialism and war.

Wilson left no doubt about it. He came to the presidency as a progressive, inveighing against the greed, cruelty, and anti-democratic characteristics of the monopoly capitalism of his era. He was critical of what he sometimes called “predatory capitalism” both at home and abroad. In his early writings—which he confirmed in later years—Wilson revealed a certain sympathy toward socialism, for it recognized that economic forces often betrayed the common interest for their own selfish gain and it promised to correct this situation by government controls. Although he believed that a free market was nonetheless the best way to assure general prosperity, the power of the middle class (an indispensable element of democratic life), and the common interest of the nation, Wilson never doubted but that this meant state regulation through administrative structures that would see democracy strengthened, not diminished, by corporate power.<sup>17</sup> Think Scandinavia, Canada, or Germany today.

As Wilson put it in 1910 in an address to the American Political Science Association, of which he had just become president:

Business is no longer in any proper sense a private matter . . . it is pursued by great companies, great corporations, which exist only by express license of the law and for the convenience of society. . . . Suppose we define business as the economic service of society for private profit and we define politics as the accommodation of all social forces, the forces of business of course included, to the common interest. . . .

Business must be looked upon, not as the exploitation of society, not as its use for private ends, but as its sober service; and private profit must be regarded as legitimate only when it is in fact a reward for what is veritably serviceable—serviceable to interests which are not single but common . . . and politics must be the discovery of this common interest in order that the service may be tested and exacted. In this conception, society is the senior partner in all business. . . .

If private profits are to be legitimized, private fortunes made honorable, these great forces which play upon the modern field must, both individually and collectively, be accommodated to a common purpose. . . .

Business serves our material needs, but not often our spiritual. But business forces are nowadays the most powerful (perhaps they have always been the most powerful) with which politics has to deal. They are the hardest to correlate, tame, and harness.<sup>18</sup>

Addressing American business leaders in Mobile, Alabama, on October 27, 1913, President Wilson expressed similar concerns as he contemplated the great opportunities the opening of the Panama Canal would soon bring (a reduction of the sailing distance from New York to San Francisco of 7,900 miles with equally striking benefits for trade with East Asia and parts of Latin America from the eastern half of the United States):

Interest does not tie nations together; it sometimes separates them. But sympathy and understanding does unite them. . . . It is a spiritual union which we seek. . . . *I mean the development of constitutional liberty in the world. Human rights, national integrity and opportunity as against material interests.* . . .

What is at the heart of all our national problems? It is that we have seen the hand of material interest sometimes about to close upon our dearest rights and possessions. *We have seen material interests threaten constitutional freedom in the United States.* Therefore we will now know how to sympathize with those in the rest of America who have to contend with such powers, not only within their borders but from outside their borders also.<sup>19</sup>

In June 1914, in an interview with John Reed, President Wilson made it clear that he suspected that international economic forces were looking to turn the Mexican Revolution to their benefit—and not simply to protect the holdings they already had in that country. By Reed’s account, “What [Wilson] meant is perfectly plain. The United States did not intend to lend its support, directly or indirectly, to the looting of the people of Central and South America.”<sup>20</sup> In a similar manner, Wilson opposed loans by American banks to China under conditions that would in short order endanger the sovereignty of that country as bankers moved in (as they already had in parts of the Ottoman Empire, Africa, and Latin America) to reclaim politically the credits they had extended. As he put it on March 18, 1913, speaking of United States participation in a six-power loan to Beijing, which he canceled: “The conditions of this loan seem to us to touch very nearly the administrative independence of China itself, and this administration does not feel that it ought, even by implication, to be a party to those conditions.”<sup>21</sup>

Indeed, as much as Wilson feared the Bolshevik Revolution, he recognized in its origins the hand of exploitive capitalist forces. As he put it toward the end of his life, commenting on the Russian Revolution:

Everyone who has an intelligent knowledge of social forces must know that the great and widespread reactions like that which is now unquestionably manifesting itself against capitalism do not occur without cause or provocation . . . we ought frankly to put to ourselves the question, Is the capitalistic system unimpeachable . . . have capitalists generally used their power for the benefit of the countries in which their capital is employed and for the benefit of their fellow men? Is it not, on the contrary, too true that capitalists have often seemed to regard the men whom they use as mere instruments of profit, whose physical and mental powers it was legitimate to exploit with as slight cost to themselves as possible, either of money or sympathy? . . .

And if these offenses against high morality and true citizenship have been frequently observable, are we to say that the blame for the present discontent and turbulence is wholly on the side of those who are in revolt against them? Ought we not, rather, to seek a way to remove such offenses and make life itself clean for those who will share honorably and cleanly in it? . . .

That supreme task, which is nothing less than the salvation of civilization, now faces democracy, insistent, imperative. There is no escaping it, unless everything we have built up is presently to fall in ruin about us; and the United States, as the greatest of democracies, must undertake it.<sup>22</sup>

In short, to Wilson’s mind, capitalism as an economic system assuring prosperity and underpinning democratic ways needed the regulation of democratic governments to keep its energies in line with the common good. Left to its own machinations, open world markets alone were no guarantee of a better world, any more than capitalism left to its own devices would automatically be at the service of democracy in the United States. Indeed, left unsupervised, capitalism could bring on war, imperialist exploitation, and the undermining of democratic institutions—very much as its Marxist critics maintained. The antidote to this danger was a regulatory democratic state, or combination of democratic states, bending capitalism’s strength to the well-being of society at large.

As a variable in the set of concepts that constitute liberal internationalism, democracy promotion thus obviously trumps economic openness. Those who allege that Wilsonianism is a form of American economic imperialism, detrimental to democracy domestically as well as elsewhere, may have points

to score on the American practice at different times in our history; that is beyond doubt and never more true than over the past few decades. But to make this the intention, wittingly or otherwise, of Woodrow Wilson himself is to falsify his thinking beyond recognition.

Similarly, Wilson's support for multilateralism as critical to the creation of a stable world peace was qualified by his conviction that democratic countries needed to be the driving forces of such institutions. Only democratic peoples had the sense of honor and the conviction that international law and procedures should be respected for the sake of the general good. Hence the resistance Wilson put up at the Paris peace negotiations in the first months of 1919 to the idea that the League of Nations might admit governments not based on the consent of the governed (much as he originally hoped that mandates created by the League would be governed in such a way that the people under international control be introduced to democracy). Eventually he recognized the practical futility of maintaining this position. In any case, he realized that even authoritarian governments could benefit from cooperating among themselves in terms of mutual interests. Still, Wilson was unwavering in his recognition of the proclivity of authoritarian states and people for war and in his conviction that were the democracies in charge of world affairs, then peace would be far more likely.

In line with Enlightenment thinking, especially as embodied in the organizational practices of Reformed Protestantism in the United States (Wilson was a Presbyterian, the child and grandchild of Presbyterian ministers, as was his first wife), men and women of reason and conscience were capable of a degree of honesty, disinterestedness, trustworthiness, and honor that made government based on the consent of the governed not only possible, but also more effective than any other form of government known to history. In terms used today, governments that are transparent and accountable, based on an informed and engaged citizenry acting in terms of "covenanted" or constitutional agreements (and for Wilson these two terms were synonyms), were capable of rising above self-interested passions and entering into accord with other similarly constituted peoples for the sake of the general good—a common peace. The same virtues that made mutual understanding and cooperation domestically possible could be transferred to the world stage. The primary force basic to an enduring peace was thus not multilateralism unqualified by the character of its membership but rather the democratic citizen member of a democratic society working through a democratic state with like-minded peoples elsewhere.

As Wilson famously put it to Congress in asking for a declaration of war against Germany on April 2, 1917:

The world must be made safe for democracy. Its peace must be planted upon the tested foundations of political liberty. . . . 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. It must be a league of honor, a partnership of opinion. . . .

Only free peoples can hold their purpose and their honor steady to a common end and prefer the interests of mankind to any narrow interest of their own.

Since Wilson’s time, American leaders have recognized the power of Wilson’s vision. Thus, almost three-quarters of a century after his death, when Secretary of State Madeleine Albright called in 1998 for a “Community of Democracies” to add strength to American leadership in world affairs, her appeal was quintessentially Wilsonian in its hope. Authoritarian members of the United Nations Security Council seemed to be inherently hostile to American wishes for the world community, so that the democracies of the world should combine outside the confines of the UN to cooperate together for their collective good and the sake of world peace.

So too when the Princeton Project in 2006 proposed a “Concert of Democracies” to rectify the shortcomings of the United Nations in democracy promotion, and when Senator John McCain proposed a “League of Democracies” in his 2008 campaign for president as the Republican candidate, such innovations were very much in line with Wilson’s thinking in 1919. In a word, it was not multilateral institutions in and of themselves that would establish world peace, but rather such organizations as were dominated by the world’s democracies.<sup>23</sup>

In short, multilateralism, like economic openness (the Open Door), was basic to the liberal peace agenda. Nevertheless, in each case democratic government was critical to the overall functioning of these two subordinate forces and thus the more critical to the Wilsonian project.

Finally, let us turn to the leadership role of the United States in world affairs for the Wilsonian agenda. For Wilson, the raw power of the United States made it an obvious candidate for leadership. But the origin of this power lay in important measure in this country’s democratic nature, whose robust individualism and vibrant, educated middle class had given rise to its

preeminent position in world affairs. Nor was it just the efficiency of American ways that recommended it to world leadership, but rather its moral authority, which gave it the ability to act in a “disinterested” way (a term Wilson often used) not only for the sake of its own security but also for the common interest of world peace.

Hence, Washington’s guidance could compensate for the League’s deficiency in terms of the democratic credentials of some of its members, even some of those that were manifestly “democratic.” The world would welcome this leadership because of what Wilson conceived to be a general recognition, both at the popular and the elite levels abroad, of the qualities of the United States in moral terms as a democracy, assuring it a fitness to lead. Here was the enduring aspect of America’s singular character—and most certainly not its relative power alone.

To summarize: The liberal promise of world peace is composed of four elemental arguments that meld into one another to create a unity greater than any one alone could provide. Of these, the dominant, because indispensable, force posited for progress to be achieved was in Wilson’s mind that democratic cultures, societies, and governments gain in strength the world around. America’s mission was therefore to sponsor the expansion of democracy as best it could, using not only direct suasion to achieve this end but by sponsoring open economies and multilateral institutions as well.

*But take note.* The evident problem nevertheless had to do with the likelihood that democratic peoples could in fact dominate in global relations. What was desirable and what was feasible were thus two very different matters, as Wilson well recognized. When he declared that “the world must be made safe for democracy,” he surely meant by this that he hoped to see democratic countries increase in number and in influence. Their dominance was indispensable for an enduring world peace. But by no means was he convinced that such a forward step would be quick or easy to take—if indeed it were likely to occur at all. The result was a decided dose of realism that mixed with Wilson’s idealism, a recognition that the developments that would serve the interests of world peace might not be at hand, indeed might never be attained. To reduce Wilson to being “messianic,” a “crusader,” who believed in America’s “redemptive” mission to cure the world of what ailed it is to caricature a man whose thinking was far more realistic in analysis and prudent in action than many believe him to have been.<sup>24</sup>

## WHAT WOULD WOODROW WILSON SAY?

There is some reason to think that Woodrow Wilson himself might have disliked an attempt to see his legacy “Wilsonianism” systematized in the way I have presented it here. He might have criticized a coherence I have given to his thought, a logic that is too sharply articulated, that he would have distrusted as leading to ideologically dictated conclusions for action. Wilson disdained what he called “abstract theory” for an important reason: it can run roughshod over the details of a people and a period that must be grasped in their uniqueness to be appreciated for their capacity to act and to change. Given what we shall see was his “organic” view of peoples, states, and the movement of history, he would perhaps have preferred to see himself remembered for his “fortunate vagueness,” as we saw Reinhold Niebuhr endorsing liberalism, rather than for having a system of thinking that could be depicted in the form of a diamond and laid out in terms of a set of four synergistic variables. That a set of blueprints of “Wilsonianism” might emerge to authoritatively direct decision-making in Washington would presumably not be to his liking. That he might be amused by the graphic of his concepts as the diamond I presented earlier in this chapter is the best we could hope for. As he put it in 1889:

The captain of a Mississippi steamboat had made fast to the shore because of a thick fog lying upon the river. The fog lay low and dense upon the surface of the water, but overhead all was clear. A cloudless sky showed a thousand points of starry light. An impatient passenger inquired the cause of the delay. “We can’t see to steer,” said the captain. “But all is clear overhead,” suggested the passenger, “you can see the North Star.” “Yes,” replied the officer, “but we are not going that way.” Politics must follow the actual windings of the channel of the river; if it steers by the stars it will run aground again.<sup>25</sup>

But we must not be detained by these objections, even if they come from Woodrow Wilson himself. If we turn from the strictly theoretical logic of Wilsonianism to a study of the lessons to be learned from Wilson’s own writings, speeches, and policies, we can imagine that the twenty-eighth president of the United States might be more receptive to our investigations. For Wilson’s life ambition was to make democracy more vibrant by making it more self-conscious—better aware of its origins, its character, its need for constant

monitoring, the challenges facing it, its need for patriotic commitment. Here is the reason that Wilson might salute the effort to see his thinking as having a coherence whose logic in his day might serve to instruct those who were to come later.

Given the scope and the speed of the domestic economic reforms Wilson made in his first two years as president, and given the enormity of the task he confronted in being the lead player at the Paris Peace Conference that ended World War I in 1919, it is unthinkable that Wilson would not have wanted to leave an intellectual legacy of the achievements and ambitions of his years in office. On the domestic front, he had succeeded in the greatest series of economic reforms in the history of our Republic up to his times. On the international stage, he presided over the peace settlement of the most important war the United States had ever engaged in—with clear-eyed foreboding that should he and his colleagues fail to win the peace that followed, an even greater war was certain to break out in Europe in the not too distant future.

How could such a man with such a record want to leave behind no intellectual legacy? That his efforts would ultimately give rise to a tradition labeled “Wilsonianism” surely would not have disappointed him, especially given the Senate’s rejection of American membership in the League. He would presumably have wanted these decisions reversed, as eventually they were under the leadership of two Americans who had been close to him: Franklin D. Roosevelt and Cordell Hull. The present, he firmly held, must learn from the past—not only from its achievements but also from its failings—in order to safeguard its future. That we might learn from his thinking and actions should be expected.

Even as a young man, Wilson’s hopes were to strengthen democracy in the United States by his work as a writer and teacher. As he wrote in his Confidential Journal on his thirty-third birthday, December 28, 1889:

It was in keeping with my whole mental make-up, therefore, and in obedience to a true instinct, that I chose to put forth my chief strength in the history and interpretation of institutions, and chose as my chief ambition the historical explanation of the modern democratic state . . . an analysis of the thought in which our age stands, if it examine itself. . . . *Why may not the present age write, through me, its political autobiography?*<sup>26</sup>

Just as Wilson had learned how best to serve American democracy by closely studying its past, so others might learn from his experiences lessons

equally suitable for the Republic’s well-being. As he put it in “Princeton in the Nation’s Service” in 1896:

The world’s memory must be kept alive, or we shall never see an end to its old mistakes. We are in danger to lose our identity and become infantile in every generation. . . .

I need not tell you that I believe in full, explicit instruction in history and in politics, in the experiences of peoples and the fortunes of governments, in the whole story of what men have attempted and what they have accomplished through all the changes both of form and purpose in their organization of their common life. . . . It is plain that it is the duty of an institution of learning set in the midst of a free population and amidst signs of social change, not merely to implant a sense of duty, but to illuminate duty by every lesson that can be drawn from the past. . . .

You do not know the world until you know the men who have possessed it and tried its ways before ever you were given your brief run upon it. And there is no sanity comparable with that which is schooled in the thoughts that will keep. . . .

Do you wonder, then, that I ask for the old drill, the old memory of times gone by, the old schooling in precedent and tradition, the old keeping of faith with the past as a preparation for leadership in the days of social change?<sup>27</sup>

In keeping with this encouragement of the “old drill, the old memory of times gone by, the old schooling in precedent and tradition, the old keeping of faith with the past as a preparation for leadership in days of social change,” we should turn to Wilson the academic and only then to Wilson the president.

As the great Wilson scholar Professor Arthur S. Link wrote of Wilson’s 1885 essay “The Modern Democratic State”: “it was the ideological framework from which Wilson never seriously deviated.” Link adds that with the publication in 1889 of the first edition of *The State*, whose general chapters tell us a great deal about Wilson’s thinking about history and politics (and which did not change markedly in its many revised editions through 1911), we have “ample evidence of what [his never written *magnum opus*] *The Philosophy of Politics* would have been had circumstances ever permitted Wilson to write it.”<sup>28</sup>

However, Link (like other scholars deservedly of note), despite his superb

accounts of aspects of Wilson's foreign and domestic policy, does little to reach back to the academic material to show us the continuity of Wilson the academic to Wilson the president. As a result, we are left with few professional guides to lead us through the maze that stretches from his first academic work of interest to us in 1879 to the final revised version of *The State*, published in 1911, the year before he was elected president.<sup>29</sup>

Surely Woodrow Wilson would be surprised that to understand his decisions as president so little had been done to understand the years when his ideas had been formulated as a professor. For he knew perfectly well that the time he had spent thinking about history and politics, and most particularly about the meaning of democracy, had to have an enormous influence on his policies as president. As he had said of Abraham Lincoln in 1893:

Mr. Lincoln can be known only by a close and prolonged scrutiny of his life before he became president. The years of his presidency were not years to form but rather years to test character. The strain was too great to harden and perfect any sinew but that which was already tough and firmly knit.<sup>30</sup>

Let us turn, then, to the lessons to be derived from Woodrow Wilson's writings and speeches between the late 1870s and 1911 (when the last revised version of *The State* appeared), to be augmented, of course, by his speeches, written communications, and policies after he became president in 1913. What we will see is confirmation of the theoretical argument presented earlier in this chapter: that the guiding light of Wilson's ambitions was to safeguard American democracy, and that the surest way of doing this, aside from constant vigilance at home, was to work for world peace by defending and promoting democracy through the multilateralism of the League of Nations, guided by Washington's leadership.

Under these conditions, the world might be made safe for democracy. That this goal was his primary objective, Wilson never doubted. That it was actually obtainable was, however, an altogether different question, a matter on which he was altogether more restrained. Whatever the force of his rhetoric on occasion, his caution is equally evident. Recognizing the gap between what Wilson desired and what he reasonably expected is a key point to capture once he began to determine policy after becoming president of the United States in 1913. It explains that as much as he wished for human freedom based on the strength of democratic institutions and so saluted the uprising of oppressed peoples, whether in Mexico or Russia, in the lands domi-

nated by the Ottomans or the Austro-Hungarians, he nonetheless realized from his earliest work on the French Revolution that not all cultures are capable of engendering a democratic political order. Nor was his initial reaction to the outbreak of war in 1914 to rush in to a conflict with Germany under the name of democracy combating autocracy (that would come later). Hence the tension between Wilson the idealist and Wilson the realist—one he finally resolved by his hopes for what the League of Nations might accomplish in ending war if only it could be led by the spirit of democracy.

### THIS BOOK: WHY WILSON MATTERS

There are three principal reasons Woodrow Wilson’s thought matters today. First, linking his presidential policies to his academic understanding has seldom been done meticulously yet has direct bearing on the policies he came to formulate as president. To take the cardinal example: Wilson’s emphasis on the genesis, character, and importance internationally of democracy has to my knowledge never been systematically studied in its breadth or depth. While his definition of liberal democracy fell within the Enlightenment understanding of this form of society and government, the meaning Wilson ascribed to it was in many ways particular to him. The trust he placed in democracy morally, for domestic as well as international well-being, is thus typically underappreciated in the vast literature on Wilsonianism.

Second, the emergence in the 1990s of a “neo-Wilsonianism,” which claimed a good part of its pedigree from the American liberal tradition founded by Wilson, rests on traditional liberal internationalism in part, but far from entirely. Here lies the explanation as to why a tradition that gave rise to the greatest successes of American foreign policy—of which the occupations of Japan and Germany have pride of place—gave way after the end of the cold war to arguments that surely Wilson himself would have disavowed. Neither the invasion of Iraq in 2003 nor the degree to which the domestic and international markets were deregulated beginning in the 1980s could conceivably be justified from the positions that he adopted and that had been followed by liberal internationalists during the cold war.

Third, American liberal internationalism may well meet the fate of communism and fascism and disappear in any meaningful way from the world political forum. A major purpose of this book is an effort to rescue the tradition in effect from itself, from the damage done to it since the 1990s by intellectuals and policy-makers who work in the name of a tradition they do not

adequately understand if for no better reason than that the character of Wilson's thinking has not been adequately understood. The clarification of the liberal internationalist tradition is thus a primary purpose of this book.

Finally, this book is likely to be subject to two criticisms. First, that it is simplistic—that is, that I insist on a coherence to the Wilsonian worldview that forces concepts and policies together within a mold that does not do justice to the improvised and sometimes even contradictory character of Wilson's positions. My answer to this charge is that I can only agree that, as with any worldview, Wilson's too is replete with blind spots, tensions if not contradictions, and changes over time. Yet coherence there is as well, which is the reason that the term "Wilsonian" deserves to be seen as standing for an integrated, if multifaceted, approach to world affairs. I therefore privilege coherence over incoherence in looking at the complexity of Wilson's thinking not only because I genuinely think it is there but especially because pointing it out is basic to the task of establishing a definition of "Wilsonianism" and so contributing to the refurbishment of this tradition by strengthening its sense of identity.

The second criticism is likely to be that I put too much weight on human rights and democracy promotion as the aspect of liberal internationalism that most determines its spirit—in effect, that my argument is overly "monocausal." Certainly other studies have exaggerated out of due proportion isolated aspects of Wilson's liberal internationalism, so I am aware of the damage that can be done to a complex approach to thinking about world affairs by elevating one consideration above all others. Yet by insisting on the importance of American leadership, world market integration, and multilateralism as indispensable aspects of Wilsonianism, I hope I have to some extent met this criticism. I would also note how critical the League of Nations was to Wilson's hopes. He meant it to be both the protector and promoter of not only peace but also democratic government. Nevertheless, I must plead guilty to the charge that the driving force I see in the liberal tradition is one where morality and practicality come together in a conviction based on faith and reason (the two properties that Wilson himself always championed in combination) that of its various characteristics, the spirit of democracy as he envisioned it has indeed always been (and should remain) the principal motivating agent of the Wilsonian tradition.