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Making the Mandates System

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Abstract

After the First World War the international order was reorganized by the victorious powers, including the creation of the League of Nations, and under its supervision the mandates system. This system was designed to manage the colonies detached from the defeated Central Powers and to mitigate the worst effects of colonialism through international oversight and the imposition of conditions on the rule of these territories. This paper investigates the origins of this system, tracing it back through earlier precedents and discerning between different variations of colonialism practiced by different empires. This analysis shows that the mandates system was an Americanized version of colonialism, created through compromises between President Wilson's ideology and European and colonial politics. This paper utilizes diplomatic documents to analyze the precedents for the system and to understand how the United States changed European colonialism in the captured territories to match its preferred colonial methodologies.

Keywords:

Colonialism, Mandates, League of Nations, Paris Peace Conference, First World War, Diplomatic History, Woodrow Wilson, Imperialism, International Relations

Lay Summary

After the First World War the international order was reorganized by the victorious powers, including the creation of the League of Nations, and under its supervision the mandates system. This system was designed to manage the colonies detached from the defeated Central Powers and to mitigate the worst effects of colonialism through international oversight and the imposition of conditions on the rule of these territories. This paper investigates the origins of this system, tracing it back through earlier precedents and discerning between different variations of colonialism practiced by different empires. This analysis shows that the mandates system was an Americanized version of colonialism, created through compromises between President Wilson's ideology and European and colonial politics. This paper utilizes diplomatic documents to analyze the precedents for the system and to understand how the United States changed European colonialism in the captured territories to match its preferred colonial methodologies.

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Introduction:

After the First World War, the great powers reconstructed the international order by creating a new international institution, the League of Nations, with explicit norms and rules to direct and manage international relations. This revised international order saw the creation of new states in the territories of the defeated Central Powers in Europe. The League of Nations and the concept of self-determination were the underpinnings of this new order and both bore the clear impress of American support for democracy and law as the foundations of international order, stated most clearly in Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points speech. American influence and ideas also influenced the creation of the mandates system, whereby colonial powers administered the former colonial territories of the German and Ottoman empires. Ostensibly designed to serve the interests of the indigenous populations of these territories and with the goal of achieving self-government, the mandates system perpetuated imperial relations, dynamics, and hierarchies. Although the United States was never a mandatory power, its influence on the creation of the system is evident in the internationalization and legalization of the mandates system, the application of the open-door principle, and in making self-government a central and achievable goal of the system in the not distant future. The effects of Americanization were contradictory, simultaneously perpetuating imperial systems and setting in place conditions for the end of empire.

American ideas about the mandates system emerged from the country's own experience as an imperial ruler in the American West and the Philippines, and in its neo-colonial relations with Latin America and China. American colonial thinking was distinctive in its focus on the application of open trade and the principle of self-government, though there was a great deal of overlap with the imperial ideologies of European states. The belief that the United States would civilize peoples perceived as less developed and sophisticated echoed the French mission

civilatrise and the British concept of the white man's burden, though with a distinctive focus on self-government as the primary goal of the American civilizing mission. Ideas about race and race-thinking informed these concepts of civilizing missions for both the Americans and Europeans, based on assumptions of the superiority of white peoples and their civilizations over their counterparts in the colonial world. Here one finds little to differentiate American colonialism from its European equivalents, there being a shared conception of white superiority and a vaguely defined hierarchy of races that generally placed Asian peoples in an intermediate position, and African and Pacific peoples at the bottom. One finds clear indications of these shared concepts in the design of the mandates system through its three-tiered structure that followed the perceived racial hierarchy in levels of civilization. Despite the overlapping beliefs that legitimized their roles as colonial powers and defined the conception of civilizing missions, it is possible to discern a discrete American influence on the mandates system both through their forceful position at the negotiating table and through the influence of their distinctive strain of colonial ideology and rhetoric.

Sources and Methodology

My analysis relies on a number of primary sources from the United States, Britain, and the League of Nations, most of which are available digitally. Because of the closure of archives and prohibitions on international travel I have also had to rely on published sources such as the Foreign Relations of the United States collection. Other key sources include the texts of the mandate agreements, and legal instruments such as the Covenant of the League of Nations, and various international treaties concerning the mandates and related developments. The writings of Woodrow Wilson, George Louis Beer, Harold Nicholson, and others who were directly involved with the Paris Peace Conference and the creation of the mandates system are also useful, though they require close reading to get past self-serving agendas and the typical challenges of the

recollections of participants. One can occasionally find direct references in these sources to American precedents in relation to the mandates. For example, Sir James Allen of New Zealand cited the policies pursued by the United States in the Philippines as precedent for the maintenance of a distinct nationality status for the inhabitants of mandated territories.¹ Such references are infrequent. Instead, I rely on similarities between the mandates system and its ideological underpinnings to those of the United States in Latin America and the Philippines, as well identifying the thoughts of key individuals such as President Wilson and comparing them with the ideologies and practices that formed the mandates system.

In addition to these primary sources, my analysis rests on a voluminous secondary literature, much of which deals with the question of mandates as it relates to broader questions of the postwar peace settlements, changes to the international order, or to the beginnings of decolonization movements. There are also many works that deal with one or a few mandates, as opposed to the more systemic view taken by this paper. Finally, there are many works that look at certain aspects of the mandates system, such as the system of petitions, which support my analysis. Among the most influential secondary sources were Erez Manela's 2007 book *The Wilsonian Moment*, which discusses the impact of Wilsonian thought on the colonial world. Whereas he traces the influence of the idea of self-determination at the grassroots level in influencing anti-colonial movements in places such as Egypt, my analysis looks more at the influence of Wilsonism at the systemic level of the mandates system and the League of Nations.² Another influential author on this subject is Susan Pedersen, who has written numerous books and articles connected with the mandates system. However, she and I differ in our interpretations of the mandates system. She emphasizes the importance of international oversight as the major

¹ "Sixth Meeting (Public)," League of Nations Official Journal, vol. 4, no. 6 (June 1923): 567-572, pg. 569.

² Erez Manela, 2007. *The Wilsonian Moment : Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

development of the mandates. While I agree that this was an important development, I place considerably more emphasis on the structural changes to colonialism and the importance of self-government and open-door economics facilitating the development of American-style neocolonialism in mandated territories than does she.³ Pedersen also asserts that the mandates system was largely a rhetorical development justifying colonialism in an era of Wilsonism, and argues that the system did little to help mandated territories towards independence.⁴ This analysis will refute that argument by noting how the principle of local self-government was embedded into the mandates system, and how despite its short lifespan the system successfully brought about Iraqi independence and membership within the League of Nations. The view of the mandates as a device to cloak the continuation of prewar imperialism holds wide currency within the existing literature, and is particularly prominent in more general histories of the aftermath of the First World War and the Paris Peace Conference.⁵ Sometimes the argument is more nuanced, noting that although there were novel features in the mandates system, they did not work effectively, the system was, in many respects, functionally a continuation of previous European colonial practices, and the mandatory regimes worked to perpetuate existing colonial practices to these regions.⁶

In fact, many authors have concluded that the mandates were more than a means to continue normative colonialism under the guise of a new rhetoric, but there is disagreement about the origins and ideas underlying the mandates system. Andrew J. Crozier and Peter

³ Susan Pedersen, 2006. "The Meaning of the Mandates System: An Argument." *Geschichte und Gesellschaft (Göttingen)* 32 (4): 560–82., 564-565.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 568.

⁵ Alan Sharp, *The Versailles Settlement: Peacemaking in Paris, 1919*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan, 1991., 159.

⁶ Peter Sluglett, "An Improvement on Colonialism? The 'A' Mandates and Their Legacy in the Middle East." *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)* 90, no. 2 (2014): 413-27. Accessed January 11, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24538563>., 425; Andrew J. Crozier, "The Establishment of the Mandates System 1919-25: Some Problems Created by the Paris Peace Conference." *Journal of contemporary history* 14, no. 3 (July 1, 1979): 483–513., 483.

Sluglett assert that the mandates system originated in the thinking of the British Labour movement, though they note that the system's implementation was facilitated by the entry of the United States into the war and the Bolshevik publication of secret treaties.⁷ I try to show that the system originated in American colonial thought, and that although there were many British figures involved in designing the mandates system, most prominently Jan Smuts and David Lloyd George, the key features of the system reflect both American ideological precepts and direct American influence at the negotiating table. As the central proposition of this paper is that the mandates system was Americanized to a significant degree, the place of this claim within the historiography of the mandates system must be understood. The mandates system was by definition a compromise between imperialism and independence, offering neither the local populations of the mandated territories nor the European imperialists unfettered control. Whether this compromise was between the European imperialists and their left-wing counterparts, as Andrew Crozier has argued, or between European imperialists and Bolshevik ideology to ideologically defend imperialism, as some Cold War historians have contended, or whether this was a compromise between European imperialism and American neocolonialism as I argue, it is generally agreed that the mandates system was a compromise on the part of European imperialism.

My argument also addresses debates about when the United States emerged as a global superpower. Several historians have identified the years following the First World War that American elites began to actively seek the Americanization of the global order.⁸ Some have argued that Wilson's Fourteen Points and Lloyd George's related Caxton Hall Speech were

⁷ *Ibid.*, 484.

⁸ Patrick O. Cohrs, "'Pax Americana': The United States and the Transformation of the 20th Century's Global Order." *Revista Brasileira de Política Internacional* 61, no. 2 (2018), 1.

rebuttals to Bolshevik ideology, and that the important principle of self-determination was essentially designed to offer an ideological alternative to Bolshevism that could appeal to both colonized peoples and colonial powers. More convincing is that for Wilson the ideological challenge presented by the Bolsheviks was an opportunity to force the Europeans to accept his ideology for the peace settlement.⁹ As I show in the first chapter, the ideology that Wilson professed in his Fourteen Points speech can be traced back through his earlier academic writings and to American precedents from the Philippines, Latin America, and the experience of the post-Civil War American South, from which Wilson originated. While the Bolsheviks certainly presented an ideological challenge to the West with their calls for an end to colonialism and the dismantling of colonial empires, the rebuttal presented by Wilson, and accepted by the Europeans, did not originate in an effort to respond to the Bolsheviks. Rather, the ideologies present had a long genesis rooted in American history and principles. While the rise of Bolshevism during the First World War helped convince the Europeans to accept American solutions to problems in Eastern Europe and the colonial world, these ideas were not developed as a response to Bolshevism. Rather, they were American ideas that the Europeans came to accept as the price of resisting the encroachment of Communism onto their territories.

Some historians have also understood the mandates system as a reflection of American influence on European colonial systems. For example, William Roger Louis, concluded that the conception of the mandates system was very different between Britain and the United States, the Americans imagining the system to be a more fundamental departure from previous colonial methodologies than did the British, as well as imagining a stronger enforcement mechanism

⁹ David Stevenson, 1979. "French War Aims and the American Challenge, 1914–1918." *The Historical Journal* 22 (4): 877–94, 887; Alexander Anievas, 2014. "International Relations Between War and Revolution: Wilsonian Diplomacy and the Making of the Treaty of Versailles." *International Politics (Hague, Netherlands)* 51 (5): 619–47. <https://doi.org/10.1057/ip.2014.26>, 638; Trygve Thrøntveit, "The Fable of the Fourteen Points: Woodrow Wilson and National Self-Determination." *Diplomatic History* 35, no. 3 (June 1, 2011): 445–481., 458.

through the League.¹⁰ He also notes that the American ideas of the mandates system more accurately embody the system that came into existence at the end of the Paris Peace Conference.¹¹ Hersch Lauterpacht writing in 1923, also believed that the mandates system was a major departure from previous European colonialism, even arguing against Secretary of State Robert Lansing when he contended that the system was merely a continuation of European colonial practices.¹² Lauterpacht also interpreted the intermediate status of the Palestine mandate between classes A and B, and detected American influence in open-door economic provisions being applied to the A mandates.¹³ Lauterpacht's commentary on the mandates was legal, offering many promising avenues for further research into the legal status of the mandates.¹⁴ Other contemporary authors such as Quincy Wright noted that American influence was fundamental not only to the design of the mandates system but also to its implementation.¹⁵ Wright acknowledges that the mandatory idea originated with South African General Smuts, but the system as designed went much further than Smuts had ever intended and reflects mainly Wilson's ideas about its design and implementation, as I discuss in chapter 2.¹⁶

Susan Pedersen notes that the mandates system was designed on beliefs concerning racial hierarchies and the desire to "uplift" the indigenous inhabitants of mandated territories. She further notes that in cases where the mandates system led to independence, it was only because the mandatory power had calculated that such independence would be to their benefit. The obvious example was Iraq, where the British facilitated Iraqi independence because a

¹⁰ William Roger Louis, "The United Kingdom and the Beginning of the Mandates System, 1919–1922." *International organization* 23, no. 1 (1969): 73–96., 93.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 93-94.

¹² Hersch Lauterpacht, and Elihu Lauterpacht. *International Law, Being the Collected Papers of Hersch Lauterpacht. Systematically Arranged and Edited by E. Lauterpacht.* Cambridge [Eng: University Press, 1970.], 37.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 45, 47.

¹⁴ See for example the works of legal historian Cait Storr.

¹⁵ Quincy Wright, "The United States and the Mandates." *Michigan law review* 23, no. 7 (May 1, 1925): 717–747., 717.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 717-718.

neocolonial model served their interests equally well at a lower cost than administering the territory directly.¹⁷ This is a clear indication that American colonial ideas and methodologies were being adopted by the British in the mandates through their adoption of a neocolonial model pioneered by the United States in Latin America. This is a clear departure from existing British practices because although the British had often retained indigenous governing structures to some degree, they had typically reserved a formal tutelage role for themselves rather than granting nominal independence. They also generally worked to ensure that states under their protection did not maintain strong relations with other European states or large non-British companies, whereas the Americans were comfortable working with independent republics that maintained relationships with other states but under a more informal umbrella in the form of the Monroe Doctrine. That only Iraq became independent during the existence of the mandates system is indicative of the success of the system rather than its failure; neither Wilson nor his European counterparts envisioned the mandates system as leading to self-government quickly. Rather, they imagined that like the American presence in the Philippines, the system would have to exist for decades if not centuries in order to bring the “level of civilization” within these territories to a point where they would be capable of self-government. Even if this level were reached, self-government would still depend on the cooperation of the local government with the material interests of the powers, an arrangement which bears a striking similarity to American practices in Latin America. Overall, the current literature is divided over the nature of the mandates system, and as Erez Manela and Robert Grewarth noted in 2014, the global history of the aftermath of the First World War remains an understudied subject.¹⁸

¹⁷ Susan Pedersen, “Samoa on the World Stage: Petitions and Peoples before the Mandates Commission of the League of Nations.” *Journal of imperial and Commonwealth history* 40, no. 2 (June 1, 2012): 231–261., 253.

¹⁸ Robert Gerwarth and Erez Manela, “The Great War as a Global War: Imperial Conflict and the Reconfiguration of World Order, 1911–1923*.” *Diplomatic History* 38, no. 4 (September 2014): 786–800. doi:10.1093/dh/dhu027., 787.

Chapter Summary and Structure of Argument

To demonstrate that the United States fundamentally altered the goals of colonialism, and the methods by which it was regulated in the areas opened for negotiation after the war, in chapter one I analyze intellectual developments in colonialism during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, with a focus on the emerging role of the United States. This section will then analyze the precedents that emerged before the First World War for the internationalization of the colonial system through innovations such as the introduction of open-door economic policies in the Congo during the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885 and innovations in international administration as exemplified by the results of the Algeiras Conference of 1906. This chapter concludes with analyses of wartime policy developments that produced the foundations for the mandates system. The next chapter focuses on the negotiations at the Paris Peace Conference that produced the outlines of the mandates system. In this section, I examine how the United States was able to push its conceptions of colonialism onto the European powers, with some modifications, resulting in an Americanized framework for the system. This will show that key American ideas developed through their colonial and neocolonial experiences in Latin America, the Philippines, and the American West. The principal American ideas that shaped the mandates system were open-door economic access for members of the League of Nations, and the achievement of self-government for the indigenous inhabitants, ideas that find little precedent in other colonial regimes. The final chapter analyzes the implementation of the mandates system after the Paris Peace Conference, and after the United States withdrew from participation in the League of Nations and failed to ratify the Treaty of Versailles, thus fundamentally changing the nature of their relationship to the mandates system. This section shows that even after the United States changed the nature of its participation in the system, the structure of the mandates still reflected American ideas of colonialism, and the desire of the American government to enjoy

open-door access to mandated territories led to a continued ability to influence the nature of mandatory administrations. Finally, I provide an overview of each of the mandates and the compromises that facilitated their implementation, explaining the on-going role of the United States and the adherence of the mandates to American precedents. This section concludes with a brief discussion of the Iraq mandate, which was the only mandate to achieve independence and self-government prior to the Second World War. In Iraq, Britain adopted American neocolonial models to facilitate continued resource-extraction while reducing the burden of administration by working through an indigenous government. Through these chapters, I demonstrate that the mandates system was an Americanized version of European colonialism, marking the beginning of a transition towards neocolonial forms of political and economic control that culminated after the Second World War. The present analysis deals only with the mandates system, and primarily with the design of the system. This is the tip of the iceberg to understanding how the United States shaped the colonial order in the first half of the twentieth century, with the mandates serving as a model for the United Nations Trusteeships that were created after the Second World War, and which led into the process of decolonization in the second half of the twentieth century.

Chapter 1: The Origins and Precedents of the Mandates System

This chapter examines the origin of the mandates system in relation to changes to colonialism that occurred in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and the wartime discussions among the Allied and Associated Powers that led to the adoption of the system after the war. I begin with an overview of the nature of colonialism at the turn of the twentieth century, particularly the way its primary justification, the European civilizing mission, had become an international project, albeit one with significant national variations. This overview leads into an investigation of the intellectual background of international colonialism at this time, to illustrate the American conception of the motives and objectives of the colonial project and how this conception compared to those of their imperial partners, especially the British Empire. I then analyze the implementation of internationalized colonialism prior to the First World War, including such prominent examples as the Berlin Conference of 1885 and the Algeciras Conference of 1906. This section highlights American contributions to the international colonial ethos and system, and shows how the American conception of colonialism had been established along neocolonial models in Latin America and elsewhere in which the United States undertook a civilizing mission in conjunction with economic exploitation, while working to establish self-government on the part of the local population. Finally, I examine the wartime policies and developments that produced the mandates system.

European colonialism had been a powerful force for centuries, but starting in the late 19th century there were important changes to the way it was conceived and practiced. Chief among these were changes in the moral and legal justifications underlying the expansion of European empires and the move away from traditional colonial methods of rule and in favour of more indirect means of economically exploiting colonized regions. An early example of these changes

was the mid-nineteenth-century shift from company rule in India to the administration of the British Raj, with its litany of semi-independent Princely States and various mechanisms for indirect rule.¹⁹ This new system reduced the burden of administration while simultaneously working to reduce the incidence of violence between the colonizer and the colonized.²⁰ This trend towards indirect rule can also be seen in the British North America Act of 1867, in which the stated objectives are “peace, order, and good government”.²¹ This must be understood in the same vein as changes to Indian governance, as the British government wanted to reduce the burden of its imperial holdings by moving towards limited self-government. The justification for these changes, and indeed for its continued authority, was the concept that it was bringing good government to the areas under its control. There was an almost pedagogical mission to teach governance to those to whom the British government has delegated partial authority. Good government and indirect rule were similar to American colonial ideology and practice, although the Americans largely left local governments to handle their own affairs except where the United States was directly interested, whereas the British preferred to keep residents or consuls in quasi-independent areas under their protection, and use these officials to ensure that such colonial states would not have relationships with other European powers besides Britain.²² In this one can detect the beginnings of the British civilizing mission, which not only underlay its administrative decisions, but also formed the core justification for its continued imperialism.

The main derivative of British colonial thought, American colonialism, took on a somewhat different shape. This can largely be attributed to American colonialism being directed

¹⁹ Joseph McQuade, “Beyond an Imperial Foreign Policy?: India at the League of Nations, 1919-1946.” *Journal of imperial and Commonwealth history* 48, no. 2 (2020): 263–295., 271.

²⁰ Kenneth Pomeranz, “Empire & ‘Civilizing’ Missions, Past & Present.” *Daedalus (Cambridge, Mass.)* 134, no. 2 (2005): 34–45., 38.

²¹ British North America Act, 1867, Section 91, pg. 33.

<https://digitalcommons.osgoode.yorku.ca/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2132&context=rso>

²² Susan Pedersen, 2015. *The Guardians: the League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire* New York, NY: Oxford University Press., 25.

to the extension of the United States through the establishment of self-governing states within the federal union rather than the creation of subject areas overseas, a process that Thomas Jefferson described as being the expansion of “an empire of liberty”.²³ In the United States, there was less emphasis on good government, though this is not absent, and more on the idea that an area populated by “civilized” peoples ought to be able to form their own government and have it recognized as sovereign by their peers, provided that it adhered to the basic guidelines for democracy and individual rights as laid out in the United States Constitution.²⁴ This concept is also important during the process of Reconstruction that followed the Civil War. When the Union army occupied large swaths of the South, the goal was the reinstatement of local state governments, subject to conditions that find echoes in civilizing missions throughout the world in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, such as the abolition of slavery and the extension of voting rights to the majority of the population. This was a formative period for many of the key figures from the American delegation who would help to craft the mandates system, including future President Woodrow Wilson, who was already in his sophomore year of college when these troops departed from his hometown of Columbia, South Carolina.²⁵

The United States joined the ranks of the European colonial empires through its acquisition of the former Spanish territories of the Philippines and Puerto Rico, at which point a major debate began in the U.S. over how they ought to rule their new territories.²⁶ This marked a major shift in the trajectory of the American colonialism, as it was no longer confined to dealing with territories on the American continent, but now held overseas possessions that seemed unlikely to be destined for statehood. Nonetheless, Woodrow Wilson believed that American

²³ Kenneth Pomeranz, 36.

²⁴ Edwin G. Arnold. *Self-Government in U. S. Territories. Foreign Affairs*, 1947, 655.

²⁵ Harley A. Notter, *The Origins of the Foreign Policy of Woodrow Wilson*. New York: Russell & Russell, 1965., 14.

²⁶ Christina Duffy Burnett. “Untied States: American Expansion and Territorial Deannexation.” *The University of Chicago law review* 72, no. 3 (2005): 797–879., 806.

colonialism overseas continued to be an empire of liberty. For example, he believed that the United States had invaded Cuba in order to liberate its inhabitants.²⁷ Wilson understood American expansion as motivated by a mixture of altruistic missions of liberation and civilization coupled with economic self-interest. These two pillars of his colonial ideology also applied to the Philippines, which he viewed as a necessary foothold for American commerce in Asia, as well as serving as a “new frontier” for young American men on the grounds that “The spaces of their own continent were occupied and reduced to the uses of civilization”.²⁸ One finds in Wilson’s thinking around this time some of his earliest references to the principle of self-determination, a concept that did not conflict in his mind with an armed imposition of American authority in the Philippines against the clear wishes of the local population.²⁹ Indeed, he believed it was legitimate for the US to suppress armed revolt against American authority in the Philippines: “We fought but the other day to give Cuba self-government. It is a point of conscience with us that the Philippines shall have it, too, when our work there is done and they are ready.”³⁰ Clearly, the self-government that Wilson hoped to achieve in the Philippines was not the same sort of self-government as that possessed by American states within the Union, nor was it the same as the self-government possessed by a country such as Norway. Instead, the model for self-government was Cuba and the other Latin American republics. This kind of self-government must be understood as neocolonial: these countries could only govern themselves, once they had been “civilized”, but their governance had to suit the interests of the U.S. government and American corporations. If they did not, then they might be subject to an

²⁷ Woodrow Wilson, *A History of the American People*. New York: Harper & brothers, 1903. Volume V., 270-272, 274.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 296

²⁹ Woodrow Wilson, *Constitutional Government in the United States*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1961., 4.

³⁰ Woodrow Wilson, edited by Ray Stannard Baker, and William E. Dodd. *The Public Papers of Woodrow Wilson*. Authorized ed. New York: Kraus Reprint, 1970. Volume I., 427-428.

American military intervention, as Wilson himself was to in Haiti and the Dominican Republic.³¹ This conception of self-government and self-determination is fundamental to understanding Wilsonian policies towards colonial areas administered as mandates.

Wilson's conception of the American mission in the Philippines and in Latin America was not restricted to him, nor to the Democratic party. President Taft, the first colonial governor of the Philippines, created the colonial state according to this civilizing mission, and President McKinley in his statements shortly after the acquisition of the Philippines made clear that self-government was the eventual goal of the administration.³² Both Taft and Roosevelt were also advocates of "Dollar Diplomacy" in the Caribbean, which bears a striking similarity to the neocolonial practices of the Wilson administration despite his statements against the policy.³³ While the League of Nations is generally associated with President Wilson, former President Taft was one of its most important domestic advocates during the First World War and subsequent Paris Peace Conference.³⁴ This highlights the importance of American colonial experience to Wilson's project, and helps to show that for all of the divisions in the United States regarding imperialism, there existed a broad conception of colonialism and the civilizing mission among Americans that was distinct from those of the European colonial states.

While the British civilizing mission was based on the concept of extending good government to its colonies and the American mission was devoted to the eventual extension of self-government, the other colonial powers also had distinctive civilizing missions. But they were united in their belief in the internationally interdependent character of the civilizing mission

³¹ David H. Burton, *Taft, Wilson, and World Order*. London; Madison [N.J.]: Fairleigh Dickenson [sic] Press, 2003., 57.

³² *Ibid.*, 29; Alpheus Henry Snow, "Neutralization Versus Imperialism." *The American journal of international law* 2, no. 3 (1908): 562–590., 577.

³³ *Ibid.*; Alan L. McPherson, *The Invaded: How Latin Americans and Their Allies Fought and Ended U.S. Occupations*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014., 5-6.

³⁴ David H. Burton, 79.

despite its national variations.³⁵ For most nations, the basic logic of their civilizing mission was material: they would bring the technological advancements of European society to other parts of the world, and this would “civilize” the peoples of these areas, a concept that can be traced at least as far back as sixteenth-century Spanish colonialism.³⁶ These European powers, among them Britain, France, the Netherlands, Portugal, and eventually Germany, saw no issue with the economic exploitation of the territories they were ostensibly “civilizing.” While the rhetorical and legal justification of imperialism shifted towards the civilizing mission in the late nineteenth century, the commercial exploitation of these regions must be understood as being at least equally important to these European governments.³⁷ This is significant because one of the basic logics of earlier imperialisms had been protectionist economic policies in which the metropole attempted to restrict access to colonial materials and markets within areas under its control.³⁸ By the late nineteenth century there was a marked movement away from this sort of protectionism in newly acquired areas and towards an internationalized conception of the role of colonial areas as being a free market in which any colonial power ought to be able to access resources and markets as well as being able to undertake civilizing missions. One of the clearest expressions of this shift is in the General Act of the Berlin Conference of 1885, whereby freedom of trade was established throughout the Congo basin despite it being the private property of King Leopold II.³⁹

³⁵ Kirsten Kamphuis, “Giving for Girls: Reconsidering Colonial Civilizing Missions in the Dutch East Indies through Charitable Girls’ Education.” *New global studies* 12, no. 2 (2018): 217–234., 220.

³⁶ Camilla Boisen, “The Changing Moral Justification of Empire: From the Right to Colonise to the Obligation to Civilise.” *History of European ideas* 39, no. 3 (2013): 335–353., 340.

³⁷ Peter J. Cain, “Character, ‘Ordered Liberty’, and the Mission to Civilise: British Moral Justification of Empire, 1870-1914.” *Journal of imperial and Commonwealth history* 40, no. 4 (2012): 557–578., 567.

³⁸ P. J. Cain, and A. G. Hopkins. “Gentlemanly Capitalism and British Expansion Overseas I. The Old Colonial System, 1688-1850.” *The Economic history review* 39, no. 4 (1986): 501–525., 518-519.

³⁹ “General Act of the Conference of Berlin Concerning the Congo.” *The American Journal of International Law* 3, no. 1 (1909): 7-25. Accessed February 2, 2021. doi:10.2307/2212022. Chapter III-IV, pg. 14-21.

The Berlin Conference was one of the earliest agreements among the European powers to codify their cooperation in the colonial sphere and establish the European civilizing mission as the primary justification for their presence in Africa.⁴⁰ In the General Act of the Berlin Conference, one can detect core features of this civilizing mission including the suppression of the slave trade, the improvement of the material conditions of the indigenous inhabitants, and the obligation to protect Christian missionaries working in Africa.⁴¹ The idea that the slave trade violated the basic morality of “civilized” nations can be traced back to the moral and religious conceptions in Britain in the early nineteenth-century, which expanded into other colonial nations, including the United States by mid-century, and by the 1880s was held as an international value of “civilized” morality.⁴² The change in attitudes towards slavery marked a significant departure from older colonial justifications, and thus distinguish this period of new imperialism from that of previous centuries.⁴³ This notion of an international mission against slavery reinforces the idea that the Berlin Conference marked a shift in ideas of colonialism from a strictly national notion of conquest and reward towards the idea that the administration of colonies involved both privileges and obligations, and that these obligations were owed to the indigenous population because of agreements between the major powers. At the Paris Peace Conference these same obligations, legitimated by agreements among the powers, became codified under the supervision of the League of Nations. Indeed, one finds explicit reference to the suppression of the slave trade in Article 22 of the League of Nations Covenant which established the mandates system, demonstrating the continuity between these international colonial agreements.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Camilla Boisen, 345.

⁴¹ “General Act of the Conference of the Berlin Concerning the Congo”, 12-13.

⁴² Boris Barth, and Rolf Hobson. *Civilizing Missions in the Twentieth Century*. Boston: BRILL, 2020., 2.

⁴³ Peter J. Cain, “Character, ‘Ordered Liberty’, and the Mission to Civilise: British Moral Justification of Empire, 1870-1914.”, 561.

⁴⁴ League of Nations Covenant, Article 22, Paragraph 5.

The improvement of material conditions for colonial peoples is a vague concept, but it can be understood as the intended result of the increase in trade relations with colonial areas, as well as the imposition of European-style administrative structures, and thus connected to the principle of good government.⁴⁵ These trade relations formed the core of European interests in the colonial sphere, with the civilizing mission serving as the justification for the imposition of European authority. Although the Congo basin was theoretically opened to the trade of all nations by the Berlin Conference, the government of the Congo actively worked to subvert this internationalization by excluding most foreign trade.⁴⁶ The arrangements emerging from this conference lacked sufficient enforcement mechanisms for the internationalization of colonial arrangements, a mistake that the negotiating parties at the Paris Peace Conference were careful to avoid in the mandated territories.

The Berlin Act also facilitated the movement of Christian missionaries throughout Africa so that they could spread Christian morality, generally seen as an integral part of the civilizing mission.⁴⁷ While the incorporation of Christian proselytizing had been a part of the older colonial models of the Spanish and Portuguese empires, the Berlin Act marked an important internationalization of the intersection of missionary activity and the civilizing mission by recognizing that missionary work did not need to be undertaken with the permission of the colonial state. This can be seen in the arrival of missionaries from European states that were not involved in African colonization, such as Sweden, whose missionaries established numerous outposts in the Congo Free State. This participation in the missionary aspect of the civilizing mission helped to justify the continued commercial exploitation of colonial areas and legitimize

⁴⁵ "General Act of the Conference of the Berlin Concerning the Congo", 12; Andrew Sartori, "The British Empire and Its Liberal Mission." *The Journal of modern history* 78, no. 3 (2006): 623–642., 627.

⁴⁶ Hersch Lauterpacht, and Elihu Lauterpacht, pg. 40.

⁴⁷ "General Act of the Conference of the Berlin Concerning the Congo", 12; Boris Barth and Rolf Hobson, 11.

the existing regimes in Africa despite their non-participation in colonial administration.⁴⁸

Facilitating missionary activities was a continuation of previous colonial practices, but the manner of its inclusion in the Berlin Act made explicit the international nature of the civilizing mission of which the missionaries were a part. Significantly, this represents one of the first steps towards the internationalization of the civilizing mission generally, as well as laying the groundwork for other forms of international inclusion within a given nation's colonial holdings, such as the open-door trade provisions that were included within the mandates.

Although the Berlin Conference reflects relatively little American influence (the United States did not even ratify the resulting Act), it marks an important moment for the internationalization of the civilizing mission underpinning European colonial expansion in the late nineteenth century. While one finds clear intimations of the conception of commercial exploitation, the imposition of European moral precepts, and the notion of good government (of the European variety), absent is any indication that the system was designed to result in any of these colonial territories becoming self-governing in the foreseeable future, as would be the case in an American civilizing mission.

Colonial Areas with Existing Governments: China and Morocco

While Africa was the focus of colonial activity in the late nineteenth century, China had become one of the most important colonial markets, to which all of the powers, including the United States, wanted access. Shortly after the American conquest of the Philippines, itself partially justified by expanding trading opportunities in China, the Boxer Rebellion against

⁴⁸ Wyatt MacGaffey, "Ethnography and the Closing of the Frontier in Lower Congo, 1885–1921." *Africa (London. 1928)* 56, no. 3 (1986): 263–279., 263.

foreign and Christian influences broke out in Northeastern China.⁴⁹ Historians have explained this rebellion as a rejection of the missionary activities of Western citizens and their commercial colonizing project. But the Boxer Rebellion also represents one of the first instances of the United States acting in concert with other colonial powers in pursuit of mutual commercial interests. Shortly after the insurrection against the Western powers erupted in China, a force was organized under the leadership of British Vice Admiral Sir Edward Seymour in which Austria-Hungary, France, Germany, Italy, Russia, Japan, and the United States participated.⁵⁰

This international force was able to work together despite internal rivalries because all of the powers had a shared interest in suppressing the rebellion and increasing their influence in China.⁵¹ This mission to quell the Boxer Rebellion not only highlights the international character of colonialism at the time. Their use of actions that the powers knew would alienate the local population were justified in part by the need to advance “civilization” in the region, a clear reference to the civilizing missions that legitimated colonialism elsewhere, shows the convergence of international colonialism around the concept of civilizing missions.⁵² The participation of the United States in this was a novel development, given that the Americans had refused British offers to participate in the Opium Wars, as well as their reluctance to set up a colony in China along the model of Hong Kong or Macau.⁵³ Although there was a convergence of American and European imperial practices, the Americans retained a certain distinctiveness even after this episode by declining its share of the reparations money that the Chinese

⁴⁹ Joseph A. Fry. “From Open Door to World Systems: Economic Interpretations of Late Nineteenth Century American Foreign Relations.” *Pacific historical review* 65, no. 2 (1996): 277–303., 282.; Alpheus Henry Snow *The American Philosophy of Government; Essays by Alpheus Henry Snow*. New York: G.P Putnam’s Sons, 1921., 352-353.

⁵⁰ Eric Ouellet, “Multinational Counterinsurgency: The Western Intervention in the Boxer Rebellion 1900-1901.” *Small wars & insurgencies* 20, no. 3-4 (2009): 507–527, 511.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 512

⁵² *Ibid.*, 523

⁵³ Teemu Ruskola. “Canton Is Not Boston: The Invention of American Imperial Sovereignty.” *American quarterly* 57, no. 3 (2005): 859–884., 869.

government had been forced to pay to the Western powers following its defeat and repurposing it into an educational trust for the Chinese.⁵⁴

Following the Boxer rebellion, the U.S. was integrated into European colonial networks and open-door policies were implemented in China, for both commercial and missionary ventures. This facilitated the expansion of American interests in China without committing the American government to administering any territory.⁵⁵ Here one can see the relationship between American policies in China and Latin America. In both cases, the United States insisted upon open economic access to the region on the basis of that its commerce would have a civilizing influence, as well as the willingness of the American government to resort to force should it feel that open-door was compromised. The precedents for American economic policies towards the mandates system were set: an open-door economic framework whereby all nations would have equal access to the resources and markets of the territories in question.

Following the Boxer Rebellion, the United States assumed a growing role in international colonial affairs, including participating in colonial conferences, most notably the Algeciras Conference of 1906. Convened in response to a Franco-German dispute over the alleged violation of some German rights by the French in Morocco, the U.S. called for an international conference to resolve the so-called Moroccan Crisis.⁵⁶ Although American interests in Morocco were limited, the United States played an important role in convening the Algeciras Conference and in formulating some of its key provisions including open-door economic policies.⁵⁷ Another decision was to create a central bank for Morocco controlled by Europeans and governed under

⁵⁴ Eric Ouellet, 523, 525.

⁵⁵ Teemu Ruskola, 870-871.

⁵⁶ Pitman B. Potter, "Origin of the System of Mandates Under the League of Nations." *The American political science review* 16, no. 4 (1922): 563–583., 577.

⁵⁷ Stephen Wertheim, "Reluctant Liberator: Theodore Roosevelt's Philosophy of Self-Government and Preparation for Philippine Independence." *Presidential studies quarterly* 39, no. 3 (2009): 494–518., 512.; William Roger Louis, *Great Britain and Germany's Lost Colonies, 1914-1919*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967., 29.

French law, a clear neocolonial policy intended to both foster economic development in the area while undermining the authority of the Sultan. The Algeciras Conference also established various forms of international oversight over aspects of the Moroccan state including inspections of the Moroccan police by the Swiss Army.⁵⁸ Practices that undermined the authority of the Sultan while retaining his position as the titular sovereign are reminiscent of policies of indirect rule adopted by the British and Americans in some parts of their respective empires, this is notable as an internationalization of Anglo-American colonial principles, which in this case can be largely attributed to the nature of the Moroccan crisis being a Franco-German dispute in which the British and Americans played mediating roles. These provisions that facilitated European oversight of major sections of the Moroccan state seem to have been intended at least in part to promote a sort of civilizing mission within Morocco, although there are no references to the civilizing mission in the General Act of the conference, presumably because the Moroccan Sultan, who convened the conference, would have taken offence to such an inclusion.⁵⁹ The economic policies adopted at the Algeciras Conference also reflect a conviction on the part of the British and American delegations that by guaranteeing international rights in the colonial sphere, the potential for conflict between the colonial powers could be reduced.⁶⁰

The imposition of international oversight over Morocco was a response to Belgian control over the Congo Free State. Despite provisions of the 1885 Berlin Conference, Belgian authorities blocked international access and committed atrocities against the indigenous population. Many Americans played a key role in publicizing Belgian atrocities in the Congo, starting in 1890 with a report by George Washington Williams, leading to a treaty between the U.S. and the Congolese authorities barring slavery and limiting traffic in liquor and arms,

⁵⁸ "General Act of the International Conference of Algeciras, Signed April 7, 1906." *The American journal of international law* 1, no. 1 (1907): 47–78., Chapter 3, Art. 44, pg. 58; *Ibid.*, Chapter 1, Art. 7, pg. 51

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 47-48.

⁶⁰ Quincy Wright, "The United States and the Mandates.", 721.

provisions that were also included into the mandates.⁶¹ The idea at Algeciras was that the French and Spanish authorities would serve as the “mandatories” of the other powers in Morocco, maintaining order and preserving their commercial rights in the region, a concept that Quincy Wright attributed to President Roosevelt and his Secretary of State Elihu Root.⁶² While this early iteration of the mandate lacked the formalities associated with the postwar mandates system, one can see here the development of the basic concept under American auspices of a power assuming a mandate to ensure the continued commercial access of the other colonial powers to an area, as well as promoting the advancement of “civilization” within the area while maintaining order. It is also notable that this was done in a region which, unlike the Congo, had an indigenous government in place and was thus already beginning to conform to the American conception of colonialism in which the colonial power undertook administrative duties to prepare the region for eventual independence. The American presence at the Algeciras Conference produced a regime that was both more international in nature as well as more aligned with American conceptions of colonialism and the civilizing mission. The impact of the precedents set at Algeciras were to find expression in the construction of the mandates system at the Paris Peace Conference.

The nature of colonialism changed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries towards a more internationalized institution. This process occurred in conjunction with an increase in American involvement in colonial matters, both in terms of the creation of its own overseas empire and in its involvement in international colonial matters. During this period, international colonialism came to be justified principally in terms of the civilizing mission undertaken by European nations, and the United States. While the civilizing mission provided the theoretical justification for colonialism, it was the economic exploitation of the regions

⁶¹ M. Patrick Cullinane, “Transatlantic Dimensions of the American Anti-Imperialist Movement, 1899-1909.” *Journal of transatlantic studies*8, no. 4 (2010): 301–314., 302, 308.

⁶² Quincy Wright, “The United States and the Mandates.”, 721.

concerned that provided a fiduciary incentive for undertaking these civilizing missions. For all the similarities and cooperation that existed among the colonial powers, there were some differences in their civilizing missions, the most important of which was that the United States conceived of their imperial role as preparing peoples for eventual self-government.

Wartime Discussions

Although the First World War primarily took place in Europe, the war also spread to colonial theatres like the German Pacific islands, much of the Ottoman Middle East, and German East Africa, in which a force of Germans and Askaris fought until the end of the war.⁶³ Having conquered most German colonies by the middle of the war, the Allied Powers began to discuss how they would dispose of them. In the Middle East the military campaigns were less decisive than in Africa and the Pacific, but the Allied Powers nonetheless felt confident enough to draft agreements amongst themselves regarding the future disposition of these territories. While the Allied agreements in the Middle East were the most detailed, it was clear even as late as the Paris Peace Conference that Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa all wanted to annex the German colonies they had conquered during the war.⁶⁴

France held similarly annexationist views on the areas it had conquered in West Africa, having concluded agreements with the British regarding their postwar status in late August 1914.⁶⁵ Prior to 1918, neither the British nor the French made any indication that they intended to substantially alter their colonial practices in Africa, as both planned to expand their empires

⁶³ Alpheus Henry Snow, *The American Philosophy of Government; Essays by Alpheus Henry Snow*, 362.; Bill Nasson, 2014. "More Than Just von Lettow-Vorbeck: Sub-Saharan Africa in the First World War." *Geschichte und Gesellschaft (Göttingen)* 40 (2): 160–83. <https://doi.org/10.13109/gege.2014.40.2.160>., 160.

⁶⁴ Margaret MacMillan, *Paris 1919: Six Months That Changed the World*. 1st U.S. ed. New York: Random House, 2002., 48-49

⁶⁵ Michael Dennis Callahan, "Mandates and Empire in Africa: Britain, France, and the League of Nations Mandates System, 1914-1931". ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 1995., 20.

there through the annexation of German colonies.⁶⁶ There are few indications that the Belgians held a different view from the British and French in this regard, and the Italians were the most anxious for expansion following the conclusion of the 1915 Treaty of London. These promises, however, were made in the vague language of spheres of influence which neither explicitly promised nor precluded the annexation of territory.⁶⁷ Italy was perhaps the great power most anxious to gain territory as a result of the First World War, setting its sights on parts of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, in addition to its colonial claims, including formerly German and Ottoman territories, as well as British and French territories in the area of the Horn of Africa.⁶⁸ Japan managed to secure British agreement in early 1917 to its claims to the German concessions in China as well as the German islands in the Pacific north of the equator.⁶⁹ While the agreements regarding Africa and the Pacific were relatively vague, the inter-Allied arrangements regarding the Middle East were much more detailed, and included the Russians, whose share of the Middle East was set to include the areas nearest to their border in the Caucasus, as well as the city of Constantinople.⁷⁰

The Sykes-Picot agreement of January 1916 divided the Middle East into British and French territories, as well as an attendant sphere of influence adjacent to this territory. Palestine was set to be placed under an international administration, save for some territory allotted to Britain near the port of Haifa. The Sykes-Picot Agreement also mentioned the establishment of

⁶⁶ Ibid., 16

⁶⁷ C. M. Andrew and A. S. Kanya-Forstner. "The French Colonial Party and French Colonial War Aims, 1914–1918." *The Historical journal* 17, no. 1 (1974): 79–106., 91; Alan Sharp, *The Versailles Settlement: Peacemaking in Paris, 1919*, 175-176.

⁶⁸ Joseph V. Fuller and Tyler V. Dennett, eds., "Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States. The Paris Peace Conference, 1919. Volume I," Papers relating to the foreign relations of the United States. The Paris Peace Conference, 1919. Volume I § (1947), p. 422-441.

<https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1919Parisv01/d354>

⁶⁹ William Roger Louis, *Great Britain and Germany's Lost Colonies, 1914-1919*, 5.

⁷⁰ Margaret MacMillan, 374.

an independent Arab state (or confederation thereof).⁷¹ However, the agreement also provided that Britain and France would be able to establish direct control over some areas in the Arab Middle East. Despite guarantees of Arab autonomy, the peace envisioned in this treaty remained largely annexationist, and certainly did not include internationalized provisions like those that would become the mandates system.

At the Paris Peace Conference, the European and Dominion governments generally, and especially those of France and the British Dominions, expected that their conquest of German and Ottoman territories would result in a conventional division of spoils and the extension of their sovereignty over these new areas.⁷² But the principle of annexation of territory as spoils of war came to be unacceptable as a result of the Paris Peace Conference. The European governments did not suddenly undergo a change of heart in late 1917 or 1918 of their own volition, and their continued attempts during the conference to achieve a status for these territories as close to annexation as possible indicates that they continued to hope for annexation.

Two events in 1917 changed the course of colonial thinking during the First World War: the Russian revolution and the American entry into the war. The Russian Revolution necessitated recalculations on the part of the European powers, not least of which was a consideration of how the colonial world might respond to this ideological challenge to European hegemony. The principal challenge posed by the Russian revolution in the colonial sphere was the so-called “Decree on Peace” issued just a day after the October Revolution, in which Lenin called for a

⁷¹ John Quigley, “Leon Trotsky and the Prohibition Against Secret Treaties.” *Journal of the history of international law* 19, no. 2 (2017): 246–273., 255-256.

⁷² Joseph V. Fuller and Tyler V. Dennett, eds., “Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States. The Paris Peace Conference, 1919. Volume IX,” Papers relating to the foreign relations of the United States. The Paris Peace Conference, 1919. Volume IX § (1946), p. 859-860. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1919Parisv09/d44>; Joseph V. Fuller and Tyler V. Dennett, eds., “Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States. The Paris Peace Conference, 1919. Volume V,” Papers relating to the foreign relations of the United States. The Paris Peace Conference, 1919. Volume V § (1946), p. 1-3. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1919Parisv05/d1>

peace without annexations and on the basis of self-determination, as well as the end of secret diplomacy.⁷³ This declaration was coupled with the publication by the Bolsheviks of all the secret treaties they had found in the Russian government archives, including the Sykes-Picot Agreement.⁷⁴ The Russian communist stance on empires and annexations challenged the colonial ideologies of the Allies and undermined the peace terms they hoped to impose on the Central Powers.

President Wilson had won the 1916 election on a relatively slim margin and had campaigned on keeping the United States out of the war, and before the U.S. ultimately entered the war, he had made pronouncements regarding the idea that the war must end in a “peace without victory”.⁷⁵ Wilson ended up pushing for a declaration of war following the German sinking of the *Lusitania* and the infamous Zimmerman telegram, leading the United States to have a much greater say in the peace settlement. Among the most important policy pronouncements during the war was Wilson’s Fourteen Points speech, which offered an alternative interpretation of the key concept of self-determination advocated by Vladimir Lenin. Some have argued that Woodrow Wilson’s iconic Fourteen Points speech on January 8th, 1918 was made in part as a rebuttal to Lenin’s pronouncement.⁷⁶ While Wilson’s statements on the subject of self-determination in this speech were rather vague, the Allied governments vastly preferred any interpretation of this doctrine that was championed by the United States instead of the Bolsheviks, even if they resented the American interference with their previous agreements.

By the beginning of 1918 the need had arisen among the Allies to offer a vision of the postwar settlement that would be acceptable to both the European powers and to colonized peoples around the world agitating for independence. This challenge obliged the Europeans to

⁷³ Erik Goldstein, *The First World War Peace Settlements, 1919-1925*. London: Longman, 2002., 47.

⁷⁴ John Quigley, 247.

⁷⁵ David H. Burton, *Taft, Wilson, and World Order.*, 87

⁷⁶ Erik Goldstein, *The First World War Peace Settlements, 1919-1925.*, 6.

take more seriously the threat of nationalism and the concept of self-determination within their own empires and the territories they had been planning to annex after the war, a challenge that was met principally by the policy statements of the United States.

In early 1918, Allied policies and pronouncements regarding the nature of the peace began to shift. The Europeans believed that they must take Wilson's ideas about the postwar settlement more seriously since they had become more dependent on American military and financial assistance to their war effort.⁷⁷ On January 5, 1918, British Prime Minister Lloyd George publicly announced that Britain intended to support the establishment of an international organization to resolve disputes, echoing Wilson's call for a League of Nations after the war.⁷⁸ The French also altered their policies fearing American opposition if they appeared to be too annexationist with regard to German colonies.⁷⁹ Despite these shifts in Allied planning towards positions more in line with those of the United States, the British and French remained committed to the idea that Germany should be deprived of its colonies at the end of the war. The loss would weaken the country militarily, as well as serving British and French colonial interests by consolidating the French Empire in Africa and helping to secure British positions in India and Southern Africa.⁸⁰ Here one can see the contradictions present in the partial Americanization of Allied policy, as they were willing to accept the Wilsonian concept of self-determination as applicable in Eastern Europe, but remained hesitant to extend this concept to colonial peoples.⁸¹ The result of these concessions was that by mid-1918 the European Allies had accepted that Wilsonian ideas would apply to Europe, though not without contest and compromise.

⁷⁷ B. J. C. McKercher, "The Quest for Stability: British War Aims and Germany, 1914-1918." *Diplomacy and statecraft* 30, no. 2 (2019): 201–227., 208.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 213.

⁷⁹ C. M. Andrew and A. S. Kanya-Forstner, 99.

⁸⁰ Michael Dennis Callahan, 3.

⁸¹ B. J. C. McKercher, 212.

The conception of the peace settlement looked different in 1918 from 1916. The entry of the United States and the collapse of Russia had fundamentally changed the geopolitical calculations in Europe and had opened a new field of ideological confrontation that was to last for most of the twentieth century. Despite these momentous shifts, the projected colonial settlements remained largely unchanged from 1914-1915, save for the acceptance that Russia would not receive a share in the partition of the Ottoman Empire. The issue confronting the leaders of Britain and France, and to a lesser extent Italy, was that they had publicly accepted Woodrow Wilson's almost messianic promises of self-determination, no annexations, and a peace without victory, all while planning to annex large swaths of territory from the German and Ottoman empires. Within the French government and populace there existed an anti-imperialist faction composed mainly of Socialists and connected with anti-imperialists in Britain, but the majority of the French government and people demanded annexations in both the Middle East and Africa.⁸²

Within the British Empire the situation was more nuanced, mainly because the British government had to contend with the greatly strengthened dominions. The southern dominions of South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand were all major advocates of an annexationist policy because they stood to gain territory legally which they had already been administering for some years under military occupations.⁸³ The Canadian delegation was opposed to the idea of annexations as they had little to gain and feared that such a policy could upset the Americans.⁸⁴ This division within the British Empire delegation to the Paris Peace Conference was a source of considerable difficulties in resolving colonial issues, especially since British Prime Minister

⁸² Ernst B. Haas "The Reconciliation of Conflicting Colonial Policy Aims: Acceptance of the League of Nations Mandate System." *International organization* 6, no. 4 (1952): 521-536, 524-525.

⁸³ William Roger Louis, *Great Britain and Germany's Lost Colonies, 1914-1919*, 81.

⁸⁴ Alan Sharp, *The Versailles Settlement: Peacemaking in Paris, 1919*, 161.

Lloyd George had invited Dominion representatives into his Imperial War Cabinet, giving them a much greater say in decision-making than had previously been the case.⁸⁵

Thus, the colonial question remained an outstanding issue in 1918 even after the European Allies had accepted most of Wilson's ideas about the coming peace settlement. Moreover, the Germans had negotiated the armistice on the understanding that Wilson's Fourteen Points would be the basis of any future peace agreement.⁸⁶ The problem at this stage was the vagueness of these points, the subjectivity of their interpretation, and the basic unwillingness to some of the European Allies to adhere to the spirit, if not the letter, of the points. This uncertainty led to range of proposals on how to deal with areas that had been removed from the control of the defeated empires, most notably a book published by the Anglophile South African General, Jan Smuts, on December 16th, 1918 entitled *The League of Nations: A Practical Suggestion*.⁸⁷ In this book Smuts suggested that the League of Nations, should act as a trustee, or mandatary in Smuts' preferred terminology, over the territories separated from the Austro-Hungarian, Russian, and Ottoman empires.⁸⁸ Smuts excludes the German colonies from his suggestions on the grounds that these areas "are inhabited by barbarians, who not only cannot possibly govern themselves, but to whom it would be impracticable to apply any ideas of political self-determination in the European sense."⁸⁹ He further stated that these areas should be disposed of according to the fifth of Wilson's Fourteen Points, which concerned the adjustment of all colonial claims based on the principle that indigenous populations should have equal weight with the government whose title was being determined, but noted that these areas are a "special case" and advocated for their annexation and

⁸⁵ William Roger Louis, *Great Britain and Germany's Lost Colonies, 1914-1919*, 81.

⁸⁶ B. J. C. McKercher, 216-217.

⁸⁷ Pitman B. Potter, 565.

⁸⁸ Jan Christian Smuts, *The League of Nations; a Practical Suggestion*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1918., 12.

⁸⁹ Jan Christian Smuts, *The League of Nations; a Practical Suggestion*., 15.

held that the point concerning self-determination ought not to apply to these areas.⁹⁰ Smuts' proposals show the syncretism of Wilsonian ideology and British imperialism that came to define the approach of the British delegation to the Paris Peace Conference, wherein they sought to annex some of the colonial territories of the defeated Central Powers while paying lip service to concepts of self-determination.

Smuts' proposal laid the foundations for the mandates system in important ways, including its justification on the grounds that the populations of some areas were not yet capable of governing themselves, and so would require "the guiding hand of some external authority to steady their administration."⁹¹ Other important suggestions include the idea that the mandatory state's position would be that of a "great trust" and that it should not be used for the private advantage of the mandatory state or its citizens.⁹² Smuts also suggested the right of appeal to the League on the part of the indigenous populations against the mandatory state, and that the League would have the right to remove the mandatory from its position as well as to lay down the terms of the mandate.⁹³ While there were a number of modifications made to Smuts' proposal before and during the Paris Peace Conference, most importantly the shift in its application from primarily European to colonial areas, this proposal has been correctly understood as the first step in the development of the mandates system.⁹⁴ Smuts' proposal reflects numerous concepts derived from earlier colonial ideologies, including his attitude towards the "barbarian" peoples of the German colonies, which reflects widespread racist attitudes of Europeans towards Africans and other peoples since at least the nineteenth century. His emphasis on the role of government in the progress of civilization is clearly derived from British and American conceptions of the

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 21.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 21-22.

⁹⁴ Quincy Wright, "The United States and the Mandates.", 717.

civilizing mission, and the emphasis he places, on the importance of developing self-governing institutions among the peoples for whom he devised this system is a clear reflection of American, and particularly Wilsonian, colonial ideologies.

Smuts' proposal informed pre-conference deliberations on the future of German and Ottoman colonies. The discussion of colonies was the first major question addressed by the Paris Peace Conference.⁹⁵ Smuts' proposals include aspects of both British and American colonial ideology, demonstrating the adoption of American colonial ideas, most prominently the role of self-government and self-determination within the civilizing mission. While the European Allies may have been less than enthusiastic about the prospect of having their administrations curtailed by outside interference or external oversight and accountability, they believed that they had to accept some degree of limitation in order to retain American economic and military support, as well as to defend themselves ideologically against the Bolsheviks. It is from this vantage that we must understand the colonial question, and the formulation of the mandates system at the Paris Peace Conference and beyond.

⁹⁵ Alan Sharp, *The Versailles Settlement: Peacemaking in Paris, 1919*, 161.

Chapter 2: The Design and Meaning of the Mandates System

The proposal by South African statesman Jan Smuts at the end of 1918 laid the foundations for European and American thinking about the solution to Eastern European and colonial questions at the Paris Peace Conference. However, there were a number of other important proposals and preparations made by the various delegations to the Paris Peace Conference. Many of the plans for the postwar world were drafted by teams of experts assembled during and after the war by the key powers to prepare suggestions for some of the most complex issues addressed at the peace conference. In many cases these teams were rather nebulous in nature. The British delegation had to contend with numerous factions within its own ranks, including the Imperial government in London and the Dominions, as well as the India Office, the Foreign Office, and the Colonial Office. While Prime Minister Lloyd George had managed during the war to centralize most foreign policy decisions within his office, it proved impossible to hide the divisions within the British Empire delegation once the conference began.⁹⁶ These divisions were especially pronounced on colonial questions, most prominently between the annexationist Southern Dominions of Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa and the Imperial government in London alongside the Canadians under Prime Minister Robert Borden, who took a more conciliatory approach to President Wilson's mandates proposal.⁹⁷

The colonial question was implicated in the changing dynamics in imperial governance between Britain and the dominions. The British government was torn between placating the Americans in their drive for more international oversight and control, and the Dominion governments who wanted to annex new territories.⁹⁸ The ambivalent attitude of the Southern

⁹⁶B. J. C. McKercher, 202.

⁹⁷ Alan Sharp, *The Versailles Settlement*, 159-161.

⁹⁸ *Imperial War Conference, 1917. Extracts from Minutes of Proceedings and Papers Laid before the Conference*. 1918., 40-50; William Roger Louis, *Great Britain and Germany's Lost Colonies*, 45-46.

Dominions towards the growth of American power can perhaps be summed up in New Zealand Prime Minister William F. Massey's comment at the Imperial Conference of 1921 that the mixed "races", which he describes not only in terms of white and black but also in terms of Northern and Southern Europeans, of the United States were going to produce unpredictable results for the nation's future policies.⁹⁹ Massey was at the head of the New Zealand delegation to the Paris Peace Conference, and like his Australian counterpart, Prime Minister William H. Hughes, would prove to be one of the biggest opponents of the mandates system within the British Empire delegation.¹⁰⁰

One of the factors affecting the unity of the British Empire delegation was that New Zealand and Australia connected the issues of annexation with their desire to be represented as equals of the other nations at the Paris Peace Conference.¹⁰¹ This issue manifested itself in a number of ways, with the firm opposition of Australia and New Zealand both to the idea of the mandate system, and their reluctance to offer any part of the Pacific islands they had conquered during the war to the United States.¹⁰² The British Government, Borden, and Smuts were much less hostile to the idea of the Americans taking responsibility for one of the colonies detached from Germany; while Smuts was opposed to the idea of the Americans taking over South-West Africa, he and the British Government hoped that the United States might agree to take on German East Africa as a mandate.¹⁰³ Conversely, there were some within the British government who hoped that the former German East Africa could be opened to Indian enterprise and

⁹⁹ William Roger Louis, *American Anti-Colonialism and the Dissolution of the British Empire*, 395-396.

¹⁰⁰ Seth P. Tillman, 2015. *Anglo-American Relations at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919*. Vol. 2112. Princeton University Press., 95.

¹⁰¹ Ernst B. Haas, *The Reconciliation of Conflicting Colonial Policy Aims: Acceptance of the League of Nations Mandate System*, 532.

¹⁰² William Roger Louis, *Great Britain and Germany's Lost Colonies*, 110.

¹⁰³ Joseph V. Fuller and Tyler V. Dennett, eds., "Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States. The Paris Peace Conference, 1919. Volume I," *Papers relating to the foreign relations of the United States. The Paris Peace Conference, 1919. Volume I* § (1947),, doc. 347, pg. 407.

immigration since the White Dominions had been restricting immigration from India. It was hoped that by doing so they could placate some of the dissatisfaction in India with its having contributed to the war effort but having received comparatively little in return.¹⁰⁴ The divisions within the British delegation on the colonial issue were a significant factor in the creation of the different classes of mandates, which will be discussed in greater detail later. The combined opposition of the southern dominions helped to create the class C mandates in the Pacific and South West Africa, as well as pushing the conference to be more accepting of French demands in the colonial sphere.

The French delegation to the Paris Peace Conference capitalized on their position as the host of the conference by using the opportunity to take foreign representatives, particularly President Wilson, to the sites of some of the great battles of the First World War. The point was to impress upon them the need to be strict with Germany in order to prevent a another war.¹⁰⁵ French President Clemenceau adopted the attitude that France had suffered the most from the war in most aspects of the negotiations, and he stressed the need for France to be prepared for another war against Germany, which proved to be a major factor in the deliberations over France's rights within its mandated territories in West Africa.¹⁰⁶ While the French delegation as a whole, and Foreign Minister Poincaré in particular, were advocates for the acquisition of German colonies in Africa, and of territories and concessions in the Middle East, Clemenceau did not view these as major priorities.¹⁰⁷ Despite Clemenceau's view that the colonial question was not a major priority for France, the perception of many in France's powerful colonial lobby was that the mandates system was an Anglo-American construct designed at France's expense,

¹⁰⁴ *Imperial War Conference, 1917. Extracts from Minutes of Proceedings and Papers Laid before the Conference.* 1918., 161-162.

¹⁰⁵ Margaret MacMillan, *Paris 1919*, 22.

¹⁰⁶ Alan Sharp, *The Versailles Settlement*, 162.

¹⁰⁷ Margaret MacMillan, *Paris 1919*, 34.

with many feeling that they had earned those colonies through their exertions on the Western Front.¹⁰⁸ While the major French territorial claims were in Africa, there were also French claims in Lebanon and Syria that predated the First World War.¹⁰⁹ France had positioned itself to receive a share of the territorial spoils should the Ottoman Empire collapse. They strengthened their claims through the construction of railroads and educational institutions, and through the creation of extensive contacts with local Christian populations in the area.¹¹⁰ The French position regarding the colonies must be understood as having a relatively low priority, but one with tremendous psychological importance to many in the government and general public, who felt that French national honour was on the line. The impact of this view is highlighted by an incident in which Clemenceau apparently offered to duel with Lloyd George over the question of oil rights and troop withdrawals in Syria and Iraq.¹¹¹ This was combined with the sentiment that the mandates system, and the proposed peace more generally, was an Anglo-American invention which left France sidelined and vulnerable. These pressures combined to create a cynical attitude within the French delegation, which sought not only to ensure that French interests were protected in the former German and Ottoman Empires, but also sought to undermine the mandates system, particularly in Africa, to avoid having their colonial empire limited by Anglo-American oversight and interference.

Beyond the colonial question the French delegation to the Paris Peace Conference also disagreed with the British and Americans on the role of the League of Nations. The French conceived of the League as a vehicle to keep the peace, whereas the British conceived of it as a

¹⁰⁸ Peter Jackson, 2019. "Great Britain in French Policy Conceptions at the Paris Peace Conference, 1919." *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 30 (2): 358–97. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09592296.2019.1619039>, 378.

¹⁰⁹ William I. Shorrock, 1970. "The Origin of the French Mandate in Syria and Lebanon: The Railroad Question, 1901–1914." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 1 (2): 133–53. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020743800024016>, 133.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 133-134.

¹¹¹ Alan Sharp, *The Versailles Settlement*, 181.

venue to promote Anglo-American moral leadership in the international sphere.¹¹² These differing conceptions had a significant impact on the French view of the mandates system as serving the Anglo-American conception of the League, as well as their national interests, while doing little to promote French security concerns in Europe. Ultimately, a compromise was reached whereby the French would be allowed to recruit troops in their mandated territories in West Africa for use elsewhere, something that was strictly forbidden for any other mandates. The phrasing of this compromise, however, reflects Clemenceau's primary concerns about the ability of France to defend itself in the event of another major European war. As Article 3 of the French Mandate for Cameroons stated: "The Mandatory shall not establish in the territory any military or naval bases, nor erect any fortifications, nor organize any indigenous military force except for local police purposes and for the defence of the territory. It is understood, however, that the troops thus raised may, in the event of a general war, be utilized to repel an attack for the defence of the territory outside that subject to the mandate."¹¹³ Article 2 of the same Mandate confirmed French suspicions that the mandates system was an Anglo-American institution, as it stated that "The Mandatory shall be responsible for the peace, order and good government of the territory...".¹¹⁴ This phrasing exactly mirrored that employed in the British North America Act, and showed that the mandates system was indeed grounded in Anglo-American colonial thinking, much to the chagrin of the French, whose own colonial methodologies would have to be modified to fit into this new framework.¹¹⁵ On the whole, the French delegation was faced with an impossible task in attempting to make the colonial gains demanded by many of its citizens and officials, all while attempting to include protections against another European

¹¹² Peter Jackson, *Great Britain in French Policy Conceptions at the Paris Peace Conference*, 375.

¹¹³ "Convention Between the United States of America and France Relating to the Part of the Cameroons Under French Mandate." 1924. *The American Journal of International Law* 18 (4): 189–93. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2212745>, 190.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ *British North America Act, 1867, Section 91, pg. 33.*

conflict into the peace agreement, as well as trying to maintain good relations with the British and Americans, who, in French perceptions, were attempting to use the peace to establish themselves as the new moral leaders of the world.

When Wilson set sail aboard the *George Washington* for France, accompanied by most of the American delegation, as well as the team of experts known as The Inquiry, on December 4, 1918 he was lauded as the harbinger of a new world, one in which the concepts of self-determination, no annexations, and a peace without victory would prevail.¹¹⁶ At the head of The Inquiry was Colonel Edward M. House, a close personal friend and confidant of President Wilson, who had arrived in Europe during the war as Wilson's chief representative to the Allied powers.¹¹⁷ House was not a U.S. Army colonel, but rather had been granted the title honorarily in his home state of Texas, and was, like most of Wilson's delegation, a Southern Democrat, an imbalance that was to cost Wilson and his peace plans a great deal when the issue of the U.S. Senate ratifying the agreements which had been reached in Europe arose.¹¹⁸ The delegation also included individuals such as Henry White, who was, in addition to being the only Republican among the senior ranks of the American delegation, an experienced diplomat with a firm understanding of international colonialism, as he had been one of the chief American negotiators and signatories to the Algeiras Conference of 1906.¹¹⁹ The partisan nature of the American delegation was even noted by British Prime Minister Lloyd George and diplomat Harold

¹¹⁶ Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism*, 7.

¹¹⁷ Margaret MacMillan, Paris 1919, 18.

¹¹⁸ Margaret MacMillan, Paris 1919, 17-18.

¹¹⁹ Seth P. Tillman, Anglo-American Relations at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919, 59; "General Act of the International Conference of Algeiras, Signed April 7, 1906." 1907. *The American Journal of International Law* 1 (1): 47-78., 77.

Nicholson, who were concerned from the very beginning about the capacity of this delegation to negotiate a treaty that would be accepted by the American Senate.¹²⁰

Another key member of the American delegation was Secretary of State Robert Lansing, who, despite his close association with President Wilson, had some doubts about the practicability of Wilson's idealistic proposals for the solution of the world's problems.¹²¹ Concerns even arose during the conference that Lansing would be sent home because of the differences between himself and the President. However, both he and President Wilson felt that this would be embarrassing and might give the Senate further grounds to oppose Wilson's plans.¹²² Despite Lansing's presence, Wilson exercised almost complete control of American foreign policy, much to the chagrin of other members of the policy-making establishment.¹²³ The American delegation was thus neither particularly representative nor united at the Paris Peace Conference, and despite the enormous influence of Wilson's ideology the differences of opinion between him and the rest of his delegation plagued the American peacemaking effort.

The United States entered the Paris Peace Conference with a set of strong principles concerning the disposal of the colonial territories of the Central Powers, though with few practical plans as to their application. It was on board the *George Washington* en route to Paris that Wilson informed members of The Inquiry about American policies, and it was around this time that Wilson heard from House that the British and French were reaching private agreements on definite plans for the conference, leading Wilson to threaten to make separate peace agreements with the Central Powers.¹²⁴ This extreme reaction did not come to pass, but it reflects

¹²⁰ Seth P. Tillman, *Anglo-American Relations at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919*, 59; Harold Nicolson, *Peacemaking, 1919*. [New ed.]. London: Constable, 1945., 138.

¹²¹ Robert Lansing, 1921. *The Peace Negotiations: a Personal Narrative* Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin company., 186-187.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ David H. Burton, *Taft, Wilson, and World Order*, 93.

¹²⁴ Trygve Throntveit, "The Fable of the Fourteen Points: Woodrow Wilson and National Self-Determination." *Diplomatic History* 35, no. 3 (June 1, 2011): 445–481., 479; George Curry. 1961. "Woodrow

something of the American, and Wilsonian, attitude towards the peace conference. Wilson had come to Europe certain that his new brand of diplomacy, in which self-determination and no annexations formed the bedrock, would bring them independence and a lasting peace.¹²⁵

There was much support in Europe and colonial areas for Wilson's 14 points and conception of international affairs. However, Wilson's understanding of Wilsonism and other peoples' understanding of Wilsonism were often at odds, starting with the idea of self-determination. Wilson had not meant national self-determination in the sense of the right of each ethnicity to its own independent state, but rather in the Anglo-American sense of civic nationalism rooted in a common commitment among members of the nation to shared ideals and democratic self-government.¹²⁶ This must be understood as being rooted in Wilson's own experience of American civic nationalism. As New Zealand Prime Minister Massey had scornfully pointed out, the United States was composed of many different "races" or nationalities, and its effective democratic governance was premised on the notion that heterogeneous groups like this could cooperate to form a functional polity on the basis of democracy and self-government, without the need for a unified ethnic nationalism.¹²⁷ This concept of self-determination can be traced back to Wilson's experience of the multi-ethnic and multilingual United States, and reflects his general view that American principles could be universalized and would solve the issues of European nationalism and imperial rivalries.¹²⁸ Self-determination as a civic principle also emerged from Wilson's understanding of the history of the

Wilson, Jan Smuts, and the Versailles Settlement." *The American Historical Review* 66 (4): 968–86. <https://doi.org/10.1086/ahr/66.4.968>, 973.

¹²⁵ Hersch Lauterpacht, 32.

¹²⁶ Allen Lynch, 2002. "Woodrow Wilson and the Principle of 'national Self-Determination': a Reconsideration." *Review of International Studies* 28 (2): 419–36. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210502004199>, 424.

¹²⁷ William Roger Louis, American Anti-Colonialism and the Dissolution of the British Empire, 395-396.

¹²⁸ Trygve Throntveit, 463.

United States and its role in the Philippines.¹²⁹ Wilson, like many of his contemporaries, believed that self-government could only be achieved through a slow process of development grounded in the creation of a sense of civic identity and the rule of law that could be developed over many generations, and that this process of development was directly linked to the character of the nation working towards the development of self-government.¹³⁰ In this one can see the role of race and the notion of the civilizing mission as being fundamental to understanding Wilson's concept of self-determination, that the degree of preparedness for self-government justified the different classes of mandate and their differences in provisions for self-government. This same logic was used to distinguish between the resolution of the colonial and Eastern European settlements. Linked by the importance of self-determination as a guiding principle, these two areas received very different treatments by the peace conference with the creation of independent states in Eastern Europe, and the creation of mandates in the colonial world, this difference threatened to undermine colonized peoples' confidence in the Allied commitment to the idea of self-determination as anything more than an ideological slogan.

The British, French, and American delegations were the key makers of the peace agreement in general, and of the mandates system specifically. The Italian delegation played an important role early on in the conference, with Lloyd George, Clemenceau, Wilson, and Italian Prime Minister Vittorio Orlando constituting the "Big Four" who tended to isolate themselves from the larger conference to make important decisions.¹³¹ This group became formalized as the Council of Four in late March of 1919 in order to streamline negotiations, though rumours abounded that this creation was also intended to sideline Italian Foreign Minister Sidney

¹²⁹ Woodrow Wilson, edited by Ray Stannard Baker, and William E. Dodd. *The Public Papers of Woodrow Wilson*. Authorized ed. New York: Kraus Reprint, 1970. Volume I., 407, 410.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 407; Trygve Throntveit, 452.

¹³¹ Trygve Throntveit, 450-451.

Sonnino, who had provoked the ire of the Big Four, including Orlando himself.¹³² Orlando was always the odd one out in this group; the only one who did not speak English well, he was preoccupied with Italy's territorial claims in Europe and thus took little part in other important negotiations.¹³³ (Clemenceau used a translator throughout the conference, but he spoke English fluently as a result of having fought for the Union during the American Civil War.¹³⁴) The Italian delegation was ambitious in its desire to gain control of formerly Austro-Hungarian areas to their east, and although the principle of self-determination was violated on the grounds of defense in granting Italy the Brenner Pass as a frontier, Wilson was unwilling to support their claims in other areas such as Fiume, a position he explained to *Le Temps* on April 23, 1919, leading Orlando and the Italian delegation to walk out of the conference.¹³⁵ While the Italians returned to the conference with a new delegation later in the year, this left them largely unrepresented in discussions beyond the basic premises of the Versailles Treaty, the League, and the mandates system. The Italians thus gained none of the mandates and ended up with little of the territory or influenced promised to it in the 1915 Treaty of London and the 1917 Agreement of St.-Jean-de-Maurienne.¹³⁶

Japan was a novel inclusion at the Paris Peace Conference, and although it did end up with a share of the mandates in the North Pacific, it was represented only on the Council of Five where the foreign ministers discussed matters passed down to them from the Council of Four.¹³⁷ The chief Japanese concerns going into the peace conference were the acquisition of German territories in the Pacific north of the equator, and the acquisition of the former German

¹³² Margaret MacMillan, *Paris 1919*, 273.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 274.

¹³⁴ Erik Goldstein, *The First World War Peace Settlements*, 4.

¹³⁵ John Phillip Posey, 1967. "David Hunter Miller as an Informal Diplomat: The Fiume Question at the Paris Peace Conference, 1919." *The Southern Quarterly* 5 (3): 251-272., 263.

¹³⁶ Erik Goldstein, *The First World War Peace Settlements*, 27; Erik Goldstein, "Great Britain and Greater Greece 1917-1920." *The Historical Journal* 32, no. 2 (1989): 339-56. www.jstor.org/stable/2639605., 339.

¹³⁷ Margaret MacMillan, *Paris 1919*, 274.

concessions in China.¹³⁸ These ambitions had been supported by the British since at least February 1917, when they had sought to leverage this support for naval assistance from Japan.¹³⁹ The Japanese also attempted to insert a racial equality clause into the language of the Covenant of the League of Nations, which some have understood as a bargaining chip intended to help secure Japanese control over the former German concessions in Shandong.¹⁴⁰ Others have interpreted this proposal as a more sincere move by Japan, to reduce the discrimination faced by Japanese people in places such as the United States and the British Dominions, as well as to undermine the theory of white supremacy underlying much of European imperialism.¹⁴¹ The racial equality clause was defeated by the combined weight of the British, French, and American delegations, a rare instance of agreement between President Wilson and Australian Prime Minister Hughes.¹⁴² The failure of this clause, combined with the Japanese threat to walk out of the conference if their demands were not met, led Wilson to be concerned that his plans for the eastern hemisphere as a whole would be in jeopardy. As a result the conference was far from insistent on enforcing Wilsonian principles regarding the former German concessions in China.¹⁴³ This issue is indicative of the approach of the key delegations to the conference regarding colonialism. Though Wilson wished to modify the international colonial system, he did

¹³⁸ Robert Gerwarth, and Erez Manela. "The Great War as a Global War: Imperial Conflict and the Reconfiguration of World Order, 1911–1923*." *Diplomatic History* 38, no. 4 (September 2014): 786–800. doi:10.1093/dh/dhu027., 798; Joseph V. Fuller and Tyler V. Dennett, eds., "Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States. The Paris Peace Conference, 1919. Volume I," Papers relating to the foreign relations of the United States. The Paris Peace Conference, 1919. Volume I § (1947),, doc. 375, pg. 490-491.

¹³⁹ Alan Sharp, *The Versailles Settlement*, 164-165; Ernst B. Haas, *The Reconciliation of Conflicting Policy Aims: Acceptance of the League of Nations Mandate System*, 525.

¹⁴⁰ Noriko Kawamura. 1997. "Wilsonian Idealism and Japanese Claims at the Paris Peace Conference." *Pacific Historical Review* 66 (4): 503–26. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3642235>, 517.

¹⁴¹ Seth P. Tillman, *Anglo-American Relations at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919*, 301.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 302; S112, 41

¹⁴³ Patrick Cottrell, 2018. *The League of Nations: Enduring Legacies of the First Experiment at World Organization*. Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315680033>, 41-42; Robert E. Hannigan, 2017. *The Great War and American Foreign Policy, 1914-24* Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press., 224.

not wish to undermine it; his advocacy for open-door policies and self-determination ended where concerns over racial demography and influence began, and his conception of the hierarchy of races, with Anglo-Saxons firmly at the top, remained a guiding feature of the approach towards colonialism.¹⁴⁴

The remaining European delegations had less interest in the colonial issues at the Paris Peace Conference, with the Belgians and Portuguese being the only other Allied powers with major colonial concerns. Belgium had suffered considerable devastation during the war, and Belgian troops from the Congo had played a role in defeating the Germans in East Africa, leading them to a claim over some mandated territories in western East Africa, Ruanda and Urundi.¹⁴⁵ Portugal also wished to claim a mandate adjacent to one of its colonies in Africa, though it was not assigned any. It did receive full sovereignty over a small area on the border between Mozambique and German East Africa, the Kionga triangle, which it had recognized as German in a treaty in 1894.¹⁴⁶ Kionga is a notable exception to the application of the mandatory principle in former German colonies, and this was justified on the basis of earlier Portuguese claims to the territory.¹⁴⁷ The cession of Kionga to Portugal in full sovereignty was a clear violation of the Fourteen Points and the spirit of the mandates system in order to placate a minor ally, and can be considered as a colonial equivalent to the agreement that Italy should gain control of South Tyrol in violation of the principle of self-determination. The smaller European delegations, while unable to secure significant territorial gains for themselves in the colonial sphere, did manage to gain some notable concessions, including representation on the Permanent

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 166.

¹⁴⁵ Quincy Wright, "The United States and the Mandates." *Michigan law review* 23, no. 7 (May 1, 1925): 717–747., 727.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Joseph V. Fuller and Tyler V. Dennett, eds., "Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States. The Paris Peace Conference, 1919. Volume VIII," Papers relating to the foreign relations of the United States. The Paris Peace Conference, 1919. Volume VIII § (1946), <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1919Parisv08/ch19>, doc. 19, pg. 363.

Mandates Commission, and thus secured for themselves, much as Wilson had earlier desired, a powerful voice in the colonial affairs of the major powers.¹⁴⁸

A small number of delegations arrived from colonial territories, most notably a delegation to represent the Arabs headed by Emir Faisal, son of Emir Hussein of Mecca, King of Syria, and later King of Iraq, whose delegation was the only one present in Paris to represent an area that would be placed under mandate.¹⁴⁹ These colonial delegations received very little attention from the Big Four, and had little impact on the settlement of colonial questions, though Wilson was much more sympathetic to Faisal's arguments on the basis of self-determination than were the British and French who had territorial ambitions in the area.¹⁵⁰ While Faisal was largely unsuccessful in pressing his case for Arab independence, his lobbying efforts for a commission to travel to the Middle East to ascertain the desires of the locals pursuant to self-determination were well received by President Wilson.¹⁵¹ This commission was originally designed to be an international effort but, as Arthur Balfour complained, ended up as a principally American affair, known as the King-Crane Commission.¹⁵² This commission had some particularly American characteristics, namely that it followed Wilson's preferred methodology of appointing commissioners with whom he was personally connected, and that it was based on American colonial precedents, including President Cleveland's commission to Hawaii, and the 1899-1900 Philippines Commission.¹⁵³ The Wilsonian nature of this commission is further revealed by the

¹⁴⁸ David Hunter Miller. 1928. *The Origin of the Mandates System. Foreign Affairs.*, 281.

¹⁴⁹ Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, 2007. "The British Occupation of Mesopotamia, 1914-1922." *Journal of Strategic Studies* 30 (2): 349-77. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390701248780>., 366-367; Hermann Joseph Hiery, 1995. *The Neglected War: The German South Pacific and the Influence of World War I* Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780824864897>., 207.

¹⁵⁰ Erik Goldstein, *The First World War Peace Settlements*, 65.

¹⁵¹ Leonard V. Smith, 2016. "Drawing Borders in the Middle East after the Great War: Political Geography and 'Subject Peoples.'" *First World War Studies* 7 (1): 5-21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19475020.2016.1159594>., 14.

¹⁵² William Roger Louis, *The United Kingdom and the Beginning of the Mandates System, 1919-1922*, 89.

¹⁵³ Harley A. Notter, *The Origins of the Foreign Policy of Woodrow Wilson*. New York: Russell & Russell, 1965., 41-42; *Ibid.*, 128; Alpheus Henry Snow, 1902. *The Administration of Dependencies; a Study of the Evolution of the Federal Empire, with Special Reference to American Colonial Problems*. New York: G. P. Putnam's sons., 574.

choice of its leaders, Henry Churchill King, the president of Oberlin College and major Christian education reform advocate, alongside Charles Crane who was an heir to the Crane plumbing fixtures estate and major campaign donor to Wilson.¹⁵⁴ The choice of these two men instead of career diplomats or Middle East experts reveals Wilson's preference for a personal brand of diplomacy, as well as underlining his control over American foreign policy to the detriment of Congress in general and Republicans in particular.

Wilson hoped that by creating internationalized colonies, in which all League members would have economic access under the open-door policies, he could promote membership in the League and help to diffuse imperial rivalries.¹⁵⁵ This view is exemplified by Wilson's statements to a meeting aboard the *George Washington* on December 11, 1918 when he explained to American colonial expert George Louis Beer, that he envisioned the mandated territories as the "cement for the League of Nations, the common property which would hold it together..."¹⁵⁶ Wilson viewed the mandates as an integral part of a lasting peace; through their internationalization the rivalries of European imperialism could be cooled, and the whole of the civilized world brought to share equitably in the trade of the colonial sphere.¹⁵⁷ This conception of the mandates within the League held little meaning for the French delegation who viewed the League primarily as means to avoid another war in Europe, and an unwelcome limitation on their freedom of action within the colonies they hoped to acquire in Africa.¹⁵⁸ The British had similar concerns about freedom of action within mandated territories. For instance the administrator of

¹⁵⁴ Leonard V. Smith, *Drawing Borders in the Middle East after the Great War: Political Geography and 'Subject Peoples'*, 14.

¹⁵⁵ Robert E. Hannigan, *The Great War and American Foreign Policy 1914-24*, 172; Antony Anghie, 2002. "Colonialism and the Birth of International Institutions: Sovereignty, Economy, and the Mandate System of the League of Nations." *New York University Journal of International Law & Politics* 34 (3): 513–634., 588.

¹⁵⁶ William. Roger Louis, 1963. "The United States and the African Peace Settlement of 1919: The Pilgrimage of George Louis Beer." *Journal of African History* 4 (3): 413–33. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021853700004333>., 417.

¹⁵⁷ Michael Dennis Callahan, *Mandates and Empire in Africa: Britain, France, and the League of Nations Mandates System, 1914-1931*, 58.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 101.

German East Africa, Horace Byatt, had hoped to deny the return of a group of Swiss missionaries that he felt were connected with Germany, and the Colonial Office noted that the provisions of the mandates system regarding the freedom of movement for missionaries were likely to limit his ability to deny them entry.¹⁵⁹ Ultimately it was only the desire on the part of Britain to retain good relations with the Americans, and of the French to retain good relations with the British and Americans as insurance for another war against Germany, that led to the adoption of Wilson's philosophy regarding the mandates with so few caveats.

The Design of the Mandates System at the Paris Peace Conference

At the Paris Peace Conference the mandates issue was addressed in a nebulous manner, its general principles and structure being among the first issues to be addressed by the conference in January. It was largely resolved by January 30, when a resolution proposed by Lloyd George was accepted that the mandatory principle should be applied to all former German and Turkish territories.¹⁶⁰ Thereafter the mandates question was often shunted to the side for the conference to deal with matters that were felt to be more pressing, such as the issue of German reparations for the war.¹⁶¹ The result of these preliminary discussions was Article 22 of the draft League of Nations Covenant, which was to form the most important legal foundation for the existence of the mandate system.¹⁶² This article enshrined some of the key principles that had been proposed by both Smuts and Wilson before the conference, most notably the concept of the mandates as forming "a sacred trust of civilization" and the notion that the role of the mandatory is to act in

¹⁵⁹ Michael Dennis Callahan, *Mandates and Empire in Africa: Britain, France, and the League of Nations Mandates System, 1914-1931*, 74.

¹⁶⁰ Seth P. Tillman, *Anglo-American Relations at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919*, 99; Quincy Wright, *The United States and the Mandates*, 723.

¹⁶¹ Andrew J. Crozier, "The Establishment of the Mandates System 1919-25: Some Problems Created by the Paris Peace Conference." *Journal of contemporary history* 14, no. 3 (July 1, 1979): 483-513., 486.

¹⁶² *Miscellaneous. No. 3 (1919.) The Covenant of the League of Nations with a Commentary Thereon.* 1919., 8-9.

the interests of the inhabitants of the territory and to work towards the development of self-governing institutions.¹⁶³ Another key aspect of this article is the differentiation between three grades of mandate on the basis of “the stage of the development of the people, the geographical situation of the territory, its economic conditions and other similar circumstances.”¹⁶⁴ In this one can clearly see the influence of not only the civilizing mission as the underlying concept of the mandates system, but also the assumptions regarding racial hierarchies held by Wilson, Smuts, and many of their colleagues.

Article 22 divided the colonial territories into three categories corresponding to the racial hierarchies imagined by the powers, with the Middle Eastern areas of the former Ottoman Empire forming the highest-ranking group, said to “have reached a stage of development where their existence as independent nations can be provisionally recognized subject to the rendering of administrative advice and assistance by a Mandatory until such time as they are able to stand alone.”¹⁶⁵ Here one can see clearly the adoption of an American colonial ethos that the ultimate goal of colonial administration is self-government once they have reached a stage of development, in European terms, that would allow them to govern themselves effectively. The justification of tutelage in the Middle East was explicitly on racial grounds, with the British viewing the Arabs as “compulsively dishonest”, and the connection with American colonial experience was made explicit by Arthur Hirtzel, an important figure in the India Office, comparing the Arabs to the “Red Indians” in terms of their capacity for self-government.¹⁶⁶ Moreover, the Americans looked favorably upon the idea of European tutelage in the Middle

¹⁶³ *Miscellaneous. No. 3 (1919.) The Covenant of the League of Nations with a Commentary Thereon.* 1919., 9.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁶ Priya Satia, “The Defense of Inhumanity: Air Control and the British Idea of Arabia.” *The American historical review* 111, no. 1 (February 2006): 16–51., 20; Timothy J. Paris, “British Middle East Policy-Making after the First World War: The Lawrentian and Wilsonian Schools.” *The Historical Journal* 41, no. 3 (1998): 773-93. Accessed December 10, 2020. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2639903>., 779.

East as an inexpensive way to protect their economic interests in the region, an idea which was furthered by their own experience with interventions in Latin America in order to protect their economic interests there.¹⁶⁷

The next category of mandates were to be found in central Africa, where the mandates were to be “responsible for the administration of the territory under conditions which will guarantee freedom of conscience or religion, subject only to the maintenance of public order and morals, the prohibition of abuses such as the slave trade, the arms traffic and the liquor traffic, and the prevention of the establishment of fortifications or military and naval bases and of military training of the natives for other than police purposes and the defence of territory, and will also secure equal opportunities for the trade and commerce of other Members of the League.”¹⁶⁸ Here one can see specific aspects of the colonial civilizing mission integrated into the language of the covenant, most notably that the maintenance of public order and morals is the responsibility of the mandatory power, the implication being that such peoples would be incapable, or unwilling, to undertake these responsibilities themselves. Furthermore, this type of mandate includes provisions relating to the freedom of commerce within such territories for members of the League, a provision that satisfied not only Wilson’s conception of the role of the mandates as an incentive for League membership, but also a reflected American commercial primacy at the time, which would have enabled them to reap the benefits of colonial control of these territories without having to bear the burdens of administration.¹⁶⁹ This concept of American economic imperialism through penetration of new markets without administering them has been traced by some authors as far back as the 1890s, demonstrating that this is an

¹⁶⁷ Peter Sluglett, "An Improvement on Colonialism? The 'A' Mandates and Their Legacy in the Middle East." *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)* 90, no. 2 (2014): 413-27. Accessed January 11, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24538563>, 418-419.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Robert Grewarth and Erez Manela, *The Great War as a Global War: Imperial Conflict and the Reconfiguration of World Order, 1911-1923*, 798-799.

application of older American foreign policies to changed circumstances, rather than an innovation in American policy.¹⁷⁰

The final category of mandates was to be found mainly in the Pacific, as well as South-West Africa, “which, owing to the sparseness of their population, or their small size, or their remoteness from the centres of civilisation, or their geographical contiguity to the territory of the Mandatory, and other circumstances, can best be administered under the laws of the Mandatory as integral portions of its territory, subject to the safeguards above mentioned in the interests of the indigenous population.”¹⁷¹ Here one can see the willingness of the conference to compromise some of the principles of the mandates system in order to placate the delegations that had opposed the system, namely Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and Japan, justified by the racist conceptions of the powers regarding colonized peoples in these areas. This was done by allowing the imposition of essentially domestic laws to these territories, and the exclusion of certain key provisions of the system such as the open-door, as well as a much laxer approach to the eventual independence of the territories. This class of mandate amounted to little more than annexation subject to oversight by the League of Nations, and the idea of the “sacred trust of civilisation” as outlined in the first paragraph of Article 22, which was hoped would prevent abuses against the indigenous inhabitants.¹⁷²

While the implementation of this category of mandates must be understood in part as a concession to the Dominions by the conference to gain their acquiescence on other aspects of the peace settlement and the mandates system more generally, this did not prevent a number of protests being raised by the United States against the exclusion of their missionaries and trade

¹⁷⁰ Joseph A. Fry, *From Open Door to World Systems: Economic Interpretations of Late Nineteenth Century American Foreign Relations*, 279.

¹⁷¹ *Miscellaneous. No. 3 (1919.) The Covenant of the League of Nations with a Commentary Thereon*. 1919., 9.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 8-9; Nele Matz. 2005. “Civilization and the Mandate System Under the League of Nations as Origin of Trusteeship.” *Max Planck Yearbook of United Nations Law* 9 (1): 47–95.
<https://doi.org/10.1163/138946305775160483>, 76-77.

from Pacific islands that were so mandated.¹⁷³ The Americans also protested their economic exclusion from some of these territories, though they appear to have felt that the majority of these mandates were of little importance to them. They were concerned that South Africa now considered South-West Africa to be united in customs with the Dominion, meaning that they could legally discriminate against American trade there, and had similar issue with the Australian treatment of potential oil deposits in New Guinea being reserved for the exploitation of the mandatory power.¹⁷⁴ A key aspect of the agreement to create this class of mandates, which violated most of the basic ideas behind the mandates system, was the issue of immigration. Both Australia and New Zealand were concerned at the time with excluding Asian immigrants from their countries, and this concern extended to the colonies they had captured during the war.¹⁷⁵ The question of Japanese immigration was also pressing for the United States, which was concerned with increasing immigration to the west coast and Hawaii, and worried that the Japanese proposals for racial equality would limit the ability to restrict immigration on the basis of race.¹⁷⁶ The Americans were also concerned, like the Australians and New Zealanders, that the Japanese would fortify their new Pacific territories, something that the requirements of the mandates would, at least theoretically, prevent.¹⁷⁷ The combination of these issues, coupled with the relative lack of American economic interests in what were to become the C mandates, explains the willingness of the conference to concede so many of the key principles of the mandates system for these territories.

¹⁷³ Andrew J. Crozier, *The Establishment of the Mandates System 1919-25: Some Problems Created by the Paris Peace Conference*, 503.

¹⁷⁴ Quincy Wright, *The United States and the Mandates*, 727; Andrew J. Crozier, *The Establishment of the Mandates System 1919-25: Some Problems Created by the Paris Peace Conference*, 503.

¹⁷⁵ Alan Sharp, *The Versailles Settlement*, 164.

¹⁷⁶ Joseph V. Fuller and Tyler V. Dennett, eds., "Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States. 1920, Volume III," *Papers relating to the foreign relations of the United States. 1920, Volume III* § (1936), <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1920v03/d9>, doc. 9, pg. 18-19.

¹⁷⁷ Leon H. Weaver. 1944. "International Government in the Pacific." *Far Eastern Survey* 13 (25): 238-41. <https://doi.org/10.1525/as.1944.13.25.01p1514v.>, 239.

The mandate classes and their locations were worked out in January of 1919 and integrated into the Covenant of the League of Nations, thereby enshrining a Wilsonian conception of their role as internationalized colonies within the new international legal system. While this was a momentous step towards solving the so-called “colonial issue” at the Paris Peace Conference, the problems surrounding the mandates system were far from solved at the end of January. The major issue remaining was the allocation of the mandates, which was particularly important to the southern dominions, the French, the Japanese, the Belgians, and to some within the American delegation. Wilson had initially favored the idea of giving the mandates to small powers, though he was not specific about what he meant; one can surmise that he was probably referring to smaller European nations such as Norway or the Netherlands, given his strong preferences for Northern Europeans.¹⁷⁸ This idea was impractical for several reasons. As Wilson’s expert on Africa G. L. Beer noted, nations with few resources and little colonial experience could hardly be expected to be more effective than larger empires in colonial administration.¹⁷⁹ This issue was even more concerning given that one of the main arguments for removing Germany from its colonies was that it had not conducted its civilizing missions effectively, and had committed abuses against the indigenous inhabitants.¹⁸⁰ Even if the record of a small power were better than Germany’s, which was certainly not the case with Belgium, the Wilsonian program for mandatory administration required a combination of economic might, colonial experience, and disinterestedness that small nations had a very hard time meeting. While the available sources make it difficult to trace exactly when Wilson came to this realization, members of his and other delegations seem to have realized quickly that the mandates would

¹⁷⁸ William Roger Louis, *The United States and the African peace Settlement of 1919: The Pilgrimage of George Louis Beer*, 417.

¹⁷⁹ William Roger Louis, *The United States and the African peace Settlement of 1919: The Pilgrimage of George Louis Beer*, 417.

¹⁸⁰ Mads Bomholt Nielsen. 2020. “Delegitimizing Empire: German and British Representations of Colonial Violence, 1918-19.” *International History Review* 42 (4): 833–50. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07075332.2019.1647868>, 834.

have to be administered by the great powers, an idea that was hardly offensive to the French delegation and to some parts of the British and American delegations.

Another issue was whether the United States would take on any mandates, and if so, which ones. The British had made offers to the Americans regarding possible administration of the former German East Africa in October of 1918, which Colonel House interpreted as a cynical maneuver to improve Britain's ability to acquire other territories.¹⁸¹ East Africa was held by many to be the most valuable of the African colonies made available as result of the war, but American experts such as G. L. Beer felt that it was too distant from the United States to be valuable, and preferred the idea of acquiring a mandate in West Africa, especially in Cameroons.¹⁸² Wilson seems to have rejected the idea of the United States accepting any mandates in Africa or Asia, but was open to the possibility of accepting mandates in the Middle East, where he expressed particular interest in Armenia and the Turkish Straits area.¹⁸³ The British seem to have wanted the Americans to take mandates in this area, possibly because the United States could serve as a buffer between British and Russian territories. The Americans would then be responsible for the fate of the Sultan and the Turks, an issue of great sensitivity to many Muslims living in British territories, particularly in India.¹⁸⁴ Wilson knew that many Americans, and much of the American government, were hesitant to take on military commitments in Asia and noted that he was unable to commit the United States to assuming any

¹⁸¹ Joseph V. Fuller and Tyler V. Dennett, eds., "Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States. The Paris Peace Conference, 1919. Volume I," Papers relating to the foreign relations of the United States. The Paris Peace Conference, 1919. Volume I § (1947), doc. 347, pg. 407.

¹⁸² George Louis Beer; Louis Herbert Gray, Editor. 1923. *African Questions at the Paris Peace Conference, with Papers on Egypt, Mesopotamia, and the Colonial Settlement*. New York, Macmillan Company., 23, 436.

¹⁸³ Joseph V. Fuller and Tyler V. Dennett, eds., "Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States. The Paris Peace Conference, 1919. Volume V", doc. 62, pg. 583-584; Robert E. Hannigan, *The Great War and American Foreign Policy 1914-24*, 207.

¹⁸⁴ Seth P. Tillman, *Anglo-American Relations at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919*, 367-368; Alan Sharp, *The Versailles Settlement*, 171.

mandates until he could return to consult with the U.S. government.¹⁸⁵ Clearly the delegation was aware that the desire to expand the American role in international colonialism was not shared by all Americans. Wilson's choice of potential American mandates is also telling, as these were held to be among the most civilized areas to be mandated; the Americans would not have to remain long in a mandatory role and could serve as an example of how a mandate could be guided towards self-government.¹⁸⁶

The issue of selecting mandatories would last well beyond the Paris Conference, but it seems that by May 6th Wilson had come to accept that the mandates would generally be assigned to those powers that had conquered them during the war.¹⁸⁷ This must be understood essentially as the recognition of a *fait accompli*, as the use of military force to dislodge a power such as Japan or New Zealand from a portion of its conquered territory would be disastrous to the general international order that Wilson was attempting to construct. Even if technically feasible, the military forces required would not be forthcoming from any power. This recognition did not preclude negotiations between the victorious powers; indeed, the British had been in occupation of Syria since 1918 and this territory ended up being mandated to France. But it meant that Wilson's original vision of small powers assuming the mandates was dead, and that the settlement of this issue was likely to closely resemble the horse-trading of past peace agreements.¹⁸⁸ While this was far from a complete victory for Wilson's vision for the future of colonialism, the establishment of the system of mandates at all, and the creation of the different mandate classes with their particular stipulations, must be understood as being, to a great degree, the result of American influence. Of particular note in this regard are the acceptance of the idea

¹⁸⁵ Joseph V. Fuller and Tyler V. Dennett, eds., "Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States. The Paris Peace Conference, 1919. Volume V", doc. 62, pg. 583.

¹⁸⁶ Robert Lansing, *The Peace Negotiations: a Personal Narrative* 159-160.

¹⁸⁷ Alan Sharp, *The Versailles Settlement*, 163.

¹⁸⁸ Ernst B. Haas, *The Reconciliation of Conflicting Colonial Policy Aims: Acceptance of the League of Nations Mandate System*, 530.

that the ultimate goal of colonialism is the creation of self-governing peoples and states within the colonized areas, a significant break from French practice, and a modest break from British precedents, but a clear continuation of American policies in the Philippines since the Roosevelt administration.¹⁸⁹ This can be seen clearly in that it was not on the basis of the consent of the governed that the mandates were imposed, much as the Philippines had not consented to American governance, but the idea that civilizing missions culminating in eventual self-government justified imperial rule.¹⁹⁰ Another key aspect of the mandates that demonstrates their Americanized character is the provision of open-door economic and missionary policies in the A and B class mandates, which not only fit American ideological predilections for free trade, but also served American business interests in the mandates and aligned nicely with the precedents the United States had set in Latin America.

While the resolution of the colonial question at the Paris Peace Conference failed to achieve Wilson's idealistic goals, it succeeded in enshrining key American principles into the League of Nations and the international colonial system. The mandates system that resulted from these principles bears a striking resemblance to the manner in which the United States organized its territories and colonies at the time: an analogy can be drawn between the relationship the U.S. government had to its territories in the American west, to the relationship between the League of Nations and the class A mandates, whereby the League or the federal government exerted an ever-diminishing level of authority as the state prepared for nationhood or statehood, subject to the approval of the League of Nations, or of Congress. A similar analogy can be drawn between the relationship of the League and the B mandates to the American administration of the Philippines, wherein less authority is vested in the indigenous government, in part because of the

¹⁸⁹ Stephen Wertheim, "Reluctant Liberator: Theodore Roosevelt's Philosophy of Self-Government and Preparation for Philippine Independence." *Presidential studies quarterly* 39, no. 3 (2009): 494–518., 495.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

conception that the inhabitants were inherently less civilized, and thus less prepared for self-government, and because the level of economic development in the territory was such that they were held to be incapable of negotiating with other nations as equals. The class C mandates then must be understood by analogy to the Insular Territories of the U.S. government, which were held to be so small and weak that there was no reasonable prospect for them to achieve self-government in the foreseeable future. They must be protected by a major power lest they fall victim to the abuses of a larger power not so altruistically inclined as the United States, or as the mandatory powers under the guidance of the League of Nations.

Chapter 3: Implementation of the Mandates System

We shall now turn to the implementation of the system after the Paris Peace Conference. To demonstrate that the system represented an Americanization of international colonialism this chapter will begin by looking at the withdrawal of the United States from the League of Nations and the failure of the Senate to ratify the Treaty of Versailles. This overview will highlight the continued influence of Wilsonian ideology, as well as showing how the new American administrations continued to directly influence the mandates, albeit in a less ideological and more self-serving manner than at Paris. Thereafter we shall look at the assignment of the mandates in the early 1920s and the transitions between military occupation and mandatory regimes, to understand how the mandates complied with both the ideologically Americanized version of colonialism envisioned by the League Covenant, and with American neocolonial practices that had been developed before the First World War. This analysis will then move to the operation of the many safeguards in the mandates system to ensure that the mandated territories would be administered as a “sacred trust of civilization”. This chapter will then conclude with a brief case study of Iraq, the only mandate to achieve its independence before the Second World War, to understand how and why the system facilitated independence here and not in the other mandates. This analysis will reveal that in addition to the slow internationalization of colonialism beginning in the nineteenth century and the surge in American ideological influence that resulted in the creation of the mandates system, even after the isolationist turn of the United States following Wilson’s death and the non-entry of the United States into the League of Nations, the mandates system continued to represent American ideology, and continued to be responsive to American influence through both direct and indirect means.

From Wilsonism to Self-Interest

The Paris Peace Conference ended in June of 1920 as the League of Nations in Geneva prepared to become the main centre of international negotiations, with the League Council holding its first meeting on January 16, 1920.¹⁹¹ The transition from the Paris Peace Conference to the League of Nations as the main forum for international deliberation was a slow but purposeful move, though it never fully replaced bilateral and multilateral negotiations between the powers, especially since the United States never ratified the Treaty of Versailles nor joined the League. Despite Wilson and the American delegations attempts to formulate the league covenant and the peace treaties in a way that would be acceptable to the U.S. government as a whole, they were not able to overcome the resistance of a group of Republican Senators known as the “Irreconcilables”.¹⁹² These staunch opponents of the Covenant were not alone in opposing Wilson’s agreements, and it would be a mistake to attribute the failure to ratify the Treaty of Versailles entirely to animosity between the parties. Some Republicans, including former president William Howard Taft, were enthusiastic supporters of the League of Nations, while others held reservations, but not as strongly as the Irreconcilables.¹⁹³ The failure to ratify the Treaty and join the League was the result of a complex mixture of motives, including issues such as the “six votes of the British Empire” and concerns that the United States would find itself entangled in European conflicts.¹⁹⁴ Article 22 and the mandates system seem not to have attracted much attention during the ratification debates in the Senate. However, the issue of a single colonial area, the Shantung concessions, proved contentious enough that after the Senate enunciated its reservation in late August, 1919, that the decision to award Shantung to Japan

¹⁹¹ "Proces-Verbal of the First Meeting of the Council of the League of Nations," League of Nations Official Journal 1, no. 1 (February 1920): 17-26, pg. 17.

¹⁹² Robert E. Hannigan, 236.

¹⁹³ David H. Burton, 74; Robert E. Hannigan, 236.

¹⁹⁴ Seth P. Tillman, 298-299; Robert E. Hannigan, 234

should be reversed and the area be awarded to China was enough to spur Wilson into a cross-country tour in the hopes of convincing the American people to support the treaties he had negotiated.¹⁹⁵

It was during this tour that Wilson's health failed him, and though he would live until 1924, he was not the man he had been, with many observers noting that he had begun to have angry outburst and often forgot things.¹⁹⁶ With Wilson's health failing, American foreign policy had lost a key figure, and although the concept of the League of Nations remained popular with many Americans, this was not enough to overcome the resistance of the mainly Republican Senators who were concerned about the implications of the League for American sovereignty and freedom of action.¹⁹⁷ The concerns of these Senators included the protection of the Monroe Doctrine from outside interference, which helps to show that although Wilson's foreign policy had not necessarily represented the American government, his concepts of neocolonialism were widely held across party lines.¹⁹⁸ The League remained a major issue in the Presidential election of 1920, with the Democratic candidate, former Ohio Governor James M. Cox, campaigning on a Wilsonian platform, and Republican candidate Warren G. Harding playing coy on the issue so as not to divide his party.¹⁹⁹ The result of the election was an overwhelming Republican victory in both the popular vote and the electoral college, with the Democrats retaining strong support only in the South.²⁰⁰ This Republican victory, based in part on appeals against certain aspects of the League of Nations, represents a major change in American foreign policy, and the separation of Wilsonian influence, itself grounded in American historical precedent, and direct U.S. influence

¹⁹⁵ Margaret MacMillan, *Paris 1919*, 490.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 490-491.

¹⁹⁷ Robert E. Hannigan, 236-237.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 237

¹⁹⁹ Robert J. Brake, 1969. "The Porch and the Stump: Campaign Strategies in the 1920 Presidential Election." *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* 55 (3): 256-67. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00335636909382952>, 258.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 256, 263.

through a now largely self-interested foreign policy. The new American foreign policy did not shy away from global engagement but held a different view of how the United States ought to interact with the world, choosing to eschew the broad multilateralism of Wilson and the League of Nations in favour of a more bilateral approach.

The new American administration continued to assert that it had rights in the mandated territories even though it had not joined the League, arguing instead that rights in those territories derived mainly from the right of conquest.²⁰¹ These rights, they asserted, were derived from being a major member of the Allied and Associated Powers; as such they had contributed to the overall victory over Germany and were thereby entitled not only to the same rights in mandated territories that were granted to all League members, but also to approve specific mandate assignments and agreements.²⁰² The United States continued to assert that it had the full rights to which it would have been entitled as a member of the league, even including provisions in treaties with mandatory powers to be furnished with a copy of the annual report on the mandate that was to be provided to the Permanent Mandates Commission.²⁰³ It is clear that while the United States was retreating from certain forms of international engagement, it was not withdrawing from participation in the mandates system, but was merely adopting a more pragmatic tack in its dealings with the mandates. It continued to insist on retaining all the rights afforded to League members, grounding this not in Wilsonian multilateralism but in a more traditional American neocolonial attitude in which economic interests are put before ideological concerns or considerations of global diplomacy.

²⁰¹ *Treaty Series No. 22 (1926). Convention Between the United Kingdom and the United States of America Respecting the Rights of the Governments of the Two Countries and Their Respective Nationals in the Former German Colony of East Africa Signed at London, February 10, 1925.* 1926., 331.

²⁰² Quincy Wright, *The United States and the Mandates*, 745-746.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*

The Allocation of the Mandates

The change in American administration had little impact on the ability to influence events in the mandates system, most notably the assignment of mandatories. Although the legal bases of the mandates were to be found in the Covenant of the League of Nations and the Treaty of Versailles, the assignment of mandatories remained within the purview of the Principal Allied and Associated Powers.²⁰⁴ The role of the League in the mandates began once they had been assigned, meaning that although the League remained a major venue for the discussion of territories to be mandated, it was ultimately the decision of the Allied and Associated Powers which country would be assigned a given mandate.²⁰⁵

While the broad outlines of the allocation of mandates had been worked out during the Paris Peace Conference, there were considerable delays in the formal assignment of mandatories because of realities on the ground and reservations held by the powers, particularly the United States. The C mandates were the first to be confirmed by the League Council, on December 17, 1920.²⁰⁶ These mandates were assigned along the lines of military conquest during the war, with South-West Africa being assigned to South Africa, the Pacific islands north of the equator to Japan, Western Samoa to New Zealand, New Guinea and associated islands to Australia, and Nauru to the British Empire as whole with Australia acting as the mandatory administrator.²⁰⁷ It is notable that for all their bluster over the issue of mandates, the Southern Dominions ultimately received very little in terms of territory or population, with Australia gaining only 392,816

²⁰⁴ Denys P. Myers, 1921. "The Mandate System of the League of Nations." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 96 (1): 74–77. <https://doi.org/10.1177/000271622109600116>, 75.

²⁰⁵ Quincy Wright, *The United States and the Mandates*, 723-724.

²⁰⁶ Joseph V. Fuller and Tyler V. Dennett, eds., "Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States. The Paris Peace Conference, 1919. Volume XIII," *Papers relating to the foreign relations of the United States. The Paris Peace Conference, 1919. Volume XIII* § (1947), <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1919Parisv13>, pg. 101.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

people according to 1931 estimates, and New Zealand gaining only 46,023 for the same year.²⁰⁸ The role of the United States in the assignment of these mandates was minor, as it had few concerns in the region. The major exception was the island of Yap in the Caroline Islands, which was to fall under the Japanese mandate for islands north of the equator.²⁰⁹ The Americans were concerned about Japanese control over the many undersea cables that passed through Yap, because these cables were the main means of communication between the United States and its Pacific possessions such as Guam and the Philippines, as well as with commercially important posts in areas of the Far East such as China.²¹⁰ Other nations such as the Netherlands were concerned about ownership of these cables as well, not only because of the strategic implications of Japanese control over important communication lines, but also because Dutch shareholders owned large portions of the German companies that had established these cables.²¹¹ It became clear that the terms agreed upon in Paris for the Japanese mandate could only be understood as having included Yap, and although the Americans contended that open-door provisions ought to be applied and thus open Yap to international cable operations, the British government was unable to support this position.²¹² Ultimately the issue was resolved through a bilateral treaty between the United States and Japan, concluded on February 11, 1922, article 3 of which stated that “The United States and its nationals shall have free access to the Island of Yap on a footing of entire equality with Japan or any other nation and their respective nationals in all that relates to the landing and operation of the existing Yap-Guam cable or of any cable which may hereafter

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Joseph V. Fuller and Tyler V. Dennett, eds., “Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States. 1921, Volume II,” Papers relating to the foreign relations of the United States. 1921, Volume II § (1936), doc. 272, pg. 272-276.

²¹⁰ Andrew J. Crozier, 507-508; Seth P. Tillman, 278.

²¹¹ Joseph V. Fuller and Tyler V. Dennett, eds., “Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States. 1920, Volume I,” Papers relating to the foreign relations of the United States. 1920, Volume I § (1935), doc. 129, pg. 126-127.

²¹² Joseph V. Fuller and Tyler V. Dennett, eds., “Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States. 1921, Volume II”, doc. 272, pg. 272-276.

be laid or operated by the United States or by its nationals connecting with the Island of Yap.”²¹³

The issue of Yap is illustrative of how the United States behaved towards the mandates after the Paris Peace Conference. It continued to insist upon its rights in mandated territories despite a lack of membership in the League, and in the use of bilateral treaties to achieve their material goals in mandated areas rather than working multilaterally through the League of Nations.

For the other Pacific mandates, the United States concluded treaties with the relevant powers in order to ensure that it was treated equally to members of the League in these territories, and continued to insist that all annual reports furnished to the League also be provided to the U.S. government.²¹⁴ The formal drafting and ratification of the C mandates proceeded fairly swiftly, and contained a number of provisions that highlight the nature of the mandates system and the concepts of the civilizing mission, replete with racial assumptions and hierarchical views of civilizational development, that justified its existence. Take for instance the mandate for Nauru, a small island most notable at the time for its significant phosphate deposits, which became the most internationalized of the C mandates as the mandate here was held by the British Crown on behalf of the British government, Australia, and New Zealand.²¹⁵ Here there was little in the way of direct American influence, however the design of the mandates system imparted a good deal of Wilsonian, and thus American, ideology into the mandate. Article 2 assigns the mandate as “an integral portion of his [the mandatory’s] territory”, but also stipulates that “The mandatory shall promote to the utmost the material and moral well-being and the social progress of the inhabitants...”²¹⁶ Article 3 of the mandate prohibited the supply of “intoxicating spirits and beverages to the natives” and article 5 provided that missionaries who

²¹³ Joseph V. Fuller and Tyler V. Dennett, eds., “Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States. The Paris Peace Conference, 1919. Volume XIII”, pg. 278-279.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pg. 101-102.

²¹⁵ Leon H. Weaver, 239.

²¹⁶ *Miscellaneous No. 6 (1921). Mandate for Nauru. 1921.*, pg. 2.

were citizens of any member state of the League of Nations would have the right to undertake their activities in Nauru.²¹⁷ This mandate, like all others, contained provisions that an annual report be provided to the League reporting on measures taken to carry out the obligations of the mandatory in accordance with the terms of the mandate.²¹⁸ While Nauru and the other C mandates saw little in the way of commitments towards self-government, this followed the hierarchical logic of civilization enshrined into article 22 of the League covenant. The provisions of these mandates reflect the perception at the time of what could reasonably be achieved in these “uncivilized” areas, and the prohibitions on providing alcohol to the indigenous inhabitants, and on the freedom of movement and proselytization reflect notions of the civilizing mission and how it ought to be carried out.

One of the issues facing the Pacific mandates was that they had been administered by the future mandatories for some time prior to their confirmation as mandatories. Most of the Pacific islands formerly held by Germany had been captured by the end of 1914.²¹⁹ This meant that the inhabitants already had a sense of the sort of control that would be imposed on them, and this did not always leave a positive impression. In Western Samoa, for instance, the New Zealand administration came to be negatively compared with the American administration in neighboring American Samoa when in 1918 the American authorities refused to allow a vessel to dock because some of the passengers were infected with pneumonic influenza, which was spreading as a global pandemic at the time; it was allowed to dock by the New Zealand authorities, resulting in the disease killing approximately one-fifth of the territory’s population.²²⁰ This event eroded the confidence of the local population in the New Zealand administration, and when Colonel R.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

²¹⁹ Herman Joseph Hiery, 26.

²²⁰ Susan Pedersen, *Samoa on the World Stage: Petitions and Peoples before the Mandates Commission of the League of Nations*, 242.

W. Tate arrived in early 1919 to become the territory's new administrator, the population immediately requested that the islands be handed over to the United States, or to direct British rule if the Americans proved unwilling to take over administration of the islands.²²¹ This event is illustrative of how the United States was viewed by colonized peoples at the time, namely as the most effective administrator and the most likely to put them on a path towards self-government, as they were doing in the Philippines.

For the B mandates matters were more complicated because the C mandates had already been assigned when the United States addressed a note to the League Council stating its objections over Yap and issues in the Mesopotamian oil fields.²²² The assignment of the A and B mandates was postponed as a result of this note (the C mandates, having already been assigned, were not reopened for discussion).²²³ In Africa, much like in the Pacific, the assignment of mandatories largely followed the lines of conquest, with Britain being assigned B mandates over most of German East Africa, thereafter called Tanganyika, and parts of Togoland and the Cameroons. France received mandates for the majority of Togoland and the Cameroons, though the boundary between the mandates held by Britain and France in these areas was not delineated until 1930.²²⁴ Belgium received a mandate for the area of Ruanda-Urundi, today called Rwanda and Burundi, which were notable for their population density and their "virtual autonomy".²²⁵

While the British and French were represented at all the important meetings concerning the disposition of colonial territories, smaller nations like Belgium and Portugal were not, much

²²¹ Ibid., 242.

²²² Joseph V. Fuller and Tyler V. Dennett, eds., "Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States. 1921, Volume I," Papers relating to the foreign relations of the United States. 1921, Volume I § (1936), doc. 106, pg. 93-95.

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ *Treaty Series No. 45 (1930). Exchange of Notes Between His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom and the French Government Regarding the Boundary Between the British and French Mandated Territories of Togoland (with Joint Note of September 23, 1930, to the Secretary-General of the League of Nations). London, January 30/August 19, 1930 [with Map]. 1931., pg. 2.*

²²⁵ George Louis Beer, and Louis Herbert Gray (eds.), *African Questions at the Paris Peace Conference*, 23.

to their chagrin. This resulted in the mandates being initially assigned without regard for these two states, with Belgium in particular hoping to see major adjustments to its colonial frontiers. Portugal was placated with the small Kionga Triangle being given to them in full sovereignty.²²⁶ The Belgians had hoped that their capture of large swaths of German East Africa during the war might allow them to organize a three-party territorial swap in which they would transfer parts of East Africa under their control to Britain, Portugal would transfer control over the southern bank of the Congo river to them, and would then be compensated by Britain with territory in the southern part of East Africa bordering the Portuguese colony of Mozambique.²²⁷ The Belgians knew that this scheme might not work because of Portuguese recalcitrance, but hoped that if the plan failed they would be left with a large area of northwestern East Africa. Much to their dismay, the Belgians learned that not only were the Portuguese unwilling to cooperate in their territorial swap, but Britain had also been tentatively assigned the mandate for all of German East Africa at a meeting of the larger powers.²²⁸ The Belgians were indignant at this state of affairs, and eventually worked out an agreement with Britain whereby they would be assigned the mandate for the districts of Ruanda and Urundi.²²⁹ This was not the end of the issues that would arise regarding the Belgian mandates, however, as George Louis Beer was against the awarding of the mandate for Ruanda-Urundi to Belgium based on its history of abuses against indigenous populations in its colonies, which he felt had not been reformed sufficiently.²³⁰ This argument was greatly strengthened by the general position of the Allied and Associated Powers that their takeover of German colonies was based, at least in part, on the poor treatment of

²²⁶ Joseph V. Fuller and Tyler V. Dennett, eds., "Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States. The Paris Peace Conference, 1919. Volume VIII", doc. 19, pg. 340-341.

²²⁷ Alan Sharp, *The Versailles Settlement*, 163; William Roger Louis, *The United States and the African Peace Settlement of 1919: The Pilgrimage of George Louis Beer*, 429.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*

²²⁹ Michael D. Callahan, 107, footnote 177.

²³⁰ William Roger Louis, *The United States and the African Peace Settlement of 1919: The Pilgrimage of George Louis Beer*, 429-430.

indigenous peoples by the German colonial administrations.²³¹ Ultimately Beer's protests came to nothing and the assignment of the Belgian mandate proceeded without interruption. But the Belgians then became embroiled in a different conflict over the category of mandate they were going to receive, a conflict that was wrapped up in similar debates including the British, French, and Americans.

The French had been anxious to obtain control over as much of German West Africa as possible and to incorporate as much of these areas into their already substantial holdings in the region as their wartime allies would allow. The French had accepted the idea of the mandates system in the first place to placate the Americans, and hoped that they would be able to obtain the most generous possible terms for their mandates as a result.²³² Understanding that they were unlikely to gain C mandates on the same terms as those assigned in the Pacific, the French were hoping to see only slight modifications to these terms for their mandates in West Africa and to incorporate these areas into their existing West African colonies, and avoid the open-door economic provisions of the B mandates.²³³ The British were initially inclined towards the French position, but realized that Belgian opinion would be inflamed by receiving a less favorable category of mandate than the French, and understood that American opposition to the granting of C mandates to France meant that there would be significant issues and delays should they fail to agree to B mandates for West Africa.²³⁴ At this stage it was not uncommon for the League to bend to American opinion, and the French were ultimately forced to accept B mandates in West Africa. However, they were able to insert a clause into their mandate agreements that was not present in the other B mandates, namely that they would be allowed to raise troops in the

²³¹ William Roger Louis, *Great Britain and Germany's Lost Colonies*, 87.

²³² William Roger Louis, *The United Kingdom and the Beginning of the Mandates System 1919-1922*, 86.

²³³ *Ibid.*

²³⁴ William Roger Louis, *The United Kingdom and the Beginning of the Mandates System 1919-1922*, 86-87.

mandated territory for use in other areas.²³⁵ This concession satisfied the French desire to extract manpower from the colonies in the event of another war, while allowing the Americans open-door economic access to the areas as part of a B rather than a C mandate.

The British were less concerned by the terms of B mandates than were the French and seem to have been less interested in the Germany's former colonies in West Africa than they were in German East Africa. When the boundary agreements between British and French holdings in West Africa were drawn up in 1929 and 1930 the French received the lion's share of the territory and population of these districts.²³⁶ In East Africa the British had generally been willing to see the territory fall into American hands, despite a lack of American enthusiasm about this option.²³⁷ Not all Britons were supportive of giving the Americans control over East Africa. Smuts was opposed, as were some in the India Office who hoped to see the territory transformed into a sort of "colony for India."²³⁸ Ultimately the mandate for German East Africa was assigned to Britain, who renamed the territory to Tanganyika and undertook to administer it under a normal B mandate.

The most important aspect of the B mandates for the United States was the inclusion of open-door economic provisions, which allowed American corporations to operate in mandated territories on the same footing as those of the mandatory. These provisions, alongside those ensuring the freedom of movement for nationals of League members, were enshrined, for instance, in Article 6 of the British mandates for the Cameroons, Togoland and East Africa, which stipulated that "the Mandatory shall ensure to all nationals of States Members of the League of Nations on the same footing to his own nationals, freedom of transit and navigation,

²³⁵ *British Mandates for the Cameroons, Togoland and East Africa*. H.M. Stationary Office, 1923., pg. 3.

²³⁶ Joseph V. Fuller and Tyler V. Dennett, eds., "Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States. The Paris Peace Conference, 1919. Volume XIII", pg. 101.

²³⁷ Michael D. Callahan, 50-51.

²³⁸ Michael D. Callahan, 50-51; George Louis Beer, and Louis Herbert Gray (eds.), *African Questions at the Paris Peace Conference*, 62.

and complete economic, commercial and industrial equality...”.²³⁹ This article further stated that general monopolies were not to be granted by the mandatory, and that concessions for the development of national resources “shall be granted without distinction on grounds of nationality between nationals of all States Members of the League of Nations...”²⁴⁰ Besides economic provisions, the B mandates ensured freedom of access for missionaries to mandated territories, and provided in several articles for the well-being of the indigenous inhabitants of these territories to form a central consideration of the mandatory regimes.²⁴¹ What is absent from the B mandates is any meaningful provisions for self-government of the indigenous inhabitants, this being justified by the racial and civilizational logic of Article 22 of the League covenant. Notably, comments were made regarding the Belgian mandated territories concerning their relative autonomy and population density, with George Louis Beer going so far as to suggest that these areas should “governed by means of native institutions.”²⁴² This is not to say that he was suggesting they become wholly independent states, but rather he seems to have been suggesting something more akin to an A class mandate or a protectorate like the Princely States of India, rather than a B mandate. The reason Ruanda and Urundi ended up as B mandates lay more in negotiations between the Europeans than in the realities on the ground; the racial basis for assigning most of the German colonies in Africa as B mandates had already been accepted, and the Belgians were concerned that they would receive a less favorable class of mandate than the French.²⁴³ What one sees here is the failure of American idealism to overcome the political necessities of European realpolitik, and that by attaching the fate of the former German colonial empire to the legitimacy of the postwar peace agreements and the League of Nations,

²³⁹ *British Mandates for the Cameroons, Togoland and East Africa*. H.M. Stationary Office, 1923., pg. 3.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 4.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 3-5.

²⁴² William Roger Louis, *The United States and the African Peace Settlement of 1919: The Pilgrimage of George Louis Beer*, 430.

²⁴³ William Roger Louis, *The United Kingdom and the Beginning of the Mandates System 1919-1922*, 86.

compromises had to be made to fundamental principles in order to gain the acquiescence of European states to the postwar order. The compromises of the B mandates are emblematic of Wilson's and the United States' operating method. They were idealistic in their approach, but were more concerned with securing larger goals, such as ensuring that the League of Nations and the peace agreements were perceived as legitimate, and in securing American material interests in colonial areas.

Ultimately the B mandates were approved in July 1922, with the British and French mandates in West Africa being approved on July 18th, and the mandates for Tanganyika and Ruanda-Urundi on July 20th.²⁴⁴ Treaties between the B mandatories and the United States confirming the rights of American nationals equivalent to those of League members in the mandated territories were concluded shortly after the mandates were confirmed. Conventions between the U.S. and France were signed in Paris on February 13, 1923; a treaty with the Belgians was signed in Brussels on April 18, 1923, and treaties concerning the British-mandated territories in Africa were signed on February 10, 1925.²⁴⁵ The main American features of the B mandates, besides the open-door economic provisions and missionary access, were more in what was prevented than what was achieved. The B mandates diverged from existing colonialism in Africa not in terms of self-government, but in terms of the legal framework that was established by the mandates system, which enshrined the interests of the indigenous inhabitants as fundamentally important and established a mechanism of enforcement that would allow the inhabitants of these territories, or outsiders on their behalf, to petition the international community if they felt that their rights were being violated by the mandatory, and empowered

²⁴⁴ Joseph V. Fuller and Tyler V. Dennett, eds., "Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States. The Paris Peace Conference, 1919. Volume XIII", pg. 101.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 101-102.

the League, at least theoretically, to rebuke or sanction a mandatory for such violations.²⁴⁶

Furthermore, the prohibitions on constructing fortifications or recruiting troops for use outside of the mandated areas, with the exception of the permission given to France to recruit indigenous troops, were clearly enacted in order to disincentivize the maintenance of colonialism in these areas by removing any military advantage from holding them. It seems likely that this was done in part in the hopes that the mandatory governments would see it as in their interests to promote progress towards self-government to reduce the burdens of administering these territories.

The A mandates were to prove the most complex to resolve, in part because of continued warfare in the region after the First World War, as well as the expectations of the population, and of certain local notables, for much more independence than was expected in Africa or the Pacific. Although the Treaty of Sevres had theoretically ended the war between the Ottomans and the Allies, the military realities in Turkey meant that this treaty did not come fully into force. These realities were primarily the rise of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk and his armies fighting against the Greeks in western Anatolia, and Armenia, which made the allocation of mandates impossible until the conclusion of the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923.²⁴⁷ Although the United States had not been at war with the Ottomans or with the new Turkish government, and thus were not entitled to be represented officially in the creation of the Treaty of Lausanne, it still sent an observer of ambassadorial rank on the grounds that “it will be practically impossible for the Allies to conduct negotiations without dealing with matters in which this [American] Government is interested.”²⁴⁸

²⁴⁶ Susan Pedersen, *Samoa on the World Stage: Petitions and Peoples before the Mandates Commission of the League of Nations*, 231.

²⁴⁷ Joseph V. Fuller and Tyler V. Dennett, eds., “Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States. 1921, Volume II”, doc. 884, pg. 925

²⁴⁸ Joseph V. Fuller and Tyler V. Dennett, eds., “Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States. 1923. Volume II,” *Papers relating to the foreign relations of the United States. 1923. Volume II § (1938)*, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1923v02>, pg. 886; Joseph V. Fuller and Tyler V. Dennett, eds., “Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States. The Paris Peace Conference, 1919. Volume XIII”, pg. 96-97.

The United States held that it was entitled to a voice in the resolution of the situation in the Middle East because it had been a party to the victory over Germany, which had been a fundamental factor in the ultimate victory of the Allies over the Ottoman Empire.²⁴⁹ The situation in the Middle East was further complicated by the wartime agreements among the Allies for the division of the territory, such as the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916, as well as statements like the Balfour Declaration and the correspondence between the British government and Emir Hussein of Mecca that had made promises to various peoples over their future rights in the Middle East.²⁵⁰ These existing arrangements, coupled with the newfound importance of petroleum in international affairs and the complex military and diplomatic situation in the Near East, created a very difficult set of circumstances for the resolution of the A mandates.

The Middle East was conquered by mainly British forces, with some assistance from other Allied forces as well as Arab armies operating as part of the Arab Revolt under the leadership of the Sheriff of Mecca and his four sons, most notably Emir Faisal.²⁵¹ Unlike the other colonial theatres, the Middle East was not conquered by Allied forces until 1918, leaving the situation more fluid and volatile than in Africa or the Pacific. The military forces in the Middle East had also included a large number of Indians under British command, particularly in Mesopotamia, giving the India Office considerable influence over the future settlement of the region.²⁵² The use of Indian troops in the Middle East was perceived as risky by the British because of many of them were Muslim, and viewed the Ottoman Sultan through his role as

²⁴⁹ Joseph V. Fuller and Tyler V. Dennett, eds., "Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States. 1923. Volume II," doc. 876, pg. 1032.

²⁵⁰ Erik Goldstein, *The First World War Peace Settlements, 1919-1925*, 58.

²⁵¹ Peter Jackson, 372; Joseph V. Fuller and Tyler V. Dennett, eds., "Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States. 1918, Supplement 1, The World War. Volume I," Papers relating to the foreign relations of the United States. 1918, Supplement 1, The World War. Volume I § (1933) <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1918Supp01v01>, doc. 177, pg. 241-242.

²⁵² Priya Satia, 2007. "Developing Iraq: Britain, India and the Redemption of Empire and Technology in the First World War." *Past & Present* 197 (1): 211–55. <https://doi.org/10.1093/pastj/gtm008>, 211-212.

Caliph, and may have been conflicted about fighting against their coreligionists.²⁵³ This issue was further exacerbated by the view among many Indian Muslims that the Arab Revolt represented apostasy on the part of Sharif Hussein and his family.²⁵⁴ This issue provoked a rift between British authorities from the India Office, who came to support the claims of Ibn Saud, and those in Cairo who supported Sharif Hussein and the Hashemites.²⁵⁵ British interests in the Middle East were to a great extent motivated by the desire to secure supply lines to India, which was made more serious by resistance to British dominance in Egypt culminating in the 1919 Revolution, in which the revolutionaries explicitly tied their demands for independence to Wilson's Fourteen Points.²⁵⁶

French claims over Syria and Arab claims of independence further complicated matters in the Middle East, and issues over oil reserves around Mosul involving the British, French, Americans, and Turks gave an economic incentive for further involvement in the situation. The assignment of mandates in the Middle East followed the basic pattern envisioned in the Sykes-Picot agreement, in part because at the 1920 San Remo Conference where the future of the Middle East was settled among the European powers, the United States was present only as an observer.²⁵⁷ At San Remo the decision was made to assign Syria, including Lebanon, to France and Mesopotamia and Palestine to Britain, leaving Arabia proper in the hands of the local Arab tribes and states.²⁵⁸ The Middle East held much more potential for conflict between Britain and France than did other colonial areas in Africa and the Pacific, most of which were centered on oil

²⁵³ Stuart Cohen, 1978. "Mesopotamia in British Strategy, 1903–1914." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 9 (2): 171–81. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020743800000040>, 175.

²⁵⁴ Timothy J. Paris, 776.

²⁵⁵ Rik Goldstein, *The First World War Peace Settlements 1919-1925*, 65.

²⁵⁶ William Roger Louis, *The United Kingdom and the beginning of the Mandates System*, 91; Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment*, 141-142.

²⁵⁷ Joseph V. Fuller and Tyler V. Dennett, eds., "Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States. 1920, Volume I", doc. 5, pg. 2-3.

²⁵⁸ William Roger Louis, *The United Kingdom and the beginning of the Mandates System*, 253.

extraction around Mosul or around French aversion to the existence of an independent Arab government in Syria.²⁵⁹ These complex issues led to considerable delays in the implementation of the A mandates, which were not confirmed by the League until 1922, though they lacked a solid legal basis until the formal surrender of these territories to the Allies pursuant to the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923.²⁶⁰

Syria and Lebanon were treated as a unit for the purposes of assigning mandates. France had interests in the region of Lebanon and coastal Syria stretching back to the Crusades, which were called upon by the French imperialist lobby and the right-wing to support their ambitions for French expansion into the Levant.²⁶¹ Syria had been conquered during the war by a combination of British and Arab troops, with the British evacuating their posts in favour of the French in late 1919, around the same time that Emir Faisal became the head of an Arab government based in Damascus that claimed to be the authentic representative of all of Syria, including Palestine and Lebanon.²⁶² While the French initially supported Faisal's regime and had some agreements with them concerning an independent federation in Syria under Faisal's rule within a French mandate, once the British had withdrawn in late 1919 and French troops arrived in Syria, they quickly moved to overthrow Faisal with the Battle of Maysalun and the occupation of Damascus, leading Faisal to flee to British-controlled areas.²⁶³ American public opinion was on the side of the Arabs, whom they viewed as underdogs akin to other nationalities who were

²⁵⁹ Luigi Scazzieri, 2015. "Britain, France, and Mesopotamian Oil, 1916-1920." *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 26 (1): 25–45. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09592296.2015.999623>, 29; S55, 488-489

²⁶⁰ Joseph V. Fuller and Tyler V. Dennett, eds., "Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States. The Paris Peace Conference, 1919. Volume XIII", pg. 101-102; Jean Allain, 2004. "Orientalism and International Law: The Middle East as the Underclass of the International Legal Order." *Leiden Journal of International Law* 17 (2): 391–404. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0922156504001864>, 398.

²⁶¹ Leonard V. Smith, Drawing Borders in the Middle East after the Great War: Political Geography and 'Subject Peoples', 9-10; Alan Sharp, The Versailles Settlement, 181; Meir Zamir, 1991. "Faisal and the Lebanese Question, 1918-20." *Middle Eastern Studies* 27 (3): 404–26. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00263209108700868>, 411.

²⁶² *Ibid.*, 413.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, 410; S55, 501; F. S. Naiden, 2007. "British Scholar-Administrators and Iraq." *The Journal of the Historical Society (Boston, Mass.)* 7 (2): 179–99. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5923.2007.00213.x>, 189-190.

striving for independence.²⁶⁴ The Americans at this point had sent the King-Crane Commission to the Middle East, and had discovered that the locals preferred no mandate, or failing that, an American or British mandate to a French one. However the recommendations of the commission had little impact, and the Americans and British were unwilling to press the French to maintain Faisal's government in the interest of maintaining good relations between the French and British.²⁶⁵ In the end the French were able to establish control over Syria under a mandatory regime without establishing a single local government for the whole territory, instead creating a series of provinces for the different groups in Syria and Lebanon, in what appears to have been a divide-and-conquer strategy to retain control over the region.²⁶⁶

French policy in Syria ran counter to the basic concept of the A mandates by failing to promote an indigenous government "which can be provisionally recognised subject to the rendering of administrative advice and assistance ... until such time as they are able to stand alone."²⁶⁷ The Allied and Associated Powers as a whole failed here to uphold the section of Article 22 which stated that "The wishes of these communities must be a principal consideration in the selection of the Mandatory."²⁶⁸ Despite these failures to uphold the "sacred trust" of the mandates system, the mandate for Syria was not a complete failure from the perspective of Wilsonian idealism; the mandate became open to economic and missionary activity from all members of League, as well as the United States, and the locals gained the right to petition the international community against the French. The Syrian and Lebanese people used this right

²⁶⁴ F. S. Naidan, 189.

²⁶⁵ James L. Gelvin, 1995. "The League of Nations and the Question of National Identity in the Fertile Crescent." *World Affairs (Washington)* 158 (1): 35–43., 39; Andrew J. Crozier, 725.

²⁶⁶ Martin C. Thomas, 2002. "French Intelligence-Gathering in the Syrian Mandate, 1920-40." *Middle Eastern Studies* 38 (1): 1–32. <https://doi.org/10.1080/714004430>., 2.

²⁶⁷ *Miscellaneous. No. 3 (1919.) The Covenant of the League of Nations with a Commentary Thereon.* 1919., 9.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

more than any other mandate, sending a total of 1322 petitions and communications, nearly half of the total received from all of the mandates combined.²⁶⁹

While the French brusquely ignored the wishes of the local populations in Syria and pushed aside the indigenous government, the British felt more compelled to adhere to their wartime agreements. The trouble for the British in this respect was felt most acutely in Palestine, where they had made such starkly opposing commitments to the Zionists and the Arabs that it would prove impossible to fulfil both. The Balfour Declaration was issued in November 1917 and promised British support for “the establishment in Palestine of a National Home for the Jewish people...”²⁷⁰ This declaration was reiterated numerous times by British officials during and after the war and was included in the terms agreed upon by Allies at the San Remo Conference, as well as being inserted into the final draft of the Mandate for Palestine.²⁷¹ The Balfour Declaration had explicitly provided that “nothing should be done which might prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine...”²⁷² This alone would have been a difficult provision for the British authorities to uphold, as the mass immigration of Jews to Palestine envisioned by the Zionists would necessarily have an impact upon the existing communities. The stated goal of achieving self-governing institutions as described in Article 2 of the Mandate for Palestine practically guaranteed that conflicts would arise between the Jewish and non-Jewish populations, and placed Britain in the difficult position of attempting to mediate between the two.²⁷³ The mandate agreement for Palestine encouraged

²⁶⁹ Susan Pedersen, *Samoa on the World Stage: Petitions and Peoples before the Mandates Commission of the League of Nations*, 237.

²⁷⁰ *House of Commons Parliamentary Papers. Palestine. Correspondence with the Palestine Arab Delegation and the Zionist Organisation*. 1922., 5-6.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*; Hersch Lauterpacht, and Elihu Lauterpacht, 45; *League of Nations. Mandate for Palestine, Together with a Note by the Secretary-General Relating to Its Application to the Territory Known as Trans-Jordan, Under the Provisions of Article 25*. 1923., 2.

²⁷² *Ibid.*

²⁷³ *League of Nations. Mandate for Palestine, Together with a Note by the Secretary-General Relating to Its Application to the Territory Known as Trans-Jordan, Under the Provisions of Article 25*. 1923., 3.

local autonomy, and provided that a Jewish agency should be recognized by the British as a public body for “advising and co-operating” with the British for the purpose of establishing the Jewish national home.²⁷⁴ The extensive rights granted to Jewish immigrants and institutions by the terms of the mandate allowed them to create a sort of state-in-waiting and to operate largely autonomously with British support.²⁷⁵

The inclusion of the Balfour Declaration into the mandate for Palestine was supported most strongly by Lloyd George and Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour; for Lloyd George, support was at least partially based on wartime considerations to convince Jews around the world to support the Allies, but for Balfour support for Zionism seems to have developed into a sincerely held belief.²⁷⁶ The Americans accepted the Balfour Declaration, in part because of Jewish lobbyists in the United States, but also because Wilson was personally sympathetic to the idea of creating a Jewish national home in Palestine, though his support was unofficial.²⁷⁷ The French were also supportive of Zionism, in part because they wanted to ensure that they would continue to hold some influence in Palestine and ensure that Zionists would not rely exclusively on British support.²⁷⁸ Faisal was sympathetic to the Zionist cause, having met the key Zionist delegate Chaim Weizmann in Paris, though it was recognized by all concerned that their goals were fundamentally irreconcilable.²⁷⁹ This broad support for the Balfour Declaration was counterbalanced by the promises made to the Hashemite family in the Hussein-McMahon correspondence, and the basic notion of self-determination which held that the local Arab

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

²⁷⁵ Patrick Terry, “Britain in Palestine (1917-1948) - Occupation, the Palestine Mandate, and International Law.” *University of Bologna Law Review* 2, no. 2 (January 1, 2018): 187–251. <https://doaj.org/article/67b962b7518a49a48e454965f3ecf869>, 209.

²⁷⁶ Seth P. Tillman, 224-225.

²⁷⁷ Wesley James Reisser, 2010. “From a World of Empires to a World of Nation States: America at the Paris Peace Conference”. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing., 249; Seth P. Tillman, 225.

²⁷⁸ C.M Andrew and A. S. Kanya-Forstner, 95.

²⁷⁹ Alan Sharp, *The Versailles Settlement*, 182; Efraim Karsh, 2020. “How San Remo Birthed the Jewish National Home.(1920 San Remo Conference).” *Middle East Quarterly* 27 (3): 1–14., 2.

population ought to be the beneficiaries of the mandate's provision of "administrative advice and assistance until such time as they are able to stand alone."²⁸⁰ This state of affairs produced for the British a sort of dual mandate in Palestine, one to the Jews to whom they had promised the land, and one to the existing Arab-majority population.

In the end the British administered Palestine more like a B mandate than an A mandate. By installing a High Commissioner as the highest authority and allowing for the creation of separate institutions by the Zionists, the British did not recognize Palestine as a provisionally independent nation as Article 22 of the League Covenant prescribed.²⁸¹ Some have interpreted British policies in Palestine as being connected to issues in Egypt and a desire for a position close to the Suez canal following the 1919 Revolution.²⁸² While this may have had an influence on British policy, it seems that the British did honestly attempt to uphold the terms of their mandate in Palestine by supporting the development of self-governing institutions on the part of the Zionists; the difficulty was more in the impossible double-bind in which the British found themselves. This is not to say that the British are without fault in the matter of the Mandate for Palestine. Rather, their vacillating policies were the result of a set of mutually incompatible obligations to the Jews and to the local Arabs, which ended up undermining the character of the A mandate classification for the region. While the United States played only a minor role in the creation of the mandate for Palestine, one can clearly see the influence of Wilsonian ideology and of American colonial precedent in the goal of self-government being placed as the highest objective in the mandate. Furthermore, the United States was able to obtain in Palestine, as it did in other mandates, the same rights as League members including open-door economic access,

²⁸⁰ *Miscellaneous. No. 3 (1919.) The Covenant of the League of Nations with a Commentary Thereon.* 1919., 9.

²⁸¹ Patrick Terry, 239; *Miscellaneous. No. 3 (1919.) The Covenant of the League of Nations with a Commentary Thereon.* 1919., 9.

²⁸² Patrick Terry, 189; Erik Goldstein, *The First World War Peace Settlements 1919-1925*, 66.

and access for missionaries, which was of particular importance in a place of such religious significance.²⁸³

The Case of Iraq

While the Palestine mandate had numerous inherent difficulties in attaining the provisional independence envisioned in the League Covenant, this goal proved much more attainable in Mesopotamia. This area had been taken by British troops, largely from India, through a series of campaigns that culminated in the signing of an armistice with the Ottomans in 1918 before the British had entirely occupied the region.²⁸⁴ Mesopotamia, or Iraq as it came to be called, was comprised of three Ottoman vilayets, those of Basra, Baghdad, and Mosul. Despite wartime agreements with the French regarding the division of the vilayet of Mosul, following the British military occupation of the region and changes to international agreements pertaining to the Middle East, France conceded pre-eminence in the region to Britain and its inclusion into Mesopotamia.²⁸⁵ It was this northern region of Iraq around the cities of Mosul and Kirkuk that the major foreign interest in the region lay, mainly because of the oil resources to be found there.²⁸⁶ The importance of Mesopotamian oil was connected with wartime experiences in Britain and France which had come to realize the precarity of relying on foreign supplies, and both turned to Mesopotamia as an alternative to foreign, chiefly American, supplies.²⁸⁷ Wrangling over Mesopotamian oil supplies involved the United States, Britain, and France, and a

²⁸³ Joseph V. Fuller and Tyler V. Dennett, eds., "Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States. 1922. Volume II," Papers relating to the foreign relations of the United States. 1922. Volume II § (1938), <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1922v02>, doc. 224, pg. 271-275.

²⁸⁴ H. I. Lloyd, 1926. "The Geography of the Mosul Boundary." *The Geographical Journal* 68 (2): 104–13. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1782447>, 104.

²⁸⁵ Luigi Scazzieri, 28; Djene Rhys Bajalan 2019. "The First World War, the End of the Ottoman Empire, and Question of Kurdish Statehood: A 'Missed' Opportunity?" *Ethnopolitics* 18 (1): 13–28. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17449057.2018.1525163>, 20.

²⁸⁶ Luigi Scazzieri, 25-26.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 26, 31.

number of private concerns such as the American Standard Oil Company, on whose behalf the governments involved were sometimes accused of acting.²⁸⁸

The precise negotiations were extremely complex and could fill a volume more than equal in length to this one; it will suffice to note that the primary interest of the three powers in Mesopotamia was oil, and that in their negotiations the primary consideration was how the oil resources of the region were to be partitioned. It was on this basis that the United States protested the confirmation of the mandates without its consent, causing additional delays in the confirmation of the A and B mandates.²⁸⁹ The issue of Mesopotamian oil touched on the key American consideration for the mandates after the Wilson administration, open-door economic access; the Americans were concerned that the British intended to establish a monopoly over Mesopotamian oil and wished to ensure that they would receive a share.²⁹⁰ The French had received the former German interests in the primarily British-owned Turkish Petroleum Company at the San Remo Conference in return for facilitating the transportation of Mesopotamian oil to the Mediterranean.²⁹¹ The Americans, not having been full participants at San Remo, did not receive a similar share, and protested the British government vigorously on the basis of ensuring commercial equality in Mesopotamia for their oil companies.²⁹² The Americans were clearly using their considerable diplomatic power to support the interests of private American companies, but were also leveraging Wilsonian principles to pursue their material interests. This is representative of the two strains of American influence over the system coming together. On the one hand there is the Wilsonian idealism infused into the system in the

²⁸⁸ William Roger Louis, *The United Kingdom and the beginning of the Mandates System*, 87.

²⁸⁹ Joseph V. Fuller and Tyler V. Dennett, eds., "Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States. 1921, Volume I", doc. 106, pg. 93-95.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁹¹ Joseph V. Fuller and Tyler V. Dennett, eds., "Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States. 1921, Volume II", doc. 81, pg. 83.

²⁹² Joseph V. Fuller and Tyler V. Dennett, eds., "Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States. 1922, Volume II", doc. 253, pg. 337-338.

form of the open-door provisions of the A mandates, and on the other is the United States behaving a manner reminiscent of their actions with respect to American resource extraction companies in Latin America in which government agencies utilize their diplomatic leverage to the advantage of private American interests.

Ultimately the issue of oil concessions was solved by Britain granting Americans certain limited investment rights in the Turkish Petroleum Company, in effect securing American participation in the monopoly they had originally sought to avoid.²⁹³ In the meantime, however, the British had been forced to suppress an uprising in Iraq in 1920 at tremendous cost, and the resulting outcry placed a great deal of pressure on the British government to reduce expenditures in the region.²⁹⁴ The resulting policies enacted by the High Commissioner in Baghdad, Sir Percy Cox, was to begin constructing an indigenous government to assume executive control, with a conference in Cairo selecting former Syrian leader Faisal to be the new king of Iraq in March 1921.²⁹⁵ This was followed in 1922 by the drafting of a treaty of alliance with Iraq whereby the indigenous government assumed nearly full control over its own affairs, subject to British advisers and complemented by a continued British military presence.²⁹⁶ This military presence underwent considerable changes after the revolt, with the desire to reduce expenditures foremost in its design, resulting in a reliance on air power to maintain control.²⁹⁷ Iraq was held to be uniquely suited to the use of air power because of its geographical location in the middle of British positions in Asia and the Mediterranean, which would allow Baghdad to act as the “pivot” of an imperial air force stretching across British possessions and facilitating both power projection and the movement of goods, and its topography, which offered relatively little

²⁹³ Andrew J. Crozier, 507.

²⁹⁴ Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, 375.

²⁹⁵ Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, 375.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

cover to insurgents, and plentiful landing areas, and.²⁹⁸ The use of air power, in addition to reducing the cost of maintaining order, allowed the British to remain an invisible hand in Iraqi military affairs, unseen until they felt it appropriate, and to hide their numbers from insurgents.²⁹⁹ This strategy is reminiscent of contemporary American strategies in Latin America, where indigenous governments were left in control of local matters, but always with the knowledge that American military forces, could arrive at any moment should the American government feel that its interests were being threatened.

The brutality of air control in Iraq, given the imprecision of contemporary aerial warfare methods, was justified largely on the basis of racial and civilizational notions that the Arabs were accustomed to visiting brutality on one another, and that their religiosity and fatalism meant that the British were merely participating in the warfare that was customary in the region.³⁰⁰ To coordinate their air power in Iraq the British relied on political agents, whose presence was facilitated by the provisions of the mandates system as they were advisers to the Iraqi government, and allowed them to maintain a relatively humane image with the population as they were not seen to be actively engaged in the violent pacification efforts.³⁰¹ This sort of indirect control was facilitated both by new technologies and the political system erected for the mandates as a whole. The British willingness to create a functioning indigenous government in Iraq, unlike in Palestine or the French in Syria, reflects Britain's priorities in Mesopotamia, which were centered on resource extraction rather than on territorial control. This arrangement bears a striking resemblance to American colonial methodologies in the so-called "Banana Republics" of Latin America, though during the 1920s its governmental structure appears more similar to that of the Philippines, in which an indigenous government existed subject to some

²⁹⁸ Priya Satia, *The Defense of Inhumanity: Air Control and the British Idea of Arabia*, 30.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 40-43.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 43

civilian oversight by the United States, and a considerable ability on their part to call in military force should their “advice” be disregarded.

In 1924 the League of Nations formally accepted the treaty of alliance between Great Britain and Iraq, creating a more advanced form of A mandate. Under this new arrangement the indigenous government operated more independently but still adhered to the provisions of a mandate, such as furnishing an annual report to the League and the right of League to review and veto any proposed modifications to the treaty.³⁰² The 1922 treaty was the first major step along the pathway to Iraqi independence, in which Britain began to reduce its role to an advisory capacity while ensuring that other nations would not be able to wield political influence in the region (such as by stipulating that British agreement was necessary for the appointment of foreign nationals by the government of Iraq).³⁰³ In 1926 a new treaty was signed between Great Britain and Iraq; it largely continued the provisions of the 1922 treaty, but contained more emphasis on how Iraq might be admitted to the League of Nations and how Britain would operate should they fail to be admitted.³⁰⁴ While these treaties had been accepted by the League of Nations, to ensure their rights in Iraq the United States, Britain, and Iraq, signed a treaty in January 1930 guaranteeing Americans the same rights as League members in Iraq.³⁰⁵ By April of 1930 the British government began preparations to propose Iraq for membership in the League of Nations in 1932, which would terminate their mandate; by the end of June they had signed a new treaty with Iraq defining their relationship following the termination of the mandate.³⁰⁶ That

³⁰² "Fourteenth Meeting (Public and Then Private)," *League of Nations Official Journal* 5, no. 10 (October 1924): 1345-1349, pg. 1346-1347.

³⁰³ "Treaty between Great Britain and Iraq," *League of Nations Official Journal* 3, no. 12 (December 1922): 1505-1509, pg. 1505.

³⁰⁴ "Annex 845 a. Application to Iraq of the Principles of Article 22 of the Covenant," *League of Nations Official Journal* 7, no. 4 (April 1926): 550-551, pg. 551.

³⁰⁵ Luther Harris Evans, 1032-1033.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 1033

these negotiations began shortly after the conclusion of a treaty with the United States concerning their rights in Iraq suggests that the British were concerned that the Americans might once again lodge a formal protest on the basis that their rights in the mandates had been infringed.

The terms of the treaties made it clear that Iraqi independence would be granted subject to the maintenance of British air bases in the territory, as well as securing British lines of communication, both of which would enable the British to intervene should the Iraqi government undertake activities that were detrimental to British interests.³⁰⁷ Britain's ability to intervene in Iraq must be understood as primarily existing in order to protect oil supplies coming from the country, and the private interests involved in oil extraction and transportation. In this the parallels to American behavior in Latin America in accordance with the Monroe Doctrine are evident. Britain retained its forces in Iraq and maintained a strong advisory relationship with the Iraqi government such that the Iraqi government's independence was functionally contingent on its willingness to cooperate with British interests, all of which was designed to facilitate resource extraction by private companies.³⁰⁸ That the United States and League members had been able to secure commercial rights in Mesopotamia was the result of American pressure for the open-door in A and B mandates during and after the Paris Peace Conference. The British thus found themselves in a position in the Middle East similar to the American position in South America. That the British were constructing a neocolonial sphere of influence in the Middle East akin to that held by the Americans in Latin America is further evinced by their willingness to see Arabia remain independent, initially as multiple small states but later amalgamated by the House of

³⁰⁷ Priya Satia, *The Defense of Inhumanity: Air Control and the British Idea of Arabia*, 50.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 49-50.

Saud into Saudi Arabia, where their primary interest was not to control the territory, but rather to ensure that no other power gained significant influence.³⁰⁹

Overall, one can see that while the mandates system did not in practice live up to Wilson's idealism, it did incorporate several key features that differentiated the mandates from other colonial regimes. The emphasis placed on open-door economic policies, missionary access, and progression towards self-government reflects American colonial preoccupations as evidenced by their similarities to American policies in China, the Philippines, and Latin America. While Iraq was the only mandate to achieve its independence during the existence of the mandates system, the path it took through an ever-shrinking British presence tied to the ability of the local government to safeguard foreign resource extraction and to cooperate with Britain is emblematic of the desired result for the mandates as a whole, namely a slow progression from outright European-style colonialism towards an Americanized neocolonial form akin to Latin America. The other mandates did not achieve this sort of independence for a variety of reasons, chiefly the diplomatic realities of European politics, as well as the racial and civilizational logic enshrined in Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations. However, even in the B and C mandates, in which self-government was less of a priority, one can still see key American provisions incorporated into the structure of the mandates system, implemented even after the United States failed to ratify the Treaty of Versailles or join the League. Most notably open-door economic access in the B mandates, international oversight in the B and C mandates, and the prohibition on fortifications or the raising of troops for use outside of the territory which would disincentivize continued direct colonial control by undercutting the protectionist and geostrategic logics which undergirded much of the existing colonial system.

³⁰⁹ Alan Sharp, *The Versailles Settlement*, 184.

Conclusion

Although the mandates system did not live up to the lofty goals espoused by Woodrow Wilson and other Allied leaders during the First World War, the system did represent a significant departure from prewar European colonialism. As with the design of the system during the Paris Peace Conference, the implementation of the mandates necessitated numerous concessions to various interest groups, chiefly colonial lobbies in France and the British Dominions. These concessions undermined to some extent the Americanized character of the colonialism envisioned by the mandates system, but they were unable to vitiate key stipulations of the system: the ultimate goal of self-government for mandated territories; the inclusion of open-door economic policies in the A and B mandates which helped to undercut the economic logic of European-style colonialism; and the inclusion of international supervisory mechanisms under the aegis of the League of Nations that ensured at least some level of compliance with the stipulations of the mandates system. It is chiefly these features that differentiate the nature of colonial control within mandated territories from that of the pre-existing colonies of the European powers, and it is in these features that one can see most clearly the influence of American colonial ideologies in reshaping colonial systems after the First World War.

This analysis builds on existing literature that connects the mandates system to earlier precedents, including the examples in the first chapter noting the internationalization of colonialism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries following the Congo and Algeiras conferences.³¹⁰ While these precedents are important, the role of the United States and its unique variant of colonial ideology has been largely left out of such analyses, despite the importance of precedents from American practices in Latin America and the Philippines to

³¹⁰ William Roger Louis, *Great Britain and Germany's Lost Colonies, 1914-1919*, 29.; Erik Goldstein, *The First World War Peace Settlements, 1919-1925.*, 42.

understanding the design of the mandates system. The current body of interpretation surrounding the influence of Wilsonian ideology has been largely aimed at anti-colonial movements, on which this ideology certainly had a profound impact, but this is not the only way Wilsonian ideology impacted the colonial world.³¹¹ It is commonplace to dismiss the role of Wilsonism in the formation of the mandates as a convenient rhetorical cover for the European powers to expand their colonial holdings while paying lip-service to the concept of self-determination for colonial peoples. Instead, this analysis has shown that the ideology had a profound influence on the design of the mandates system and, to a lesser extent, on its functioning.³¹² Whether this took place in the context of a retort to the newly prominent Bolshevik ideology, as some authors have asserted, or to assuage the desires of anti-colonial movements within the metropolises of the colonial powers, many authors have been quick to dismiss the mandates system as little more than cloak for traditional colonialism.³¹³ While there is some truth to these interpretations, in that the ideological threat of Bolshevism and the desire of the European governments to dispel criticisms and resistance to their colonial control motivated acquiescence with a Wilsonian conception of the mandates system. Still, the existing literature tends to understate the role of the United States and its ideologies in the creation and implementation of this system.

Some authors do note the key role played by the United States in the formulation of the mandates system. However they tend not to recognize the fundamentally Americanized character of the system as it was designed. They focus more on the later stages of American participation in which the United States utilized its powerful negotiating position to ensure it would receive shares of the spoils in mandated territories, most notably Iraq, and less on the influence of American ideology and precedent on the conceptualization and design of the system.³¹⁴ Such

³¹¹ Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment*, 4-5.

³¹² Susan Pedersen, *The Meaning of the Mandates System: An Argument*, 564-565.

³¹³ Eugene P. Trani and Donald E. Davis, 35-37; Andrew J. Crozier, 484.

³¹⁴ Quincy Wright, *The United States and the Mandates*, 717-718.

analyses offer considerable support to the contentions of this paper, even if they fail to account for the lasting importance of the Americanization of the mandates system on international colonialism – largely because many of these analyses were written prior to the Second World War. To this effect my conclusions help to tie America's entry into global and colonial politics in the interwar period to developments after the Second World War and during the Cold War in the shaping of international frameworks for decolonization. They emphasize the importance of self-determination and self-government in colonial areas as a fundamental feature of both their own colonialism and their attempts to influence international systems more broadly.

While the present analysis develops upon ideas of the American role in reshaping the global order in the aftermath of the First World War, the true promise of this research is that it offers great potential for further investigation into American colonial ideology's influence on decolonization and international governance during and after the interwar period. The importance of this research lies in understanding the nature of mandatory administration and its implications. Nowhere is this clearer than in the former British Mandate for Palestine, where there remains a great deal of contention over legitimate rights to the land and sovereignty; this can be traced directly back to the mandate and the promises made by the British administration and international community through the League of Nations. One of the most promising avenues for future research is in the legal sphere, where the nature of sovereignty in the mandates had been hotly debated since their creation. This is particularly true in the notion of divided sovereignty or the concept that the mandatory powers were acting in *loco parentis* for the inhabitants of mandated territories, leaving many questions regarding their rights of disposal of territory and other property within the mandated territories. The results of the mandates system have been generally poor, and one need only look towards the plight of the former A mandates in the twenty-first century to see that the issues with which the mandatory administrations grappled

have not gone anywhere. This suggests that the mandates system and its successors failed to produce desirable results. A deeper understanding of this system as a sort of bridge between the colonialism of early twentieth century and the neocolonialism of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries may help to illustrate the failures of this system and ways to prevent repetition of their mistakes.

The changes to colonialism that took place during the twentieth century were profound. The shift from a world dominated by a few mostly European empires to a world of nation states in which very few colonies remain has been a momentous change for the colonial world, and comprehending this change requires understanding not only the movements within these countries, but also how changes to the international order facilitated the process of decolonization. Despite the success of the decolonization movement, its results have been decidedly mixed, with many countries continuing to be greatly influenced by the governments and private citizens of their former colonial rulers. In many contexts the transition from colonialism to independence has done little to ameliorate the economic disparities in these areas, or to reduce the influence of foreign corporations in the most lucrative sectors of their economies. These changes can best be understood by looking to their progenitors and precedents, which are most evident in the history of areas that gained their independence during the late nineteenth century, most prominently in Latin America. Looking at the relationship between these areas and more powerful countries such as the United States helps us to understand the interactions between newly independent states and global powers in economic and political terms that facilitated the transition from colonialism to neocolonialism.

The mandates were some of the last colonies acquired by the European powers, and represent the beginning of a process whereby the acquisition of territory through conquest came to be seen as unacceptable in international law. It has become an accepted part of the

international order that states are not entitled to occupy foreign lands without legitimate reasons beyond self-interested economic or strategic motives, and one can see in the mandates system the beginnings of this ideology with the enshrining of the principles of international oversight and the goal of self-government. Even after the Second World War territory that was removed from the administration of the defeated powers in the colonial sphere was subject to international oversight, as in the case of the United Nations Trusteeships that were established in many Pacific islands formerly under Japanese mandate, or in Italian Somaliland where the former colonial title was transformed into a trusteeship. This shows that the international community came to accept that existing colonial titles could not be made subject to the principles enshrined of the mandates system (and its direct successor the trusteeship system). Instead, whenever the title to a colonial territory became open to negotiation, the principles of oversight and self-government should be applied as legal requirements for the continuation of colonial rule. These changes coincide with the rise of the United States as one of the world's preeminent powers, and the incorporation of American principles into systems of colonial administration at this time cannot have been a coincidence.

Appendix 1

Mandate:	Mandatory:	Terms Defined by Council:
“A” Mandates		
Palestine	United Kingdom	July 24, 1922
Trans-Jordan	United Kingdom	Sept. 16, 1922
Syria and Lebanon	France	July 24, 1922
“B” Mandates		
Cameroons	France	July 18, 1922
Cameroons	United Kingdom	July 18, 1922
Ruanda-Urundi	Belgium	July 20, 1922
Tanganyika (German East Africa)	United Kingdom	July 20, 1922
Togoland	France	July 18, 1922
Togoland	United Kingdom	July 18, 1922
“C” Mandates		
North Pacific Islands	Japan	Dec. 17, 1920
Nauru	British Empire (Australia acting)	Dec. 17, 1920
New Guinea and Islands	Australia	Dec. 17, 1920
South-West Africa	South Africa	Dec. 17, 1920
Western Samoa	New Zealand	Dec. 17, 1920

All information in this table is derived from Joseph V. Fuller and Tyler V. Dennett, eds., “Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States. The Paris Peace Conference, 1919. Volume XIII,” Papers relating to the foreign relations of the United States. The Paris Peace Conference, 1919. Volume XIII § (1947), 101-102.

Appendix 2

Map of League of Nations mandates and mandatories

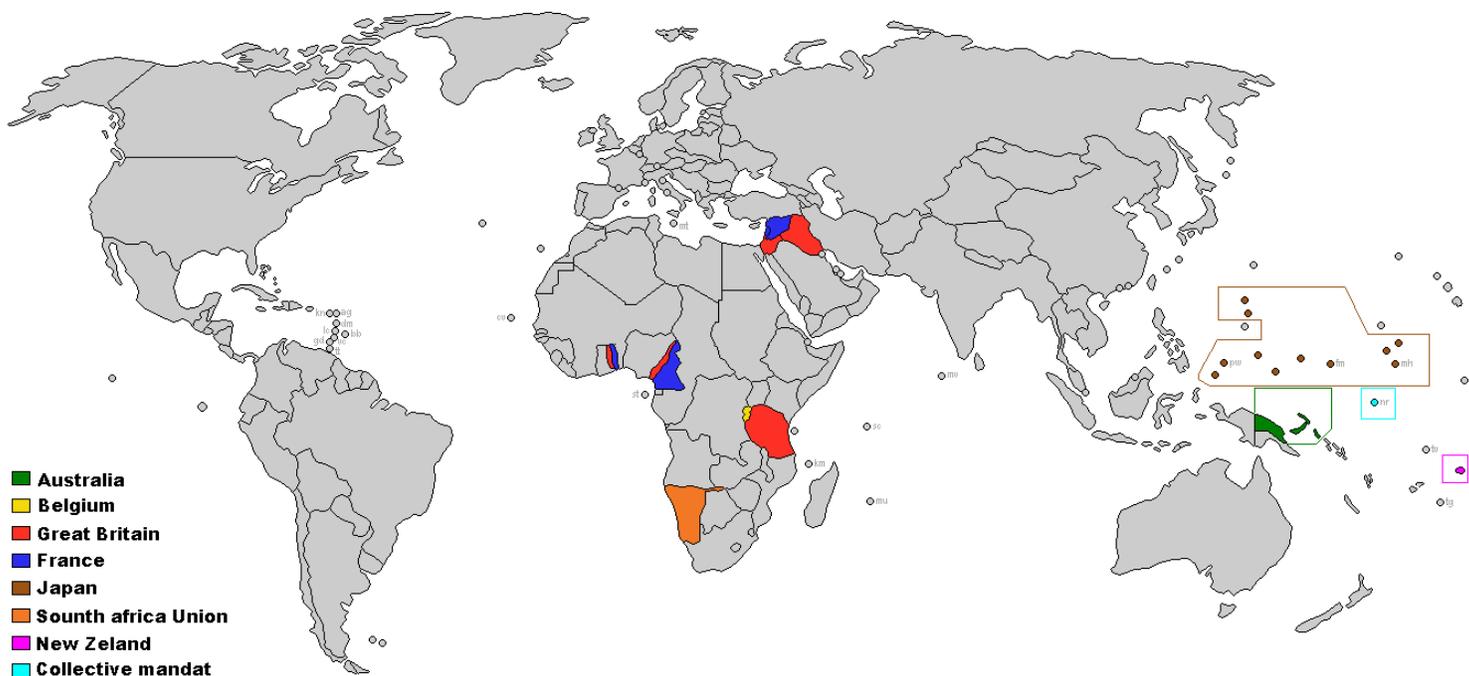


Image source:

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Map_of_league_of_nations_mandate.png

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