

FROM ASSOCIATES TO ANTAGONISTS: THE UNITED STATES,
GREAT BRITAIN, THE FIRST WORLD WAR, AND THE
ORIGINS OF WAR PLAN RED, 1914-1919

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American military plans for a war with the British Empire, first discussed in 1919, have received varied treatment since their declassification. The most common theme among historians in their appraisals of WAR PLAN RED is that of an oddity. Lack of a detailed study of Anglo-American relations in the immediate post-First World War years makes a right understanding of the difficult relationship between the United States and Britain after the War problematic.

As a result of divergent aims and policies, the United States and Great Britain did *not* find the diplomatic and social unity so many on both sides of the Atlantic aspired to during and immediately after the First World War. Instead, United States' civil and military organizations came to see the British Empire as a fierce and potentially dangerous rival, worthy of suspicion, and planned accordingly. Less than a year after the end of the War, internal debates and notes discussed and circulated between the most influential members of the United States Government, coalesced around a premise that became the rationale for WAR PLAN RED.

Ample evidence reveals that contrary to the common narrative of "Anglo-American" and "Atlanticist" historians of the past century, the First World War did not forge a new union of spirit between the English-speaking nations. The experiences of the War, instead, engendered American antipathy for the British Empire. Economic and military advisers feared that the British might use their naval power to check American expansion, as they believed it did during the then recent conflict.

The first full year of peace witnessed the beginnings of what became WAR PLAN RED. The foundational elements of America's war plan against the British Empire emerged in reaction

to the events of the day. Planners saw Britain as a potentially hostile nation, which might regard the United States' rise in strength as a threatening challenge to Britain's historic economic and maritime supremacy.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

WAR PLAN RED occupies a curious position in military historiography. American military plans for a war with the British Empire, first discussed in 1919, finally developed in 1927-1930, and retained up through 1939 – one of many colored plans the Army and Navy jointly developed in the post-First World War period – have received varied treatment since their declassification in 1974.

The official plan assumed a long war, “involving the maximum effort of the armed forces and civil power of the United States, directed. . . toward. . . the defeat of [the British Empire’s] armed forces in North America and the Western North Atlantic, including the Caribbean Sea and West Indian waters, and finally toward the economic exhaustion of the. . . United Kingdom.” British forces would concentrate land and naval forces on Canada. Over the course of a year, the Joint Army and Navy Board estimated British and Canadian military forces in the Dominion could amount to 1.29 million men; the Royal Navy in Western Atlantic waters, operating out of Canadian and Caribbean ports, could possess 16 battleships, 5 aircraft-carriers, 143 destroyers, and 52 submarines; and the Royal Air Force could send up to 72 squadrons to North America. PLAN RED anticipated a British-Canadian invasion of the United States, primarily the northeast, at the earliest possible moment to arrest American mobilization. Against this possibility, an American expeditionary force of some 25,000 men would capture Halifax to prevent British reinforcement of Canada, followed by amphibious assaults on other harbors to prevent effective British naval operations in the Western Atlantic. Ultimately, the Joint Board estimated 4.6 million men could be mobilized into 9 armies and support organizations. Besides Canadian ports,

other offensive operations into Canada would be launched, as well as against strategic British locations such as Jamaica, Bermuda, and the Bahamas in the Caribbean. Additionally, the United States Navy would embark upon a campaign of *guerre de course* against Britain's worldwide commerce, attempt a distant blockade of the home islands, and force the British Empire to terms.¹

The most common theme among historians in their appraisals of PLAN RED is that of an oddity. One of the most valuable sources on the details of American war plans, Steven Ross of the Naval War College, dismisses RED as lacking "serious political rationale," a contention he repeats in several iterations in two separate works on American war planning.² In full agreement, an Army War College production, Henry Gole's *Road to Rainbow*, implies that these plans "bore little relation to contemporary developments in international affairs."³ Its only value, these scholars contend, existed in providing United States military planners "practice in dealing with problems of a major war," for study of "the complexities of an Atlantic-centered conflict," or merely "exercise [of] skills in defending the Atlantic coast."⁴ One reviewer reduces it even further: it remained simply "to give colonels and captains something to do."⁵

These and other authors maintain that PLAN RED provided little more than a phase on the "Road to Rainbow." Even those willing to concede some element of the realistic in the plans remain focused more on the premise that, "for both the Army and Navy, planning for war against RED. . . provided valuable experience from which the services drew when they confronted *really*

¹ *Joint Army and Navy Basic War Plan – RED*, Estimates of the Situation, 16 May 1930, JB 325, Serial No. 436, Records of the Joint Army and Navy Boards and Committees, 1903-1947, Record Group 225, National Archives II, College Park, Maryland, M1421, Roll 10.

² Steven T. Ross, *American War Plans, 1890-1939* (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 2002), 145.

³ Henry G. Gole, *Road to Rainbow: Army Planning for Global War, 1934-1940* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2002), x.

⁴ Steven T. Ross, *American War Plans, 1919-1941*, vol. 1, *Peacetime War Plans, 1919-1935* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1992), ii; *idem*, *American War Plans*, 145; Gole, *Road to Rainbow*, xvii.

⁵ Thaddeus Holt, "Joint PLAN RED," *Military History Quarterly* (1988): 48.

dangerous enemies... on the eve of World War II.”⁶ Indeed, one of *Road to Rainbow*’s main arguments asserts that, however illogical RED or the other colored plans were, they provided direction on the path to the eventual – presumably more logical – planning for coalition warfare entailed in the Rainbow Plans that emerged in the late 1930s.

Near incredulity underlies these perceptions – that American Army and Navy planners would even devise plans for an Anglo-American war. Ross declares, “The idea that the United States and Britain would engage... against each other... was at best remote.”⁷ Gole counts RED as unrealistic because he considers Britain a most “unlikely foe” during the Inter-War period.⁸ In this premise, that a serious notion of such a war between 1919 and 1939 must have been “unthinkable,” and such planning therefore nonsensical, Ross and Gole have much company.

The idea of a true friendship between the United States and the United Kingdom, emerging prior to the Great War, demonstrated in 1917-1919, merely dormant in the 1920s and 1930s, but solidified in the 1940s, finds exposition in early, full-length studies of the relationship, and demonstrates the bent of most subsequent works up through the present. In 1924, J.D. Whelpley of *Harper’s Weekly* penned his *British-American Relations*. Though somewhat critical in its analysis, his agenda reveals itself in chapter headings such as the opening, “Natural Allies,” and the concluding “What Can Be Done.”⁹ Major works rolled out as the American and British people developed the “Special Relationship” out of the Second World War. These books sought to interpret Anglo-American history as a linear, uniform progression from the division and hatred out of the American War of Independence to diplomatic unity and

⁶ William Reynolds Braisted, “On the American Red and Red-Orange Plans, 1919-1939,” in *Naval Warfare in the Twentieth Century, 1900-1945: Essays in Honour of Arthur Marder*, ed. Gerald Jordan (London: Croom Helm, Ltd., 1977), 182 (emphasis added). Though he considers the work wholly unrealistic, Holt echoes the same in “Joint PLAN RED,” 55.

⁷ Ross, *American War Plans*, 145.

⁸ Gole, *Road to Rainbow*, 27.

⁹ J.D. Whelpley, *British-American Relations* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1924), 1, 315.

friendship, and the alliance of the 1940s.¹⁰ Chief among Anglo-American histories, H.C. Allen's *Great Britain and the United States* remains one of the most oft cited works, and his study of relations between the United States and Britain from 1783 to 1952 sets the mold. Professor Allen espouses the "Special Relationship" view, and downplays the very real controversies that bedeviled Anglo-American connections in the decades prior to the Second World War – a theme improved upon in his *Conflict and Concord*.¹¹ As a later critic observed, Allen's thesis follows that "a growing intimacy of action between the United States and Britain has been the great continuing theme of world history" since the First World War.¹² And other volumes utilize these same themes. Lionel Gelber's deceptively titled *America in Britain's Place* quips, "between the [world] wars, for all who cherished freedom and cared for the defense of Western society, the one element of promise was Anglo-American friendship."¹³

These, mostly – though by no means exclusive¹⁴ – British productions were products of the Cold Wars, as the prolific Canadian scholar B.J.C. McKercher observed, "when the East-West rivalry was at its height." Historians at that time took their lead from statesmen such as the great Winston Churchill, adopted the "Special Relationship" line, and sought to demonstrate "how from at least 1865 onward, any Anglo-American differences amounted to small pebbles dropped accidentally in a placid pool of commonality."¹⁵ They became, in the words of D. Cameron Watt, "a convinced and dedicated group of 'Anglo-American' historians for whom the

¹⁰ Philip Gibbs, ed. *Bridging the Atlantic: Anglo-American Fellowship as the Way to World Peace; A Survey from both Sides* (Garden City: New York: Doubleday, Doran, and Co., 1944); Crane Brinton, *The United States and Britain* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University, 1945), 128, 130-131.

¹¹ H.C. Allen, *Great Britain and the United States, 1783-1852* (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1955); H.C. Allen, *Conflict and Concord: The Anglo-American Relationship since 1783* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1960).

¹² Max Beloff, "The Special Relationship: An Anglo-American Myth," in *A Century of Conflict, 1850-1950: Essays for A.J.P. Taylor*, ed. Martin Gilbert (New York: Atheneum, 1967), 152.

¹³ Lionel Gelber, *America in Britain's Place: The Leadership of the West and Anglo-American Unity* (New York: Frederick Praeger, 1961), vii.

¹⁴ Allen and Gibbs are British; Lionel Gelber hails from Canada; while Crane Brinton and Bradford Perkins, and many other notable authors are Americans.

¹⁵ Brian McKercher, "Wealth, Power, and the New International Order: Britain and the American Challenge in the 1920s," *Diplomatic History* 12, No. 4 (1988): 413.

differences and conflicts which existed in those relationships are barriers to proper understanding, as they conceive[d] it, of the unique nature of those relationships, and which are therefore to be ignored when possible.”¹⁶

These “Anglo-American historians,” quite literally, paper over those incidents problematic to their positive interpretation. H.C. Allen references some of the incidences of friction arising out of the First World War, yet does little to chart their course, or see to their influence or consequences, or resolution in the Inter-War period. Others overlook relevant issues entirely to fit the narrative. In an excellent example – the short, concise *United States and Britain* – H.G. Nicholas practically skips the major issues of immediate post-War relations. He regards the disagreements arising out of the First World War as “minor,” and the questions debated as “wholly unnecessary.”¹⁷

Lack of a detailed study of Anglo-American relations in the immediate post-First World War years makes a right understanding of the difficult relationship between the United States and the British Empire after the War problematic.¹⁸ Innumerable volumes cover the War itself, and several articles and a few books dwell on American and British relations during that period – though even they minimize the many Anglo-American controversies.¹⁹ The Paris Peace Conference, one of the most unique events in the diplomatic annals of the modern era, likewise

¹⁶ D. Cameron Watt, *Succeeding John Bull: America in Britain's Place, 1900-1975* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 20.

¹⁷ H.G. Nicholas, *The United States and Britain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), 69, 71.

¹⁸ Benjamin D. Rhodes, “The Image of Britain in the US, 1919-1929: A Contentious Relative and Rival,” in *Anglo-American Relations in the 1920s: The Struggle for Supremacy*, ed. B.J.C. McKercher (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1990), 187ff.

¹⁹ Studies on relations between the United States and Great Britain during the War include David F. Trask, *Captains & Cabinets: Anglo-American Naval Relations, 1917-1918* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1972) and Dean C. Allard, “Anglo-American Naval Differences During World War I,” *Military Affairs* 44, No. 2 (April 1980): 75-81.

has been the subject of intense study, as have its Anglo-American dimensions.²⁰ A hole, however, exists, for the most part, once one emerges from the Peace Conference and into the post-War world.

Contributions to such a field do exist, however limited in scope. The most useful *Anglo-American Relations in the 1920s*, a collection of seven articles on different, semi-related issues of the period, currently provides the only full-length source on the subject.²¹ But most articles and histories of the 1920s, including those found in *Anglo-American Relations*, focus upon particular aspects of Anglo-American relations – economic, naval, and others. And among these, a more diverse picture of the relationship materializes.

Of course, a collection of Watt’s “Anglo-American historians” occupy these fields as well. Michael Hogan’s *Informal Entente* is exemplary. His work, quite compellingly, endeavors to demonstrate that economic considerations did much to bring the United States and Britain together in the decade after the First World War. In the same vein, Roberta Dayer’s expositions on American and British monetary and financial establishments stress “common values and goals” between these interests in both countries out of the World War and after.²²

Other scholars present a different analysis. In their economic histories, Carl Parrini and Frank Costigliola present a far more contentious relationship between the two great powers in the

²⁰ Everyone involved in the Conference wrote their own account of its events. David Lloyd George, the British Prime Minister, *Memoirs of the Peace Conference*, 2 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1939); Robert Lansing, the American Secretary of State, *The Peace Negotiations, A Personal Narrative* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1921); André Tardieu, the French Commissioner for Franco-American War Cooperation, *The Truth About the Treaty* (Brooklyn: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1921). Ray Stannard Baker, *Woodrow Wilson and World Settlement*, 3 vols. (Gloucester, Massachusetts: Peter Smith, 1960) remains standard; Margaret MacMillan, *Paris, 1919: Six Months that Changed the World* (New York: Random House, 2001), what may be considered a popular history, is perhaps the most recent; Seth P. Tillman, *Anglo-American Relations at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961) provides the most detailed look at the conference for its effect on relations between the United States and Great Britain.

²¹ B.J.C. McKercher, ed., *Anglo-American Relations in the 1920s: The Struggle for Supremacy* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1990).

²² Michael J. Hogan, *Informal Entente: The Private Structure of Cooperation in Anglo-American Economic Diplomacy, 1918-1928* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1977); R.A. Dayer, “Anglo-American Monetary Policy and Rivalry in Europe and the Far East, 1919-1931,” in B.J.C. McKercher, *Anglo-American Relations*, 158.

post-Great War decade.²³ Parrini's *Heir to Empire*, in particular, highlights how the World War itself created a new economic landscape in which the United States and the British Empire had become fierce rivals. And though Paul Kennedy asserts in *Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, that the United States had become "by 1918... indisputably the strongest power in the world," that position was, by no means, assured, nor complete.²⁴ According to Herbert Feis in *Diplomacy of the Dollar*, the United Kingdom remained a potent economic power, despite its indebtedness and losses due to the 1914-1918 war, and therefore an apt competitor. Professor McKercher completes Feis's argument: with the United States now a major, capable economic rival, yet not the supreme economic power, and Great Britain in possession of much of its commercial abilities, a serious competition between the two nations after the First World War was inevitable.²⁵

Naval histories, likewise, present differing appraisals. Early naval histories downplay the notions of an Anglo-American contest. George T. Davis's *Navy Second to None*, in the introduction, remarks that in the post-World War One era, "although the aim of this country [was] to match the British fleet, there is no evidence of rivalry in this relationship."²⁶ His work by no means states this alone. Yet others convincingly dispute such an assertion. Jeffrey Safford's *Wilsonian Maritime Diplomacy*, one of the most comprehensive studies of its subject, presents the Administration of Woodrow Wilson as intensely wary of British mercantile

²³ Carl P. Parrini, *Heir to Empire: United States Economic Diplomacy, 1916-1923* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1969); Frank Costigliola, "Anglo-American Financial Rivalry in the 1920s," *Journal of Economic History* 37, No. 4 (December 1977): 911-934; Frank Costigliola, *Awkward Dominion: American Political, Economic, and Cultural Relations with Europe, 1919-1933* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1984).

²⁴ Paul M. Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (New York: Random House, 1987), xix.

²⁵ Herbert Feis, *Diplomacy of the Dollar: First Era, 1912-1932* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1950); Brian McKercher, "Britain and the American Challenge."

²⁶ George T. Davis, *A Navy Second to None: The Development of Modern American Naval Policy* (1940), xii.

intentions after the World War, a portrait absent from the works G.T. Davis, Allen, and others.²⁷ Stephen Roskill's first volume of *Naval Policy between the Wars*, the only extant naval history to focus on the years 1919-1929, develops a narrative that most seriously challenges the above-mentioned "Anglo-American historians" who disclaim the notion of any contention in the relationship between the United States and Great Britain. Roskill convincingly argues that, despite "a tendency by historians to underplay, if not actually ignore, the serious differences of opinion and the rivalry in many fields which arise between the two nations during the inter-war period," the years 1919-1929 were, in fact, a period of intense antagonism between the two countries.²⁸ Though mostly from the British perspective, his work provides valuable insights. But published in 1968 – six years before the release of the WAR PLAN RED documents – the plan's significance could neither be expounded upon, nor even referenced.

And because each of these scholars' works details a particular segment of scholarship – merchant marine policy, naval history, trade – none of these studies ably combine these elements to develop a unitary narrative of the Anglo-American relationship during the formative years of WAR PLAN RED. Thus, detached from its roots, American plans for war with Britain can be made to look out of place, misguided, and irrational.

One must then question the logic of dismissing the war plans outright. The mere existence of PLAN RED implies that a far different relationship between American and Britons developed after the First World War, especially when one examines the context in which it was created. America's undisputed emergence into the ranks of the great nations took place concurrent with one of the most monumental shifts in the global balance of power. The events of

²⁷ Jeffrey J. Safford, *Wilsonian Maritime Diplomacy, 1913-1921* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1978).

²⁸ Stephen W. Roskill, *Naval Policy between the Wars*, vol. 1, *The Period of Anglo-American Antagonism, 1919-1929* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1979), 20.

the First World War and immediately after shattered what remained of the arrangements made after the fall of Napoleon one hundred years earlier, and the establishment of the German Empire fifty years prior, and set in motion much of subsequent history. Likewise, the course of the War and its effects on the great nations dramatically impacted American perceptions of the post-War world. Out of this global shift, the United States adjusted its view of the world dynamic, relations between nations, and the American position in the new international order.

Of all the relationships of all the Great Powers, that of the United States and Great Britain changed the most significantly. Together, they and their allies defeated the Central Powers. The German Empire, formerly the greatest nation on the European continent and the second most powerful country in the world in terms of its global military and economic standing, suffered a significant defeat in the fields of France, the loss of nearly its entire navy, and the ruin of its industrial capacity by four years of near total war. The British Empire received nearly a million war casualties, substantially less than their rivals or the other Allies, but the Royal Navy outnumbered all others combined; yet the War inflicted a terrible toll on the Empire's economy. Britain lost many of its overseas markets and owed billions in war debts to the United States and American bankers. The United States, however, having committed its men and resources to only a year and a half of the War, lost little of either, the American Navy had embarked upon its grandest construction program in its history, developed an enormous merchant marine, and became the most competitive trading nation, capturing many former English markets, and became Britain's most capable rival. At the end of the First World War, the United States and Great Britain had become the two, sole, greatest powers on earth, and each recognized the other as such.

In the immediate aftermath of the War, leaders in the United States Government, military, business community, and so forth, fully recognized this new American position. Most significantly, with the European nations at war for four years, the United States had grasped a significant new share of the world's markets – outlets formerly utilized, primarily, by British merchants. This new economic dominance demanded protection, and perhaps greater expansion. Few believed that policy could go forward without conflicting with British interests. To forward these economic and diplomatic aims, elements within the Congress, the Administration, and the Navy believed the United States required a physical arm with which it could reach out into the world. Beginning in 1916, it undertook to construct a new modern navy, “second to none.” In 1918 and 1919, plans expanded to create a naval and mercantile force which contemplated matching, or potentially surpassing, Britain's Royal Navy and merchant marine in quality, and even in quantity. The question of naval armaments and trading vessels, what would see construction and for what purpose, then became one of the most divisive sources of contention between the two nations in the years after the war.

As a result of these divergent aims and policies, the United States and Great Britain did *not* find the diplomatic and social unity so many on both sides of the Atlantic aspired to during and immediately after the First World War. Instead, the United States' civil and military organizations came to see the British Empire as a fierce and potentially dangerous rival, worthy of suspicion, and planned accordingly. Less than a year after the end of the War, internal debates and notes discussed and circulated between the most influential members of the United States Government, coalesced around a premise that became the rationale for WAR PLAN RED. Of all American concerns, the economic became central in and after the First World War. In a

memorandum written for the Chief of Naval Operations, Rear Admiral William Benson, just months following the November 1918 Armistice, the Navy Planning Section warned,

war [with Great Britain] may come. . . . Successful trade rivalry strikes at the very root of British interest and British prosperity, and may threaten even the existence of the British Empire. If British trade is seriously threatened, her people may feel that war is justified – as a measure of self-preservation.²⁹

In all the war plan documents, as developed and finalized in the late 1920s and early 1930s, the premise remained the same:

The most probable cause of war between [Great Britain] and [the United States] is the constantly increasing [American] economic penetration and commercial expansion into regions formerly dominated by [British] trade, to such extent as eventually to menace [British] standards of living and to threaten economic ruin. . . . The war aim of [Great Britain] in a war with [the United States] is conceived to be the definite elimination of [America] as an important economic commercial rival in international trade.³⁰

The majority of the sources on Anglo-American diplomatic relations, described above, overlook this aspect. There is, therefore a history largely lost over the course of the last century. The present aim, developed here, seeks to explore this neglected period in the relationship between the United States and Great Britain, the ignored theme of the antagonism that existed between the English-speaking nations as a consequence of the First World War, and provided the foundational elements of WAR PLAN RED as a consequence of these troubled years.

Sources have only begun to develop these ideas. Christopher Bell’s article “British and American Naval Strategies for an Anglo-American War,” advocates acceptance of WAR PLAN RED on its face. The plan, Bell writes, “highlights the competitive, often antagonistic side of Anglo-American relations during the 1920s and the level of mutual mistrust that existed.” Far from lacking “serious political rationale,” he asserts, “it is too often forgotten that naval rivalry, war debts, and arguments over belligerent versus neutral rights placed considerable strain on

²⁹ Planning Section, London, Memorandum, [c. January] 1919, William Shepherd Benson Papers, Library of Congress, Manuscripts Division, Washington, D.C., Box 42.

³⁰ *Joint Army and Navy Basic War Plan – RED*, 16 May 1930.

Anglo-American friendship during this period.”³¹ The works by Parrini, Roskill, Safford, and the like explored elements of the Anglo-American post-War rivalry, but none bring them to fruition. D. Cameron Watt’s *Succeeding John Bull* references difficulties in the war-time relations between the United States and Great Britain, the monumental shift in the position of the two powers – in relation to the world and especially one another – but, like others, goes into only so much detail on such matters. *The Eclipse of Great Britain*, by Anne Orde, billed as “a study, not of Anglo-American relations as such, but of the relationship between Great Britain’s imperial decline and the ascent of the United States to the position of a super power” highlights some of the more conspicuous controversies that divided America and England, and demonstrates to a degree as few others have the negative strains such issues placed on the relationship after the Great War.³²

An exploration of the personal papers and government documents of those individuals at the highest levels of the Woodrow Wilson Administration, the State and Navy Departments, the United States Congress, and other informed observers, reveals a substantial need for this reevaluation. By no means were there expectations of a new war between the United States and the British Empire, especially only a few years after the most destructive war had just ended, or the inevitability of such a conflict in the near future. Yet a serious appraisal of the new international situation recognized major conflicting interests between Americans and Britons. Considering the widened diplomatic divide between the two nations as a consequence of the World War, many in the government, military, and economic spheres recognized that those

³¹ Christopher M. Bell, “Thinking the Unthinkable: British and American Naval Strategies for an Anglo-American War, 1918-1931.” *International History Review* 19, No. 4 (November 1997): 791.

³² Anne Orde, *The Eclipse of Great Britain: The United States and British Imperial Decline, 1895-1956* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1996), vii.

opposing interests may “threaten even the existence of the British Empire. . . . [And] her people may feel that war is justified – as a measure of self-preservation.”³³

³³ Planning Section, London, Memorandum, [c. January] 1919, Benson Papers.

CHAPTER 2

CONTROVERSIES OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR

Wars, between Britain or the United States and third powers, as between the two nations themselves, have provided nearly equally serious strains on the Anglo-American relationship. Regardless of the belligerents, conflicts of interest inevitably arose. The Great War that engaged all the major European powers in August 1914 proved no different. The British Empire's war of 1914-1916 required of it serious military, economic, and political measures which brought it into conflict with the interests of the United States, which remained neutral until 1917. The blockade of Germany and other British naval activities raised legitimate concerns. American commercial interests, which sought equal, and unhampered, neutral trade with all the belligerent powers, recognized very real dangers in the Royal Navy's restrictions. So did the United States Navy, which saw its impotence in the face of the British and German navies, so preeminent in with their surface fleets, and Germany with its submarines. Then, British and Allied plans for the post-War world, and the economic system that would dominate Europe and seemingly shut out the United States, reached governmental and commercial offices, and spurred fears that an Allied victory could be little better for Americans than a German win.

United States economic expansion ensured America's pro-Ally disposition at the end of 1916, the ultimate intervention in the First World War from April 1917 through November 1918. But belligerency only temporarily allayed American concerns over British designs on international commerce. Despite the need for a successful, joint prosecution of the war against the Central Powers, several influential members of the American government, naval establishment, and economic realm, remained suspicious of their chief wartime associate.

On the eve of the First World War, one might judge the relationship between the United States and Great Britain as merely acceptable, and their view of each other as ambivalent. Many long-standing issues between the two nations found their way toward resolution in the decade between the last great Anglo-American controversy – the First Venezuela Crisis of 1895 – and the election of Woodrow Wilson as President of the United States. Up through 1914, “indifference” described the mutual opinions glancing across the Atlantic.

The Mexican Revolution, begun in 1910, unsettled the *détente*. By the spring of 1911, significant portions of that country were in revolt against the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz, and the civil authorities abandoned many of their posts. American businessmen initially welcomed the victory of Francisco Madero and his revolutionaries, until they encouraged British economic and political investment in Mexico against United States interests. In April of that year, an incident at Mexicali demonstrated for many Americans that the English intended to meddle in the American back yard. The commander of a British warship landed troops under the pretense of preventing disorder in the city. The “occupation” lasted a mere seventeen hours, but elements within the United States, up to the Senate, viewed the action as a violation of the historic Monroe Doctrine prohibiting European interference in the affairs of the Western Hemisphere.¹

The British did have much interest in Mexican affairs at the time. The British Admiralty under Winston Churchill as First Lord in 1913 announced plans to construct oil-, rather than coal-burning warships, and Anglo-Mexican Petroleum Products, headed by Weetman Pearson,

¹ George C. Herring, *From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations since 1776* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 390-391; P. Calvert, *The Mexican Revolution, 1910-1914: The Diplomacy of Anglo-American Conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 64; 17 April 1911, United States Department of State, Decimal Files, General Records of the Department of State, 1756-1999, Record Group 59, National Archives II, College Park, Maryland, No. 812.00/3029½ (hereafter cited as “SD”); Senator William Joel Stone, 17 April 1911, Congress of the United States, *Congressional Record: Proceedings and Debates of the Congress* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1911), 47, Part1:307, 448.

Lord Cowdray, to become a minor, though important supplier for the Royal Navy. Contemporaneous with Britain's growing interest in Mexican oil, a *coup* led by General Victoriano Huerta overthrew the revolutionary government in February 1913, resulting in the murder of Madero and his vice president, and a violent civil war. The British Government, according to long-standing precedent, quickly recognized the new provisional regime. Then, on 10 October, Huerta dissolved the Mexican Chamber of Deputies. The very next day the new British Minister to Mexico City, Sir Lionel Carden, an ardent anti-American, arrived to take up his post – seen as an intentional affront to the United States and further endorsement of Huerta's tyranny. President Wilson, meanwhile, in a novel diplomatic initiative for the time, withheld recognition of the Huerta Government due to the means by which it attained power. Thus, as the United States Government rejected Mexican leadership for its corruption and brutality, the British appeared willing to make deals for access to its resources.² “Thus, it was easy to go on to suspect the relationship between Lord Cowdray and the British government. . . . That Cowdray's activities in Mexico were corrupt, and to the view that the British government was deliberately thwarting the wishes of the United States in Mexico.”³ The Britons appeared all too willing, to Wilson and others in America, to compromise on moral principles in order to secure economic gain and led to a decided “chill” in the United States' relations with Great Britain.⁴

Yet active British support of Madero never fully materialized, and as quickly as the United States Government had come to believe in foul British intentions, the concerns waned.⁵ Furthermore, Britons appeared far more interested in the issue of Panama Canal tolls than

² Mark T. Gilderhus, *The Second Century: U.S.-Latin American Relations Since 1889* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 2000), 43; Calvert, *Mexican Revolution*, 173, 192; Herring, *Foreign Relations*, 391-392; Thomas Andrew Bailey, *A Diplomatic History of the American People* (New York: Appleton, Century, Crofts, 1964), 551; H.C. Allen, *Great Britain and the United States: A History of Anglo-American Relations, 1783-1952* (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1955), 646-647.

³ Calvert, *Mexican Revolution*, 176.

⁴ Gilderhus, *U.S.-Latin American Relations*, 43.

⁵ Calvert, *Mexican Revolution*, 155.

Mexican oil.⁶ Therefore, in order to secure British cooperation in Mexican affairs, on 5 March 1914 President Wilson made a “dramatic” plea before Congress and urged the repeal of the discriminatory clauses in the 1912 Panama Canal regulations exempting American coastwise shipping to the detriment of all other users, “in plain contravention of the treaty with Great Britain concerning the canal.”⁷ Narrow repeal of the provision on 11 June led to a fair degree of British compliance at an important moment. In April 1914, the arrest of American sailors at Tampico led to the occupation of the port of Vera Cruz until November. With General Alvaro Obregón’s Constitutionalist Army’s success in July 1914 and the flight of Huerta to Jamaica, remaining American fears of an illegitimate tyrant backed by British imperialists dissipated.⁸ The Mexican question as a whole, however, remained unresolved; and though the specific incidents would, British behavior in Central America would not be forgotten. But, by August 1914, the diplomatic relations between the United States and Great Britain could be judged as in a decent state.

But as wars inevitably interrupt international discourse, so they disrupted Anglo-American concord. Most importantly, the War of 1914-1918 interfered with global trade. Within the first weeks of the First World War, American merchants prepared for the predictable interference in their commercial activities. Firms such as the Insurance Company of North America inquired of the State Department the parameters of “contraband of war” – those items whose sale the belligerents would not allow to their enemies.⁹ Congressman John Stevens of

⁶ Bailey, *Diplomatic History*, 551.

⁷ House Doc. No. 813, 5 March 1914, Congress of the United States, *Congressional Record: Proceedings and Debates of the Congress* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1914), 51, Part 5: 4312-4313.

⁸ Bailey, *Diplomatic History*, 550, 556-560; Herring, *Foreign Relations*, 393-394; Gilderhus, *U.S.-Latin American Relations*, 45.

⁹ Benjamin Rush, President of the Insurance Company of North America, to William Jennings Bryan, 3 August 1914, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1914*, Supplement: The World War

Texas, on behalf of the Wichita Mill and Elevator Company, requested that Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan provide a report on whether grain shipments to Holland would sail unmolested.¹⁰ Requests for information and advice became so burdensome in the first two weeks of the War that the State Department issued an official, public statement on 15 August defining the requirements of neutrality, classes of contraband, as well as the major pronouncements by both Britain and Germany as to their particular intentions with regards to shipments of contraband cargoes.¹¹ The proscriptions and inconveniences, however, were natural and internationally accepted by-products of war the United States would make little objection to.

In practice, though, crises in Anglo-American relations of the World War arose out of the blockade due to differences in opinion over the administration of a proper and legal blockade.¹² American expectations of respect for its neutrality and implementation of the Declaration of London of 1908 – the last international attempt at codification of maritime law – quickly faded.¹³ On 20 August, King and Parliament declared Orders in Council which provided for *qualified* British compliance with much of the Declaration of London. In notifying Walter Hines Page, the American Ambassador in London, of the Orders, Sir Eyre Crowe at the British Foreign Office

(Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1928), 272 (hereafter cited as *Foreign Relations, 1914*, Supplement).

¹⁰ John H. Stevens to W.J. Bryan, 6 August 1916, *Foreign Relations, 1914*, Supplement, 273.

¹¹ Cone Johnson, Solicitor, "Public circular issued by the Department of State...regarding neutrality, contraband, and the seizure of ships and cargo," 15 August 1914, *Foreign Relations, 1914*, Supplement, 274-278.

¹² David Dumbleby and David Reynolds, *An Ocean Apart: The Relationship between Britain and America in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Random House, 1988), 58; H.C. Allen, *Great Britain and the United States*, 662.

¹³ Allen, *Britain and the United States*, 624-625. For the text of the Declaration, see James Bryce, Ambassador to the United States, to Philander Knox, 20 September 1909, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States..., 1909*, (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1914), 316-333. Principles established in the Declaration of London attempted to dictate protocol and practice in blockade. An International Prize Court established at the Second Hague Conference of 1907 required rules for application. The Great Powers had intended to make the generally accepted international standards of blockading and use of the seas in times of war for the Court at the London Conference the following year, and the Declaration of 1908 went far in settling some of the differences between the major naval nations, and included concessions by the Americans and Britons. The final protocol outlined permissible blockades, enumerated contraband or war, established procedures for the disposition of prizes, delineated acceptable transfer of ship registry, and so forth. The United States Senate ratified the convention, while fears for its maritime position and use of its greatest weapon resulted in Britain's withdrawal. Though its Parliament never approved of the Declaration, the Government of the United States expected England to adhere to its standards same as those who had officially ratified it.

conceded that “acceptance of [the Declaration of London] by the belligerents would prevent the possibility of grave misunderstandings [as] to the relations between belligerents and neutrals,” but that his government had “decided to adopt generally the rules of the declaration. . . subject to certain modifications and additions which they judge indispensable to the efficient conduct of their naval operations.” That meant practical abrogation of certain articles with regards to the definitions of contraband items and to neutral rights.¹⁴ They would not be the first alterations to the Declaration, nor the most serious, which would antagonize the United States.

Britain, France, and the other Allies, from then on, defined the parameters of the blockade without regard to the neutrals – but cautiously at first. Certain items, such as tobacco, resin, and turpentine, and that most divisive of commodities, cotton, remained exempt from seizure as such a policy would guarantee an angry American response.¹⁵ Notwithstanding the exemptions, Robert Lansing, as Counselor to the State Department, though cautious, definitively opposed the British modifications. He advised “careful consideration and considerable research before we [take] a definite position” on the British Orders in Council, but could not “but feel the action of the British Government calls for unqualified refusal [by] this Government to acquiesce in its legality, and that our objections should be clearly and firmly stated.”¹⁶ President Wilson agreed. Accordingly, on 28 September 1914, Counselor Lansing drafted a telegram for dispatch to Walter Page. It instructed the Ambassador to informally notify Sir Edward Grey, Britain’s Foreign Secretary, that implementation of such arbitrary revision of the Declaration of London

¹⁴ Walter Hines Page to W.J. Bryan, Telegram 483, undated [26 August] 1914, with Memorandum on the Order in Council, *Foreign Relations, 1914*, Supplement, 218-220.

¹⁵ Samuel Flagg Bemis, *A Diplomatic History of the United States* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1938), 592-594; Akira Iriye, *The Cambridge History of American Foreign Relations: The Globalizing of America, 1913-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 23.

¹⁶ Robert Lansing to Woodrow Wilson, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States: The Lansing Papers, 1914-1920* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1939), 1:247.

“will arouse a spirit of resentment among the American people toward Great Britain, which this Government would extremely regret, but which it would be unable to prevent.”¹⁷

The President’s closest friend and most trusted adviser, the Texan Colonel Edward House, urged Wilson not to send Lansing’s instruction. An advocate of informal diplomacy, he requested permission to meet with the British Ambassador in Washington. The President permitted House to discuss the issue with the Sir Cecil Spring-Rice, Britain’s Ambassador to the United States, but still allowed Lansing to cable the order to Page. Spring-Rice assured House “that the British Government was preparing a new Order in Council which would practically meet these [American] views.”¹⁸ Despite this optimistic indication of concession, the State Department informed Wilson on 15 October “that the Order in Council of August 20th is repealed in no particular, but on the contrary is reenacted with changes and additions which make its provisions *even more objectionable*.”¹⁹

By the end of 1914, Woodrow Wilson’s main problem lay in the defense of American trading rights against British seapower. The Royal Navy mined the North Sea and controlled passage through the English Channel. Essentially all commercial traffic to Europe, therefore, passed through British hands. With its system of pilots, to guide neutral ships through minefields and channels, British authorities could direct American ships into their ports and subject them to search, ascertain their destinations, and prevent their release before guaranteeing that cargoes destined for neutral nations such as Denmark and Holland would not eventually find receipt in Germany.²⁰ Even in periods of difficulty with Germany, representatives of the United States

¹⁷ R. Lansing to W. Wilson, *ibid.*, 1:248; SD 763.72112/359a.

¹⁸ Diaries, 27 September, 4 October 1914, Edward Mandell House Papers, Ms 466, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut, Box 300.

¹⁹ R. Lansing to W. Wilson, 15 October 1914, *Foreign Relations: Lansing Papers*, 1:253 (emphasis added); SD 763.72112/157.

²⁰ Arthur S. Link, *The Higher Realism of Woodrow Wilson and Other Essays* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1971), 91; George T. Davis, *A Navy Second to None: The Development of Modern American Naval Policy*

maintained that “the American Government cannot recognize the right of the British Government to set up rules and regulations which are beyond the limits of international law.”²¹ As Britain and its Allies tightened their blockade, adding new rules and regulations, further interfering with and burdening United States commerce, American leaders informally protested, while British statesmen made a show of concession and only continued the “objectionable” practices.

Merchants reported British cruisers hovering just outside American ports in United States waters in early October.²² By the end of that month, the Royal Navy began stopping, searching, and on occasion seizing and taking into prize courts commercial vessels flying the neutral flag of the United States, and carrying neutral cargos.²³ Following a round of American hauls into British prize courts, additional Orders in Council of 29 October and 23 December announced further revisions to the lists of absolute and conditional contraband, as well as other alterations to the English Government’s attitude towards the Declaration of London and the application of its blockade.²⁴ In March 1915, the Royal Navy effectively cut all direct commercial transportation

(New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1940), 202-204, 206-207; Rodney Carlisle, *Sovereignty at Sea: U.S. Merchant Ships and American Entry into World War I* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2009), 31-32.

²¹ Robert P. Skinner, American Consul-General, London, to W.J. Bryan, No. 394, 27 April 1915, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1915*, Supplement: The World War (Washington, D.C.: United States Printing Office, 1928), 373 (hereafter cited as *Foreign Relations, 1915*, Supplement).

²² Office of the Counselor to Frank L. Polk, 24 October 1916, Frank L. Polk Papers, Ms 656, Box 34, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut. On 9 October 1914, Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels learned that Robert Lansing had personally protested to the British Ambassador the presence of the British cruisers *Suffolk* and *Lancaster* off the American coast, the latter just outside the port of New York. Lansing received assurances that the British Government had instructed its North Atlantic commanders not to repeat such activities, yet they would not be the last British warships to test American waters.

²³ R. Lansing to W. Wilson, 20 October 1914, *Foreign Relations: The Lansing Papers*, 1:106; R. Lansing to W.H. Page, Telegram 379, 23 October 1914, Cecil A. Spring-Rice to R. Lansing, 26 October 1914, *Foreign Relations, 1914*, Supplement, 325-326, 328-329. The first, and most widely publicized cases, breaking in October 1914, were the Standard Oil Company tanker *Brindilla*, the *Platuria* bound for neutral Denmark, and the *Rockefeller*, “bound for a port in the near neighborhood of a[n enemy] belligerent.” In time, each of the cases was resolved, but the violation of neutral rights – perceived or real – did not go overlooked.

²⁴ W.H. Page to W.J. Bryan, No. 549, 16 November 1914, R.P. Skinner to W.J. Bryan, Telegram, undated, [24 December] 1914, *Foreign Relations, 1914*, Supplement, 260-262, 269-270; Allen, *Britain and the United States*, 664.

to Germany.²⁵ With every extension of the lists, the British asserted – over each American protest – the vital necessity of the contraband lists, even as against neutral carriers.²⁶ The British navy commanded the seas, and with that power – as Americans began to view it – came arbitrary rule. The *Army and Navy Journal*, one of the chief organs of the United States armed forces, regarded Britain’s restrictions as so burdensome that American trade could only be hindered more “if we were actually at war with her.”²⁷ Interior Secretary Franklin Lane questioned Britain’s true motives:

I cannot see what England means by her policy of delay and embarrassment and hampering. Her success manifestly depends upon the continuance of the strictest neutrality on our part, and yet she is not willing to let us have the rights of a neutral. . . . *Can it be that she is trying to take advantage of the war to hamper our trade?*²⁸

In early 1915, ships themselves became cause for debate. The first year of the European war demonstrated the inadequacy of the American merchant marine. In the face of British command of the seas, and German threats, United States shipping demonstrated its woeful inadequacy. A paltry 10% of American commerce shipped in United States-owned vessels. With a mere 2,027,000 gross tons of ocean-going tonnage as of June 1914 (a miniscule two percent of the world’s mercantile marine), as opposed to the over 20 million of the British Empire and 5.13 million of Germany, United States commercial interests lacked vessels to transport their goods, and those ships that plied the Atlantic were subject to Allied and German depredations. The American economy boomed only on the schedules of Allied vessels. The United States had to take command of its own fate with regard to shipping. A ship-purchase bill became one such

²⁵ W.H. Page to W.J. Bryan, 15 March 1915, Telegram No. 1798, *Foreign Relations, 1915*, Supplement, 143-145; Iriye, *American Foreign Relations*, 22.

²⁶ Bemis, *Diplomatic History*, 594.

²⁷ 14 August 1915, *Army and Navy Journal* 52, 1579.

²⁸ Franklin K. Lane, in Allen, *Britain and the United States*, 666 (emphasis added).

“emergency provision” to enlarge the American merchant marine, and expand service, primarily to ports in South America.²⁹

Included amongst the merchant vessels the act proposed to purchase were a number of German ships that took refuge in American ports at the outset of the War. The British immediately threatened to capture any ships previously operated by the Germans, or other subjects of the Central Powers, bought by American firms. As Sir Cecil Spring-Rice framed the issue, Germany would receive payment for some 400,000 tons-worth of “practically dead” vessels, that is, ships forced to hide in neutral ports where they provided no service to the German war effort. As inactive ships in Germany’s possession, they would remain a useless arm in need of constant, expensive upkeep – a drain on vital resources. Sale of the ships both cut losses and provided needed credits to Britain’s enemy. Additionally, some feared that these vessels would, in time, return to German service during the war after passage across the Atlantic under a neutral flag.³⁰

Though several ships gained notoriety in the controversy, the *Dacia* became the headline vessel. Upon rumors of the sale of Hamburg-Amerika ship to an American firm for one-third its real value, the British Government moved to counter.³¹ Sir Cecil Spring-Rice wrote the State Department in January, that “such transactions justify the strictest enquiry on the part of the belligerent,” and that “His Majesty’s Government must reserve its right as to the recognition to

²⁹ Burton I. Kaufman, “United States Trade and Latin America: The Wilson Years,” *Journal of American History* 58, No. 2 (September 1971): 345; Archibald Hurd, “The World’s Shipping: The Balance of Power,” October 1920, *Fortnightly Review*; Jeffrey J. Safford, *Wilsonian Maritime Diplomacy, 1913-1921* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1978), x, 75; William C. Redfield, Secretary of Commerce, to Philip T. Dodge, 5 June 1915, in Safford, *Maritime Diplomacy*, 67; W.L. Saunders to W.C. Redfield, 17 December 1914, General Records of the Department of Commerce, Office of the Secretary, 1898-1996, Record Group 40, National Archives II, College Park, Maryland, General Correspondence/72155/18, Part 1A.

³⁰ C.A. Spring-Rice to Edward M. House, 12 September 1914, House Papers, Box 105.

³¹ C.A. Spring-Rice to W.J. Bryan, 12 January 1915, *Foreign Relations, 1915*, Supplement, 676-677; SD 195.1/393.

the validity of the transfer of the flag under these and similar circumstances.”³² In spite of the British reservation, Secretary Bryan maintained that “the Department holds that transfer of a belligerent-owned merchant vessel to [an] American purchaser made in good faith is valid.”³³ Yet anticipating the intimations of Sir Cecil in later letters, Bryan cautioned President Wilson that “a large part of the alarm in Great Britain arises over the fear that if the *Dacia* sale is allowed to stand the Government would expect us to use it as a precedent and proceed to buy [more] German ships.”³⁴

And the sale, indeed, elevated temperatures in England as the British Ambassador warned. Publication of the *Dacia* purchase resulted in “fast-rising criticism of the United States” and “added volume and vehemence to all preceding criticisms as proof of our unfriendliness.” On 19 January, Ambassador Page indicated that should the *Dacia* sail for Europe, “she will, of course, be seized and put into the prize court.” He feared that,

if another German ship should follow the *Dacia* here, I do not think any government could withstand the popular demand for her confiscation; and if we permit the transfer of a number of these ships there will be such a wave of displeasure as will make a return of the recent good feeling between the two peoples impossible for a generation. There is no possible escape from such an act being regarded. . . as a distinctly unfriendly attitude. . . I can not [*sic*] exaggerate the ominousness [*sic*] of the situation.³⁵

Bryan could only ask Page, on behalf of the President, to tell Sir Edward Grey, “we regret exceedingly to learn that the British public entertains any doubt as to the strict neutrality of this Government.”³⁶

The ship-purchase question engendered ill-feeling on both sides of the Atlantic, but as with the routines of blockade, the issue did not break relations between the two Governments,

³² C.A. Spring-Rice to the Department of State, Memorandum, 2 January 1915, *Foreign Relations, 1915*, Supplement, 674-675.

³³ W.J. Bryan to John T. Walsh, Telegram, 9 January 1915, *ibid.*, 675.

³⁴ W.J. Bryan to W. Wilson, 22 January 1915, *Foreign Relations, Lansing Papers*, 1:110.

³⁵ W.H. Page to W.J. Bryan, Telegram No. 1486, 19 January 1915, *Foreign Relations, 1915*, Supp. 682-683.

³⁶ W.J. Bryan to W.H. Page, Telegram No. 1019, 23 January 1915, *ibid.*, 685; SD 763.72112/796a.

and the “crisis” passed when the ship purchase bill failed to pass in 1915 (much to Britain’s delight). But the affair added aggravation in troubled times. American observers noted the British reaction, how quickly the public appeared to accuse the United States of un-neutral behavior and unfriendliness towards Great Britain, to what had been a seemingly legitimate neutral act. And the shipping issue, which eventually faded into the background during the first German crisis, remained, and contained enormous consequences for the future maritime dynamic. Instead of merely purchasing ships, the President began to urge the American people and the Congress that the United States needed a government-operated merchant marine. “We are not likely to be permitted to . . . use the ships of other nations in rivalry with their own trade,” Wilson suggested.³⁷ In this the President and the American people became convinced, then and thereafter.

Fortunately, for those desirous of maintaining some sense of cordiality between the United States and Great Britain, Anglo-American tensions over maritime matters decreased due to the first of several German missteps in the war. Problems between the United States and Germany dated back to the initiation of the war, as with England, but the two nations remained fairly agreeable terms. Then on 28 March 1915, in the Irish Sea, the German submarine *U-28* torpedoed the British ship *Falaba* and an initial report indicated an American drowned in the attack. One month later, the American oil tank steamer *Gulflight* became the first of several American vessels subject to German submarine attack in European waters. All such issues, the British maritime practices, the *Falaba*, and other American vessels, became overshadowed as news broke on 7 May of the passenger liner RMS *Lusitania*, sunk by the German submarine *U-*

³⁷ Safford, *Maritime Diplomacy*, 75; Ray Stannard Baker and William E. Dodd, eds., *Public Papers of Woodrow Wilson* (New York: Kraus Reprint Co., 1970), 3:415-416- 418 (hereafter cited as *Wilson, Public Papers*).

20.³⁸ For a brief moment, Americans feared, and Britons hoped, the United States might join in the European War. The reality of intervention, however, remained remote in 1915.³⁹ But the crisis lasted through June, and altered the American situation in the process.

William Jennings Bryan resigned from the State Department on 8 June in anger over Wilson's proposed *Lusitania* notes of protest to the German Government, fearing it would lead to an American declaration of war. In his place, the President promoted Robert Lansing, who brought his unique position of pro-Ally and strong defender of American rights (even as against the Allies) to the first chair of the State Department. Just over two months after the *Lusitania* Crisis arose, the *U-24* sank another British steamer *en route* to New York, in violation of imperial orders. No doubt realizing the immense danger to American-German relations caused by two high-profile sinkings of passenger ships, the *Lusitania* and the *Arabic*, with American casualties, the German emperor personally promised that such attacks would cease.⁴⁰ The *Arabic* Pledge provided for nearly eight months of *détente* thereafter between the United States and Germany. The episode, however, provided a sobering reminder that, although the British navy cost American business time and money, the German navy cost Americans lives.

³⁸ R. Lansing to James W. Gerard, Ambassador in Germany, Telegram No. 370, 9 October 1914, *Foreign Relations, 1914*, Supplement, 330, SD 300.115/768b; Carlisle, *Sovereignty at Sea*, 22. As early as 9 October 1914, the American Government became concerned over the German practice of sinking British merchant ships, because some carried American cargoes. On 27 January 1915 an American merchant ship, the *William P. Frye*, had been seized and sunk; as the ship carried contraband material, the United States gave the incident little regard. W.H. Page to W.J. Bryan, Telegram No. 1864, 1 April, W.J. Bryan to J.W. Gerard, Telegram No. 1471, 6 April, R.P. Skinner to W.J. Bryan, 7 April, Telegram, W.J. Bryan to R.P. Skinner, Telegram, 8 April, R.P. Skinner to W.J. Bryan, Telegram, 9 April, R.P. Skinner to W.J. Bryan, Telegram, 10 April, J.W. Gerard to W.J. Bryan, Telegram No. 2026, 11 April, W.J. Bryan to W.H. Page, Telegram No. 1411, 12 April, J.W. Gerard to W.J. Bryan, Telegram 2044, 16 April 1915, *Foreign Relations, 1915*, Supplement, 358-365, 370. G.T. Davis, *Second to None*, 208. Stephens, Consul-General, Plymouth, England, to W.J. Bryan, Telegram, undated, [c. 3 May] 1915, W.J. Bryan to W.H. Page, Telegram No. 1500, *Foreign Relations 1915*, Supplement, 378; Bailey, *Diplomatic History*, 577; G.T. Davis, *Second to None*, 208.

³⁹ See Woodrow Wilson's "Too Proud to Fight" speech, delivered in Philadelphia, 10 May 1915, *Wilson, Public Papers*, 3:318-322; Bailey, *Diplomatic History*, 577-579; Iriye, *American Foreign Relations*, 24-25.

⁴⁰ Carlisle, *Sovereignty at Sea*, 26-27; Bailey, *Diplomatic History*, 580-581.

As relations with Germany eased, 1916 proved to be the worst year for Anglo-American relations in the War. The year opened with an incident in the Far East that reminded suspicious Americans that the British lacked respect for American rights. On 18 February 1916, the British cruiser *Laurentic*, just out of the Yangtze, stopped and boarded the American mail steamer *China*.⁴¹ During the search British naval officers removed thirty-eight Germans, passengers on board, and detained them in Shanghai. The British Government claimed the men were “embodied in the armed forces of the enemy,” collecting weapons and ammunition for use against British interest in India.⁴² As far as the United States Government understood, none of those taken from the *China* were members of the armed forces of the enemies of Great Britain. Robert Lansing, therefore, instructed Ambassador Page to protest this “unwarranted invasion of the sovereignty of American vessels on the high seas.”⁴³ Months of debate followed, one of the most protracted controversies between the two nations during the War.⁴⁴ The Secretary of State indicated “the American protest will not, in the opinion of this Government, be fully met unless, in addition to the release of the men, the British Government apologizes for the affront to the American flag or wholly repudiates the act of their commander.”⁴⁵

⁴¹ Baker, Consul-General, Nagasaki, to R. Lansing, 23 February, and Anderson, Consul-General, Hongkong, to R. Lansing, Telegram, 23 February 1916, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1916*, Supplement: The World War (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1929), 632 (hereafter cited as *Foreign Relations, 1916*, Supplement); SD 341.6221a/30, 31.

⁴² W.H. Page to R. Lansing, No. 3259, 17 March 1916, *Foreign Relations, 1916*, Supplement, 634; SD 341.622a/84.

⁴³ R. Lansing to W.H. Page, Telegram No. 2924, 23 February 1916, *Foreign Relations, 1916*, Supplement, 632.

⁴⁴ R. Lansing to W.H. Page, Telegram No. 3233, 22 April, R. Lansing to W.H. Page, Telegram No. 3264, 1 May, W.H. Page to R. Lansing, Telegram No. 4252, 5 May, R. Lansing to W.H. Page, Telegram No. 3285, 6 May, R. Lansing to W.H. Page, Telegram No. 3318, 15 May, W.H. Page to R. Lansing, Telegram No. 4320, 18 May, W.H. Page to R. Lansing, Telegram No. 4335, 20 May, R. Lansing to W.H. Page, Telegram No. 3357, 24 May, R. Lansing to W.H. Page, Telegram No. 3402, 8 June, R. Lansing to W.H. Page, Telegram No. 3402, 8 June, W.H. Page to R. Lansing, Telegram No. 3402, 12 June, R. Lansing to W.H. Page, Telegram No. 3436, 17 June, R. Lansing to W.H. Page, Telegram No. 3464, 28 June, W.H. Page to R. Lansing, Telegram No. 4508, 29 June, W.H. Page to R. Lansing, Telegram No. 4570, 18 July, W.H. Page to R. Lansing, Telegram No. 4637, 1 August 1916, *Foreign Relations, 1916*, Supplement, 637-636, 637-641, 644-647, 649-653, 656.

⁴⁵ R. Lansing to W.H. Page, Telegram No. 3285, 6 May 1916, *Foreign Relations, 1916*, Supplement 641; SD 341.622a/120.

Concurrent with the *China* matter, other United States vessels received similar violations. In the case of the American steamer *Henry S.*, a British cruiser ransacked the ship and detained two men – United States citizens – who lacked their citizenship papers. Though the British Government released the men taken from aboard the *China* on 22 May, and Secretary Lansing called the case closed on 23 November, the governments debated the other vessels through December.⁴⁶ The United States never received the apology it claimed to demand. The British dismissed the controversy wholesale. Sir Edward Grey suggested that Lansing’s protests could have “only [been] due to a misunderstanding of the reason[s] which suggested them,” but offered no conciliation.⁴⁷ As with matters in the first two years of the war, the *China* Affair and similar matters were eclipsed by far more serious questions.

A second brief crisis with Germany following the *Sussex* incident led members of Woodrow Wilson’s Cabinet, and significant elements of the American people, to consider war – but, again, provided only temporary distraction away from Britain. As with the *Arabic* note the year prior, a new German promise assured that unarmed civilian ships, Allied or neutral, would remain immune from unannounced submarine torpedoes. The *Sussex* Pledge of 4 May 1916, like the *Arabic* before it, essentially re-neutralized American-German relations until January 1917.⁴⁸

The second settlement came at the most unfortunate moment for Anglo-American relations. Edward House shrewdly observed that “when our difficulties with Germany were

⁴⁶ W.H. Page to R. Lansing, Telegram No. 4284, 11 May, W.H. Page to R. Lansing, No. 3277, 20 March, R. Lansing to W.H. Page, No. 4520, 1 May, R. Lansing to W.H. Page, Telegram No. 3264, 1 December 1916, *Foreign Relations, 1916*, Supplement, 635-636, 639, 641, 667-668. The main incidents were over the *Ausable*, of which the Department learned in March; the *Henry S.* in May; and the *Marcus L. Urann* in June. W.H. Page to R. Lansing, Telegram No. 4284, 11 May, R. Lansing to W.H. Page, No. 4520, 1 December 1916, *ibid.*, 641, 667-668; W.H. Page to R. Lansing, Telegram No. 4335, 20 May, R. Lansing to W.H. Page, 23 November, R. Lansing to W.H. Page, No. 4520, 1 December 1916, *ibid.*, 647, 662-668.

⁴⁷ W.H. Page to R. Lansing, Telegram No. 4570, 18 July 1916, *ibid.*, 652; SD 341.622a/182.

⁴⁸ R. Lansing to W. Wilson, 27 March 1916, Arthur S. Link, ed., *Papers of Woodrow Wilson* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966-1994), 36:371-373 (hereafter cited as *Wilson Papers*); W. Wilson, “*Sussex* Address,” 19 April 1916, *Wilson, Public Papers*, 4:153-159; Carlisle, *Sovereignty at Sea*, 28-29; Allen, *Britain and the United States*, 681; Bailey, *Diplomatic History*, 584-586.

settled, our difficulties with the Allies would begin, and the solution has disturbed me greatly.” The Colonel placed the blame squarely upon the “blindly stupid” British.⁴⁹

The Easter Rebellion in April 1916, which caught the United States public by surprise, depressed American opinions of the English ahead of serious Anglo-American controversies. Violent suppression of the uprising in Dublin and the subsequent execution of Irish republican leaders (with the notable exception of Éamon de Valera, who would later figure prominently in later Anglo-American disputes over Ireland), reduced pro-Allied sentiment, and even non-Irish-Americans vocalized intolerance for English rule over the Emerald Isle.⁵⁰ A member of the New York legal community and a friend of Lieutenant Colonel Sir William Wiseman, Britain’s chief intelligence officer in the United States, wrote the English agent that “had the Dublin uprising been put down without the shooting of the fifteen leaders and the murdering of Skeffington, there would have been universal approval in America, but the shooting of those men was the most colossal blunder that Great Britain could have committed.”⁵¹ The rebellion, quickly quelled, did not become a major issue at the time; but in many American eyes, Britain appeared hypocritical in proclaiming itself the defender and liberator of small nations as it oppressed one itself.

Even the United States Congress involved itself in Irish affairs. News of the uprising in Dublin inspired sympathy in Washington and debates in the Senate displayed ready hostility. Jeff McLenmore of Texas openly supported the Irish rebels. Senator William Borah of Idaho

⁴⁹ E.M. House to W. Wilson, 17 May, E.M. House to W. Wilson, 18 May 1916, House Papers, Box 120.

⁵⁰ “Ireland’s Sudden Revolt,” 30 April, “Proclamation of the Irish Republic,” 1 May, “Dublin Rebels All Prisoners and City Quiet,” 2 May, “Four More Rebels Shot in Ireland,” 6 May, “Major McBride Shot as Irish Insurgent: Eighth Rebel Leader to Meet Death by Court Martial,” 7 May, “Four More Rebels Shot in Ireland,” 9 May, “Mrs. Skeffington Tells How Husband Died,” 12 May, “Connolly Shot with McDermott: Last Two Signers of Irish Republic Proclamation Executed in Dublin,” 13 May, “Denounces British for Executing Irish: Bourke Cockran Stirs Madison Square Garden Meeting Called in Protest,” 11 June 1916, *New York Times*; F.M. Carroll, *American Opinion and the Irish Question, 1910-1923: A Study in Opinion and Policy* (Dublin: Gill and MacMillan, 1978), 55-69.

⁵¹ “In the Matter of Sir Roger Casement and the Irish situation in America,” 2 June 1916, Sir William Wiseman Papers, Ms 666, Box 5, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.

condemned the wave of executions and Britain's "arbitrary power."⁵² As an avenue into the Anglo-Irish crisis, Democrat Senator John Kern of Indiana introduced a resolution calling upon the State Department to "take whatever steps may be necessary or proper, under international law, to protect the rights of American citizens in the disturbed districts" of Ireland, which the Senate adopted in early June.⁵³ And with regard to prisoners held by the British Government in the wake of the uprising, of which there were, understandably, many, the Senate passed a separate resolution (with only nineteen dissenting votes, but many absences) calling for "clemency in [their] treatment."⁵⁴ The American Government did little more than issue these resolutions, but the incident substantially damaged Britain's moral reputation in the United States, and fouled Anglo-American waters for years thereafter.⁵⁵

The great divide between the Americans and Britons, revealed in 1916, deepened as the year wore on. Wilson, and other leaders in the United States, saw distinctly that Allied victory bore similar dangers to economic community and the historic American "Open Door" policy as German hegemony, theoretically, posed.⁵⁶ Several public examples fed these concerns. In

⁵² 25 July 1916, Congress of the United States, *Congressional Record: Proceedings and Debates of the Congress* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1916), 53, Part 12:11519-11526; F.M. Carroll, *American Opinion and the Irish Question, 1910-1923: A Study in Opinion and Policy* (Dublin: Gill and MacMillan, 1978), 62.

⁵³ "Favor Irish Resolution: Senate Adopts Kern's Suggestion for Safeguarding Americans," 3 June 1916, *New York Times*. Citizens of the United States, however, were detained, but by the time the Senate and Secretary Lansing became involved, the revolt had ended and the crisis abated. "Lansing Replies to Kern: Stands Ready at Any Time to Protect Americans in Ireland," 14 June, "Americans Held in Jail: Embassy Inquires About Three Arrested in Ireland," 23 June 1916, *New York Times*.

⁵⁴ "Dublin Rebels All Prisoners and City Quiet," 2 May 1916, *New York Times*; S.R. 241, 29 July 1916, *Congressional Record*, 53, Part 12:11770, 11773-11783; F. Polk to W.H. Page, Telegram No. 3606, 2 August, F. Polk to W.H. Page, Telegram No. 3608, 2 August, I.B. Laughlin to R. Lansing, Telegram No. 4654, 3 August 1916, *Foreign Relations, 1916*, Supplement, 870-871.

⁵⁵ Allen, *Britain and the United States*, 682; Bailey, *Diplomatic History*, 586; Dimpleby and Reynolds, *An Ocean Apart*, 58; Alan J. Ward, *Ireland and Anglo-American Relations, 1899-1921* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1969), 111-112.

⁵⁶ Carl P. Parrini, *Heir to Empire: United States Economic Diplomacy, 1916-1923* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1969), 12-13. The American commitment to the "Open Door" – equality in competition in global markets between the citizens and subjects of all nations – had long been important in the official and popular mind. It became governmental policy with John Hay's Open Door Notes. Through the Roosevelt, Taft, and Wilson administrations, there were to varying degrees attempts to expand the scope of the Open Door, from China

London, capital of the free-trade world, a movement against Britain's historic policy grew in strength. In the fall of 1915, William Hweins, a Conservative Member of Parliament, initiated the call for economic combination with England's fellow Allies, introducing a resolution to that effect in the House of Commons. The resolution found support among Conservatives and Liberals, including Walter Runciman, the shipping industrialist, President of the British Board of Trade, and Liberal MP, who accepted the proposal on behalf of the Government. The meeting of the Chambers of Commerce of the United Kingdom on 26 February 1916 laid additional foundations for reversal of Britain's free-trade tradition. Sir Algernon Firth, President of the Chamber of Commerce, made a dire prediction that England would suffer a fate similar to that of Holland if the trends of growing imports and declining exports continued. To remedy the situation, he, and others, proposed adjusting laws on patent rights, control of shipping entry into British ports, and limitations on access to the British market – in essence, a more closed-door commercial policy for the British Empire (imperial preference). On 29 February, the Associated Chambers of Commerce approved a resolution calling for an Allied commercial conference.⁵⁷ Walter Runciman's speech indicated that "American traders and manufacturers must prepare for a rigid, though friendly, British commercial competition in neutral markets after the war."⁵⁸

Tangible threats to economic community, and American prosperity, appeared out of the Paris economic conferences in 1916.⁵⁹ The initial phase possessed an unofficial tone at the International Parliamentary Commercial Conference, held in Paris on 27-29 April 1916. Ambassador William Sharp's report on the meeting included few details, and conveyed merely

to elsewhere. Before the First World War began, Wilson firmly believed that the Open Door in economic relations would be one of the keys to international peace.

⁵⁷ Robert E. Bunselmeyer, *The Cost of the War, 1914-1919: British Economic War Aims and the Origins of Reparation* (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1975), 36-37; Parrini, *Heir to Empire*, 16-17.

⁵⁸ William Joel Stone to W. Wilson, 25 March 1916, *Wilson Papers*, 36:366-369.

⁵⁹ Frank Costigliola, *Awkward Dominion: American Political, Economic, and Cultural Relations with Europe, 1919-1933* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1984), 36-37; Parrini, *Heir to Empire*, 15-39; Bunselmeyer, *Cost of the War*, 34.

the broad premise of the deliberations. The convention discussed Allied commercial defense and an economic offensive against the Central Powers. Only in reparations could a post-war issue be found, though hints of more existed.⁶⁰ Perhaps with British actions, or the preliminary economic conference in mind, and anticipating developments at the forthcoming meetings of the Allies in Paris, the American business community found sympathetic company in the highest levels of the United States Government. Writing to his closest adviser in May, President Wilson feared, “*trade rivalries... must inevitably follow the war.*”⁶¹

What looked to be the first round of that trade rivalry came at the Paris Economic Conference of 14-17 June – which included the representatives of Great Britain, France, Belgium, Italy, Japan, Portugal, Russia, and Serbia.⁶² With a much more official tone, the Conference produced a series of resolutions, not simply for the “period of the duration of the war” against Germany and the Central Powers, but made joint commercial and financial plans for “the period of reconstruction after the termination of hostilities.”⁶³ The war-time measures were logical: prohibitions against trade with the enemy, unified lists of forbidden contraband and exports, and the like.⁶⁴ The other resolutions made by the Allies, primarily those of “Transitory Measures for the Period of the... Reconstruction of the Allied Countries” and the “Permanent Measures of Mutual Assistance and Collaboration Among the Allies,” became the causes for concern. These were to be permanent economic measures to encourage exclusive trade between

⁶⁰ William Graves Sharp to R. Lansing, Telegram No. 1383, 8 May 1916, *Foreign Relations, 1916*, Supplement, 974.

⁶¹ W. Wilson to E.M. House, 18 May 1916, House Papers, Box 120 (emphasis added).

⁶² G.T. Davis, *Second to None*, 223; A. Orde, *The Eclipse of Great Britain: The United States and British Imperial Decline, 1895-1956* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), 46-47. Lord Robert Crewe-Milnes, Lord President and Canadian Minister of Finance Sir George Foster represented free-trade interests on the British Empire's mission, Colonial Secretary and Conservative Party leader Andrew Bonar Law and Prime Minister William Hughes of Australia – whose appointments pleased protectionists – dominated the delegation. Bunselmeyer, *Cost of the War*, 39.

⁶³ Robert Woods Bliss, *Chargé d'Affaires*, Paris, for W.G. Sharp, to R. Lansing, Telegram 3311, 22 June 1916, *Foreign Relations, 1916*, Supplement 974.

⁶⁴ R.W. Bliss to R. Lansing, 22 June 1916, *Foreign Relations, 1916*, Supplement, 974, 976.

the Allied nations. These included collusion between the Entente Powers after the war in the development of cooperative commercial policies, prevention of unfair economic competition amongst themselves, division of world markets, joint regulations, and direct governmental financing and development of foreign markets. They would “conserve [raw materials] for the Allied countries, before all others,” and establish a system to “facilitate the interchange of these resources.” The Allies would, together, discriminate against their former enemies and potentially against neutrals.⁶⁵

The implications for United States trade Americans deemed obvious. The economic conference appeared to reject the *laissez-faire* free trade which had become increasingly prevalent in the nineteenth century; instead, it seemed a return to the mercantilism and state capitalism of previous centuries. If implemented, the Paris program would establish a more-or-less exclusive economic community for the Entente.⁶⁶ Sir Cecil Spring-Rice warned the Foreign Office on 23 June that “the attitude of the United States towards a commercial combination, such as appears to be now contemplated, will, no doubt, be a matter of serious consideration.”⁶⁷ The British Ambassador correctly appraised the situation. The same day, the Secretary of State warned the President that the “measures may be very far reaching on the commerce and trade of the whole world after the war is over.” The economic weapons leveled against Germany would not likely end with conclusion of the war; instead, Lansing predicted, such policies would extend to control the industries of the Central Powers into the foreseeable future. As for neutrals, of which the United States was then the greatest, “the intentions of the Allied Powers are disquieting.” Lansing feared that, like Germany, neutral nations would fall victim of an Allied commercial combination “which has as its avowed purpose preferential treatment for its

⁶⁵ R.W. Bliss to R. Lansing, 22 June 1916, *Foreign Relations, 1916*, Supplement, 977.

⁶⁶ Parrini, *Heir to Empire*, 15, 37.

⁶⁷ C.A. Spring-Rice to Foreign Office, 23 June 1916, Cab. 37/151, No. 812, in Bunselmeyer, *Cost of the War*, 45.

members.” The Secretary went so far as to raise the prospect of a “Congress of Neutrals” to address this economic bloc.⁶⁸ Though few historians note the episode, or realize its long term impact, from then on many, including the President of the United States, maintained some sort of suspicion that the United Kingdom meant to build up its own trade at American expense.⁶⁹

In Congress, Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, the Massachusetts Republican remarked, “that they will try to close the gates of trade and commerce upon us in many directions I regard as highly probable, although the aim and extent of the effort must remain at present a matter of speculation.” Democrat William Stone of Missouri, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, expressed similar concerns. He agreed with Lansing’s assessment, that the Paris proposals ran much deeper than a simple commercial war against the Central Powers. The resolutions, in the Senator’s view, amounted to an economic alliance, and he

[could] not escape the belief that these war-involved and so-called allied nations have in mind a mutual policy to accomplish certain results beneficial to themselves that may not be in accord with the interests of this country.

In time, those weapons could be directed against the United States as against Germany: “the allied powers, after the war, would work with each other and for themselves as against not only Germany but the balance of the world.”⁷⁰ Spring-Rice correctly understood that the resolutions had confirmed in the American mind suspicions that “England had entered the war in the spirit of commercial rivalry and of putting an end to German commercial competition.”⁷¹

The Paris Economic Conference was a prophecy fulfilled. The Paris protocols provided, apparently, proof of Britain’s ulterior motives. The blockade, long suspected of being more burdensome than necessary, was thus but part of a grander scheme. Britain, as well as France and

⁶⁸ R. Lansing to W. Wilson, 23 June 1916, *Foreign Relations: Lansing Papers*, 1:312.

⁶⁹ Orde, *Eclipse of Great Britain*, 46-47.

⁷⁰ Senate Document No. 491, 10 July 1916, *Congressional Record*, 53, Part 11:10678.

⁷¹ Bunselmeyer, *Cost of the War*, 45ff.

the other Entente nations in cooperation, had revealed their intention to control trade, and the blockade was a weapon in its implementation. Rear Admiral Austin Knight, President of the Naval War College in Newport, had written as early as August 1915 of the War as, fundamentally, a struggle for industrial and commercial supremacy between Britain and Germany.⁷² The General Board, too, warned the Secretary of the Navy that wars would inevitably follow the current War, as the victors “try to recoup. . . their losses and expand at the expense of the new world,” i.e. the United States.⁷³

As a result of the infringements of American rights at sea by Britain and Germany – but chiefly due to the uncertainty over the outcome of the War and the alignment of the Powers after it – the President, the Navy Department, and the Congress initiated study of a new naval and merchant-marine construction program.⁷⁴ Woodrow Wilson, in his message of 7 December 1915, requested of Congress “construction within five years of ten battleships, six battle cruisers,” and a myriad of other warships, “a navy fitted to our needs and worthy of our traditions.”⁷⁵ Before the House Committee on Naval Affairs, Admiral Knight advocated a new, expanded fleet, because, while he did not consider war with any nation imminent, Germany presented a potential problem – and, “I am not so sure we will never have a war with England.”⁷⁶ The General Board of the Navy, therefore, demanded a fleet “Second to None” as essential to safeguard the lives and property of the American people.⁷⁷ Most sources on the subject of the Naval Act of 1916 point to

⁷² Austin M. Knight to Charles J. Badger, Memorandum, GB 420-2, 5 August 1915, General Board Papers.

⁷³ C.J. Badger to Josephus Daniels, Memorandum, 6 August 1915, Josephus Daniels Papers, Box 3, Library of Congress, Manuscripts Division, Washington, D.C.

⁷⁴ George W Baer, *One Hundred Years of Sea Power: The U.S. Navy, 1890-1990* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1994), 59.

⁷⁵ W. Wilson, “Annual Message on the State of the Union,” 7 December 1915, *Wilson Papers*, 35:299-300.

⁷⁶ “Knight Thinks Navy Only Half Efficient: Nine Battle Cruisers and Eight Scouts Among Needed Ships, Says Admiral,” 29 February 1916, *New York Times*.

⁷⁷ General Board Meeting, 27 July 1915, Proceedings, 7:199, General Board Papers. The General Board voted seven to one for a navy “equal to the most powerful...by not later than 1925,” with only Captain Harry Knapp dissenting. “Urges a Navy Second to None: Admiral Dewey and Associates Say Our Fleet Should Equal Most

Germany as the source of inspiration, however the passage of the bill coincided with the equally serious disputes with Great Britain.

For many who advocated it, the program was countenanced upon future predictions, not preparation for war.⁷⁸ Treasury Secretary William McAdoo advocated preparedness as a means of forwarding a merchant-marine construction program: “A merchant marine is just as essential to the effectiveness of the Navy. . . as the guns upon the decks of our battleships!” And after the war, those ships would “enlarge upon our foreign trade and carry our influence, both financial and commercial, into the open markets of the world.”⁷⁹ In Wilson’s annual message, he considered the naval program “a question of independence.”⁸⁰ Representative Simeon Fess of Ohio remarked during the naval appropriations debate, “the very moment that we begin to extend the commerce of America on the seas, that moment we will counter some wishes of the other countries that have controlled the seas.”⁸¹ Senator Lodge, too, tied the preparedness drive to his fears of post-War economic combinations against the United States:

the only wise course for this country is, so far as possible, to be prepared for any contingency. There are two forms of preparation – what I may call the physical and the economic. . . . We shall require to be prepared in this [economic] direction. . . by what is generally referred to as industrial organization. . . . They will try to close the gates of trade and commerce. . . . If we are to meet this situation successfully we must be prepared economically and industrially as I believe we should be prepared physically in arms.⁸²

The Naval Act of 1916 – which provided for construction within three years of ten battleships and six battle-cruisers of the most modern types, and one-hundred and forty other vessels, the

Powerful in World,” 22 December 1915, *New York Times*. The Navy Department did not announce the policy until that date, and campaigned for it before Congress from December until passage of the Naval Act in July 1916.

⁷⁸ Baer, *One Hundred Years*, 60-61; William Reynolds Braisted, *The United States Navy in the Pacific, 1909-1922* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1971), 201-202

⁷⁹ “A Naval Auxiliary Merchant Marine,” in William Gibbs McAdoo to W. Wilson, 9 October 1915, *Wilson Papers*.

⁸⁰ “Annual Message,” 7 December 1915, *Wilson Papers*, 35:301.

⁸¹ 27 May 1916, *Congressional Record*, 53, Part 9:8797.

⁸² 10 July 1916, *Congressional Record*, 53, Part 11:10679.

largest naval appropriation in American history – finally passed on 29 August, therefore aimed not solely at the War in Europe, but more at the potential for conflict afterward.

Partly in reaction to the denunciations of American leaders, members of the British Government assured the United States that Germany and its allies alone would suffer the policies developed at Paris. At the same time, in Parliamentary debates and across the British Press, hints remained that England looked to institute a measure of protectionism within its empire or adhere to the exclusionary provisions of the Paris Economic Conference to the detriment of the United States. The Cabinet approved the Paris Resolutions on 14 July 1916, and in August the Commons debated the proposals. Over minor Liberal and Labour opposition, Parliament gave its assent. On 27 December 1916, Ambassador Page finally reported to Washington official British Government approval of the Paris resolutions.⁸³ Then, the following spring, the Imperial War Cabinet passed a resolution that

all possible encouragement should be given to the development of Imperial resources, and especially to making the Empire independent of other countries in respect of food supplies, raw materials and essential industries. . . . This Conference expresses itself in favour of: 1. The principle that each part of the Empire, having due regard to the interests of our Allies, shall give especially favourable treatment and facilities to the produce and manufacturers of other parts of the Empire.⁸⁴

How the empire intended to implement the Paris provisions and its contradictory aspirations of imperial preference remained open.

On the heels of the Paris Economic Conference, the British Government drafted additional Orders in Council which instituted some of the most divisive injunctions against American commerce and industry, and spurred one of the greatest crises of the War for the United States and England. British “blacklists” – the rolls of names of foreign companies with

⁸³ Bunselmeyer, *Cost of the War*, 40-41; W.H. Page to R. Lansing, Telegram No. 5378, 27 December 1916, *Foreign Relations, 1916*, Supplement, 983; SD 600.001/8.

⁸⁴ Imperial War Conference 12, Minute 16, 26 April 1917, Cab. 23/40, in Bunselmeyer, *Cost of the War*, 49.

proven and suspected ties to the enemy powers with which the government forbid British businesses to associate – dated to the early years of the War, but gained statutory status with the Trading with the Enemy Act of 23 December 1915. Not until 18 July 1916, however, did the British Government place some eighty American firms on the black list.⁸⁵ Publication of the revised list “created much surprise” and “tremendous irritation” at the White House.⁸⁶ The official note of protest, drafted primarily by Woodrow Wilson and Frank Polk, the Counselor to the State Department, regarded the inclusion of American firms on the black list as the result of “a policy of arbitrary interference with neutral trade.”⁸⁷ A member of the Commerce Department described the Orders in Council applying the blacklist, “the most serious restriction that had been applied to American commerce since the war began.”⁸⁸ The policy itself they deemed “extraordinary,” “harsh, and even disastrous,” and under no circumstances “should [the Government of the United States] acquiesce in such methods or applications of punishment to its citizens.”⁸⁹

Outright anger soon followed. Even the Ally-biased *New York Times* called the policy “the most tactless, foolish, and unnecessary act of the British Government during the war.”⁹⁰

⁸⁵ For a summary of the United States Government’s position on the blacklist, see White House Memorandum, “English Boycott,” 28 June 1916, Polk Papers, Box 14. On the Trading with the Enemy Act and black list of 18 July, see W.H. Page to R. Lansing, Telegram No. 3602, 19 January, and R. Lansing to Claude Kitchin, 17 August 1916, *Foreign Relations, 1916*, Supplement, 337-338, 432-434; “Names of 82 Firms and Individuals in United States on British Blacklist,” 19 July 1916, *New York Times*.

⁸⁶ R.P. Skinner to R. Lansing, No. 2308, 21 July, R. Lansing to C. Kitchin, 17 August 1916, *Foreign Relations, 1916*, Supplement, 423, 434; F.L. Polk to E.M. House, 22 July, W. Wilson to E.M. House, 23 July 1916, Charles Seymour, *The Intimate Papers of Colonel House* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1928), 1:312-313; Bailey, *Diplomatic History*, 586.

⁸⁷ F.L. Polk to W.H. Page, for the British Foreign Office, “English Boycott,” 26 July 1916, *Foreign Relations, 1916*, Supplement, 421-422; “Prepare Blacklist: Washington to Send Note Despite Britain’s Modification of Embargo,” 27 July, “Britain Receives Blacklist Protest: Its Publication is Likely to Cause Surprise, London Believes,” 29 July, “The Blacklist Note,” 31 July 1916, *New York Times*.

⁸⁸ W.C. Redfield to R. Lansing, Memorandum, on the means of combating foreign restrictions on American commerce, 23 October 1916, *Foreign Relations, 1916*, Supplement, 470; SD 763.72112/3094.

⁸⁹ F.L. Polk to W.H. Page, for the British Foreign Office, “English Boycott,” 26 July 1916, *Foreign Relations, 1916*, Supplement, 421-422; *Wilson Papers*, 37:476-479; SD 763.72112/2758a; “English Boycott,” 26 July 1916, Polk Papers, Box 14; Allen; *Britain and the United States*, 681.

⁹⁰ “When Britain Stoops to Folly,” 20 July 1916, *New York Times*.

Wilson wrote his old confidant, “I am. . . about at the end of my patience with Great Britain and the Allies.” After two years of infringements upon American neutral rights, the President had had enough. “This black list business is the last straw.”⁹¹ Counselor Polk warned Lansing that the incident had become “an awful row.”⁹²

Based upon its investigations into developing European trade practices and economic alliances anticipated to continue after the war, the agreements reached by the Allies at Paris in June, the British blacklist, and the Administration’s opinion that “it would be a good idea for the President to get some powers from Congress to be used as a club for Great Britain, if they do not give some real relief on trade interference,” the United States Congress in September empowered the Chief Executive with retaliatory legislation.⁹³ The Senate added a provision to the 1916 revenue act, providing

that whenever. . . the President shall be satisfied that there is reasonable ground to believe that under the laws, regulations, or practices of any belligerent country or Government, American ships or American citizens are not accorded any of the facilities of commerce which the vessels or citizens of that belligerent country enjoy in the United States or its possessions, or are not accorded by such belligerent equal privileges or facilities of trade. . . the President is hereby authorized and empowered, in his discretion, to direct that similar privileges and facilities, if any. . . be refused to vessels or citizens of such belligerent.⁹⁴

This power included executive authority to prohibit further loans to Allied nations and restrict commercial exports to those countries.⁹⁵ The significance of the amendment was clear: a reaction to perceived Allied – specifically British – abuse of command of the seas, institution of the black

⁹¹ W. Wilson to E.M. House, 23 July 1916, *Wilson Papers*, 37:467.

⁹² F.L. Polk to R. Lansing, 27 July 1916, Polk Papers, Box 9.

⁹³ F.L. Polk to E.M. House, 8 August 1916, House Papers, Box 92.

⁹⁴ 5 September 1916, *Congressional Record*, 53, Part 13:13792. After lengthy debate on other matters, H.R. 16763, a revenue bill, passed both houses with the retaliatory measure included. *Ibid*, 13872-13873, 14124, 14156, 14158.

⁹⁵ W. Wilson to E.M. House, 23 July 1916, *Wilson Papers*, 37:466-467.

list, and ultimately, a “resort, in certain circumstances, to retaliatory measures against the Allied powers.”⁹⁶

For the first time in the war, the events of the summer of 1916 had spurred a true Anglo-American crisis, and lasted up to the end of the year.⁹⁷ According to Secretary Lansing, “The unyielding attitude of Great Britain has...awakened against the Allies a resentful sentiment among the American people which is in marked contrast to their popular sympathy, which earlier in the war was strongly on their side in the conflict.” A journalist and friend of Edward House informed the Colonel that, in an interview with Spring-Rice, the Ambassador said “if [the United States] attempted to put such [retaliatory] measures into effect, it would probably mean breaking off diplomatic relations and the withdrawing of all trade.”⁹⁸

In late September, President Wilson contemplated serious action. When Colonel House remarked that, in his opinion, the real difference between America and Great Britain was not simply the black list or the blockade, but that the United States had embarked upon an unprecedented program of naval and merchant construction, and American industry and commerce were expanding “beyond all belief,” Wilson replied, “Let us build [the] navy bigger than hers’ [*sic*] and do what we please!”⁹⁹ Less than two months later, displeased that that the Britons had made no attempts to recognize the American protests, the President made his most belligerent utterances against Britain declaring, “if the Allies wanted war with us we would not shirk from it.”¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ Edward Grey to C.A. Spring-Rice, 17 September 1916, *Foreign Relations, 1916*, Supplement, 445-446, SD 763.72112/3044; Orde, *Eclipse of Great Britain*, 47.

⁹⁷ Link, *Higher Realism*, 113.

⁹⁸ Diaries, 20 September 1916, House Papers, Box 301.

⁹⁹ Diaries, 24 September 1916, House Papers, Box 301; *Intimate Papers*, 2:315; *Wilson Papers*, 38:258-259.

¹⁰⁰ Diaries, 15 November 1916, House Papers, 301; *Wilson Papers*, 38:656-658.

Elements within the Administration, however, expended every effort to prevent a break in diplomatic relations with the British. The American Ambassador to Great Britain, ever the friend to England, did everything in his power to defend the British position and character.¹⁰¹ The few advisers whose counsel Wilson accepted, opposed a belligerent policy. House, Lansing, and Polk “were unanimous in [their] belief that it would be stupendous folly to wage war against the Allies.”¹⁰² Robert Lansing wrote, “Nothing in our controversies with Great Britain must be brought to a head.” Though he remained one of the most ardent defenders of American commercial and maritime rights, the Secretary of State believed “on no account must we range ourselves even indirectly on the side of Germany, no matter how great the provocation.”¹⁰³ House, the Secretary of State, and many others, believed, “if war must come. . . it should be on [the Allied] side and not against them.”¹⁰⁴

Economic interests militated against conflict with Britain and the Allies as well. Treasury Secretary William McAdoo wrote President Wilson that “Great Britain is, and always has been, our best customer. Since the war began, her purchases and those of her allies. . . have enormously increased.”¹⁰⁵ While American merchants decried the gradual demise of access to the German market, between 1913 (the last year of uninterrupted commerce) and 1916, exporters more than made up their losses in Allied ports. Whereas the value of exports to Germany declined from \$332 million in 1913 to \$2 million in 1916, that to the United Kingdom rose from \$597 million to \$1.89 billion over the same period – an increase of 316%. Great Britain constituted half of the American market in Europe, and 34% of United States’ global commerce. And England and the

¹⁰¹ Diaries, 25 September 1916, House Papers, Box 301.

¹⁰² 15 November 1916, *ibid.*; *Wilson Papers*, 38:658.

¹⁰³ R. Lansing, “The President’s Attitude toward Great Britain and Its Dangers,” September 1916, Robert Lansing Papers, Box 7, Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey.

¹⁰⁴ Diaries, 15 November 1916, House Papers, Box 301; *Wilson Papers*, 38:659.

¹⁰⁵ W.G. McAdoo to W. Wilson, *Wilson Papers*, 34:275.

Allies borrowed heavily in the United States to finance these purchases. Many scholars have argued that the American economic investment in the Allied cause during the period of neutrality explains United States intervention in 1917 to save the Entente from collapse.¹⁰⁶ The inverse hold true as well. By 1916, the American economy could not afford to assert its neutral rights against abuse by the Royal Navy and the British Government, nor did some wish to, because of the potential financial toll.¹⁰⁷

While few, if any, truly considered a to war at that time to protect American rights, United States leaders in government and business remained unwilling to allow the Allies to become dictators over the commercial strength of the United States, or to place limitations upon it. The Paris protocols and the blacklist inspired a flurry of thoughtful activity within the United States on how to counter the potential danger. Congress authorized the President to retaliate against countries which discriminated against American citizens, especially with respect to measures like the blacklist.¹⁰⁸ The blacklist further convinced Congress of the inadequacy of the American merchant marine. According to Senator Duncan Fletcher of Florida, “the blacklist furnishes the strongest kind of argument in favor of American ships. . . . Britain can enforce that sort of rule if she likes. She can enforce it, because she controls ocean shipping. . . . [and] the permanent remedy is to have the carriers.”¹⁰⁹ Thus, the Shipping Act, signed by the President on 7 September 1916, initiated a new foreign trade program. It created the United States Shipping Board and the Emergency Fleet Corporation, tasked with the construction of a government

¹⁰⁶ United States Bureau of the Census, *The Statistical History of the United States: From Colonial Times to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1976), 884, 903; D.F. Fleming, “Our Entry into the World War in 1917: The Revised Version,” *Journal of Politics* 2, No. 1 (February 1940): 75-86; B.O. Fordham, “Revisionism Reconsidered: Exports and American Intervention in World War I,” *International Organization* 61, No. 2 (Spring 2007): 277-310.

¹⁰⁷ Not only could the United States financially ill-afford to act against the Allies in 1916, but throughout that year American military forces were deployed under General John Pershing in Mexico against Francisco Villa, and not withdrawn until February 1917. Bailey, *Diplomatic History*, 560-561; Herring, *Foreign Relations*, 395-397.

¹⁰⁸ Orde, *Eclipse of Great Britain*, 46-47.

¹⁰⁹ 9 August 1916, *Congressional Record*, 53, Part 12: 12364-12365.

merchant marine and the extension of American trade. Additionally, in 1916, directly influenced by the Paris Economic Conference, the Federal Trade Commission began a study of European trade policies. Two years later, the Commission's report became the foundation of the Webb-Pomerene Act of 1918 that allowed small companies to form combinations in order to effectively compete with larger firms of Great Britain, and Germany to a lesser extent.¹¹⁰ The most long-lasting effect of these incidents, President Wilson became convinced that under all the objectionable British policies – the blockade, the Paris resolutions, and especially the blacklist – lay “the wish to prevent our merchants getting a foothold in markets which Great Britain has hitherto controlled and all but dominated.”¹¹¹

And the lead up to and the eventual advent of war between the United States and Germany provided, once again, a blessed reprieve from the Anglo-American controversies that could possibly have gone further than mere diplomatic confrontations. The more cautious German *guerre de course* against Allied shipping had proved insufficient to bring Britain and France to terms, and so the German Government announced at the end of January 1917 that it would repudiate the *Sussex* Pledge resume the practice of sinking Allied vessels without warning, and that neutral vessels would be sunk as well. When the campaign began in February, President Wilson immediately announced a break in relations with the German Empire. By the end of the month, he requested permission to arm merchant ships. On 16 March, the first American merchant ship was sunk without warning, resulting in six Americans drowned. More followed, and the United States declared war on 6 April 1917.¹¹²

¹¹⁰ Clarence G. Morse, “A Study of American Merchant Marine Legislation,” *Law and Contemporary Problems* 25, No. 1, Part 2 (Winter 1960): 57-59; Safford, *Maritime Diplomacy*, 92-97; Parrini, *Heir to Empire*, 28; Iriye, *American Foreign Relations*, 66.

¹¹¹ W. Wilson to E.M. House, 23 July 1916, *Wilson Papers*, 37:467.

¹¹² W. Wilson, “Submarine Warfare and the Break with Germany,” *Wilson, Public Papers*, 4:428-426; Congress of the United States, *Congressional Record: Proceedings and Debates of the Congress* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1917), 54, Part 3:2578-2579; “Armed Merchant Ships,” *Wilson, Public*

Association with the Allies in the World War from April 1917 to November 1918 restrained most public utterances of American economic ambitions and concomitant anti-British sentiments while the War produced an “emotional outpouring of Anglo-American friendship. . . somewhat out of character.”¹¹³ The new United States propaganda machine recast George III of American revolutionary days as a “Prussian king,” and a federal court went so far as to restrain production on the patriotic film *Spirit of '76* because it cast aspersions on America’s new ally.¹¹⁴ But the association did not erase suspicions and fears engendered in the first two and a half years of the conflict. Sir William Wiseman – who became a close friend of Edward House and Woodrow Wilson, as well as their primary liaison to the English Government outside the official channel of the British Embassy – informed the Cabinet in London that there remained significant obstacles to Anglo-American cooperation.¹¹⁵ “It would be wrong to assume that there is any pronounced pro-Ally feeling on the part of the great mass of the American people. It would be certainly wrong to assume any pro-British sentiment.” In particular, he advised, “of the great Allied powers Great Britain is probably the least popular because all the war measures which have irritated the American people have been carried out by Great Britain as the representative of the Allies. In this, of course, are included the blockade, black-list, . . . etc.” Wiseman also cited the question of Irish independence of Great Britain, for which there was much sympathy in the United States, the Mexican situation, and other elements as contributing to this general feeling. Additionally, though he crossed out and later removed the sentence from the

Papers, 4:428-432; “For Declaration of War Against Germany,” *Wilson, Public Papers*, 5:6-16; Carlisle, *Sovereignty at Sea*, xiii-xv, 10-14, 63-66, 88-89, 106-120; G.T. Davis, *Second to None*, 233.

¹¹³ Benjamin D. Rhodes, “The Image of Britain in the United States, 1919-1929: A Contentious Relative and Rival,” in *Anglo-American Relations in the 1920s: The Struggle for Supremacy*, ed. B.J.C. McKercher (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1990), 187.

¹¹⁴ S. Adler, *Isolationist Impulse*, 78.

¹¹⁵ W.B. Fowler, *British-American Relations, 1917-1918: The Role of Sir William Wiseman* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969).

final draft sent to London, he remarked, “some capital has been made out of the fact that Japan is [Britain’s] Ally.”¹¹⁶

A diplomatic mission in the spring of 1917 under Arthur James Balfour, Sir Edward Grey’s successor as Foreign Secretary, did much to establish financial and naval precedents for the new Allied and Associated Powers, and develop the new wartime partnership between the United States and England.¹¹⁷ But Americans, especially in the Navy, remained hesitant to dedicate themselves full-bore to the Allied war plans.¹¹⁸ Rear Admiral William Benson, United States Chief of Naval Operations since 1915, wrote Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels in a memorandum that the American navy must cooperate with the Allies, “but in a manner that will serve our permanent interests.” The reason for wariness: in part, Britain’s “fixed and continuous aim. . . to further the interests of British commerce at the expense of the commerce of every other nation, whether friend or enemy.”¹¹⁹ The Secretary of the Navy, too, recommended “the heartiest cooperation with the Allies to meet the present submarine situation” to the Secretary of State, but “compatible with an adequate defense of our own home waters.” As civilian chief of the Navy, Josephus Daniels always kept in mind that “the future of the United States must in no way be jeopardized.” either by dividing the American fleet, or by submitting it to the whims of the Allied nations.¹²⁰ Not until August would the Navy General Board concede postponement of the 1916 capital ship program in deference to destroyer construction against submarines, as well as to increase the merchant marine. And not until November 1917 would Daniels authorize the

¹¹⁶ W. Wiseman, Memorandum, Relations between the United States and Great Britain, February 1917, Wiseman Papers, Box 4; Memorandum, 8 March 1917, House Papers, Box 123.

¹¹⁷ Orde, *Eclipse of Great Britain*, 51.

¹¹⁸ Baer, *One Hundred Years*, 65; David F. Trask, *Captains & Cabinets: Anglo-American Naval Relations, 1917-1918* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1972), 44-52.

¹¹⁹ William S. Benson to J. Daniels, Memorandum, June 1917, UF File, RG 45, Naval Records Collection of the Office of Naval Records and Library, 1691-1945, National Archives I, Washington, D.C.

¹²⁰ J. Daniels to R. Lansing, 3 July 1917, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1917*, Supplement 2: The World War (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1932), 1:116 (hereafter cited as *Foreign Relations, 1917*, Supplement 2); SD 763.72/6268.

dispatch of battleships under Rear Admiral Rodman to European waters, to “indicate more conclusively and strongly the intentions of the United States” of solidarity with the Allies.¹²¹

The Army, too, maintained its doubts about British and Allied operational plans. Rather than sending American men as they became available for the front into the Entente ranks, the War Department waited until it assembled a self-composed American Expeditionary Force for independent operations in France, to act independently of the other Allied Powers. When General John Pershing arrived in France, he selected a sector of the front disconnected from the British theater because the commanding general of the United States Army suspected the English of attempting to use the American force to augment their own. Only with Germany’s Spring 1918 Offensives did American military leaders consent to some form of Allied control over United States troops, but even then they remained distant, in spirit, from the Allied military and civil command.¹²²

The President remained dubious as well. To Edward House, he wrote, “England and France have not the same views with regard to peace that we have by any means.”¹²³ Of the Royal Navy, Wilson felt they used the United States to remedy their own deficits: “I have been greatly surprised at the failure of the British Admiralty to use Great Britain’s great naval superiority in an effective way. In the presence of the present submarine emergency they are helpless to the point of panic” – hence their desperate pleas for American destroyer construction.¹²⁴ And in a conversation with former-President William Howard Taft, Wilson

¹²¹ C.J. Badger to J. Daniels, GB 420-2, 29 August 1917, General Board Papers;; W.S. Benson to J. Daniels, Telegram No. 41, 9 November 1917, J. Daniels to W.S. Benson, 12 November 1917, D File, RG 45; G.T. Davis, *Second to None*, 236-237.

¹²² David R. Woodward, *Trial by Friendship: Anglo-American Relations, 1917-1918* (Lexington: University of Kentucky, 1993), 56-57, 82, 159-166.

¹²³ W. Wilson to E.M. House, 21 July 1917, House Papers, Box 121.

¹²⁴ R. Lansing, for W. Wilson, to W.H. Page, for William Snowden Sims, Telegram No. 5089, 4 July 1917, *Foreign Relations, 1917*, Supplement 2, 1:117-118; SD 763.72/13321a.

questioned the desirability of drawing the two countries too closely together [as]. . . . there were divergences of purpose and. . . . the United States must not be put in a position of seeming, in any way, involved in British policy [because]. . . . the motives of the United States were unselfish while those of the British Empire. . . . seemed less worthy of character.¹²⁵

Six months after the United States' entry into the War, Colonel Wiseman submitted another note to his Foreign Office on the British relationship with America. He recognized the United States had not yet fully committed its power to the war effort, nor did Americans and Britons agree on war aims and peace terms. Sir William believed "the Administration [is] ready to assist us to the limit of the resources of their country," however, "there is by no means complete understanding between the two Governments" on how to accomplish the task. Of real concern, Sir William observed, "there still remains a mistrust of Great Britain."¹²⁶

¹²⁵ A Memorandum of an Interview with William Howard Taft, 12 December 1917, *Wilson Papers*, 45:273; Orde, *Eclipse of Great Britain*, 56.

¹²⁶ W. Wiseman, memorandum on Anglo-American relations, [25] August 1917, Wiseman Papers, Box 4; House Papers, Box 123.

CHAPTER 3

RETURN TO RIVALRY BETWEEN WAR AND PEACE

War-time association between the United States and the United Kingdom established significant sympathies between the two nations, and provided many with hope that the two great powers might continue their cooperation into the future. The controversies of the neutrality period, however, had not simply vanished with the advent of the American-German war. As many leaders in the United States perceived, the British sought territorial and economic gain – even at American expense – as a product of the War, and appeared to devote resources to those pursuits while hostilities persisted.

The First World War would not end until 11 November 1918, yet the divisions between the United States and its British associate resurfaced as soon as the conflict's conclusion appeared imminent. At the pre-Armistice conferences October-November 1918, intended to assemble terms, terminate the War, and prepare for a peace conference with Germany, some of the most heated exchanges took place not over the German surrender, but about Britain's seapower and America's navy; and some of the most serious threats of future conflict emanated from both English-speaking nations against the other.

Then, as the agencies of Government prepared the American peace program, Great Britain received detailed attention. The United States Navy, in particular, recognized its impotence in the face of a Royal Navy which, by 1919, outnumbered the combined fleets of the world. With the growing American economy and the desire for further expansion into overseas markets, United States industrial might could make it a target for only one real rival power. And the Navy was not alone. In multiple sectors of American Government and business, there grew a

realization that, with the end of the Great War, only two real world powers remained – and the United States’ new-found position may require defense against the other.

Even as American armed forces became ever more heavily engaged in the War, events away from the battle front undercut the possibility of deep and lasting Anglo-American unity. Out of revolutionary Russia, the secret treaties negotiated between the Entente Governments revealed to Americans what they considered less-than pure motives in war aims. The American people felt they fought a war of defense, for basic liberty, to expand the cause of democracy, and for the other ideals that slogans proclaimed, and many had believed the Allies, too, made war for the same principles and aims. The treaties appeared to lay bare the Allies’ true goals, and to some they seemed no more noble than those of the Germans: a war to enhance one’s own power to the detriment of the enemy, for financial and territorial gain, and the like.¹

Woodrow Wilson, therefore, responded with a statement of American war aims on 8 January 1918 – thereafter known as the Fourteen Points. Among them, he included a repudiation of territorial ambitions and demands for reparations, called for publicity of all treaties between nations, the reduction of trade barriers, and so forth. The celebrated fourteenth point desired formation of a league of nations to settle international disputes and prevent war.² The league issue, an aspiration of Americans and Britons for some years before the War, would, at the

¹ David R. Francis, Ambassador in Russia, to Robert Lansing, 5 December 1917, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1917*, Supplement 2: The World War (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1932), 1:493-507 (hereafter cited as *Foreign Relations, 1917*, Supplement 2); United States Department of State, Decimal Files, General Records of the Department of State, 1756-1999, Record Group 59, National Archives II, College Park, Maryland, No. 861.00/873 (hereafter cited as “SD”).

² Address of the President of the United States, Delivered at a Joint Session of the Two Houses of Congress, 8 January 1918, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1918*, Supplement 1: The World War (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1933), 1:12-17 (hereafter cited as *Foreign Relations, 1918*, Supplement 1); Congress of the United States, *Congressional Record: Proceedings and Debates of the Congress* (Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1918), 56, Part 1:680-681.

forthcoming peace conference, provide a cause for unity between the United States and Great Britain – but a source of division thereafter.³

Point Two, on the Freedom of the Seas, derived directly from the submarine crises with Germany as well as the Anglo-American controversies of 1914-1916, and in it lay one of the most serious potential sources of contention. In a memorandum on the subject by journalist Walter Lippmann for Colonel House, he noted the term dated back to historian and military philosopher Hugo Grotius in 1609, but in practice the idea had roots in the foundations of the American Republic and went to the heart of the War of 1812, and the principle had been discussed throughout the present war. At the end of 1915, President Wilson indicated to Edward House that, to him, “the only possible guarantees. . . a rational man could accept [in the future peace], are (a) a military and naval disarmament and (b) a league of nations to secure each nation against aggression and maintain the absolute freedom of the seas.”⁴ As House and Wilson drafted the Fourteen Points, the President consented to the inclusion of his chief adviser’s interpretation of the idea. The Colonel admitted, “I went further than anyone I knew. . .” in his definition. The phrase they adopted read, “Absolute freedom of navigation upon the seas, outside territorial waters, alike in peace *and in war*.” Even at that moment, as the two pondered the language of this provision, they wondered “how England would receive this particular paragraph. . .” Therefore, in an attempt to placate anticipated reactions against such a premise,

³ Lloyd E. Ambrosius, *Woodrow Wilson and the American Diplomatic Tradition: The Treaty Fight in Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 16-50; George W. Egerton, “Ideology, Diplomacy, and International Organization: Wilsonism and the League of Nations in Anglo-American Relations, 1918-1920,” in *Anglo-American Relations in the 1920s: The Struggle for Supremacy*, ed. B.J.C. McKercher (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1990), 19-24; Seth P. Tillman, *Anglo-American Relations at the Peace Conference of 1919* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1972), 101-108; Henry R. Winker, *The League of Nations Movement in Great Britain, 1914-1919* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1952); George W. Egerton, *Great Britain and the Creation of the League of Nations: Strategy, Politics, and International Organization, 1914-1919* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978).

⁴ Memorandum in Walter Lippmann to Edward M. House, 21 May 1918, Edward Mandell House Papers, Ms 466, Box 70, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut; Woodrow Wilson to E.M. House, 24 December 1915, Arthur S. Link, ed., *Papers of Woodrow Wilson* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966-1994), 35:387-388 (hereafter cited as *Wilson Papers*).

House suggested an additional sentence, believed acceptable to British sensitivities: that “the seas might be closed by international action in order to enforce international covenant.”⁵ Point Two, like the other thirteen, would not be publically disputed by the Allies in deference to wartime cooperation. Nonetheless, when the demands of the War lessened, and permitted divisions to emerge, the British seriously challenged Freedom of the Seas.

While Point Three, on “economic barriers,” never received near as much heated, direct debate as Freedom of the Seas, commercial issues carried far more problematic questions. The fourth of Wilson’s “Five Particulars,” declared on 27 September 1918, further enunciated, “there can be no special, selfish economic combinations within the League and no employment of economic boycott.” Aimed directly at the resolutions of the Paris Economic Conference of 1916, the President stated that “special alliances and economic rivalries and hostilities have been the prolific source in the modern world of the plans and passions that produce war,” and therefore incompatible with the coming peace.⁶

While American resistance assured the Allies never instituted the 1916 Paris program, Anglo-American economic rivalry definitively reemerged before the War came to an end. In Latin America, for example – as in other parts of the world – the United States had created new economic outlets, opened new shipping lines with new vessels under the new government-operated merchant marine, and captured pre-existing British markets during the World War. For decades, Great Britain had been the largest investor and exporter to the Latin States, with Germany and France in second and third. United States investments in 1914 amounted to \$1.6 billion, while British interests provided \$5 billion in capital to Central and South America. While Britain’s exports necessarily declined due to the War, the value of United States exports to

⁵ Diaries, 9 January 1918, House Papers, Box 302 (emphasis added).

⁶ “Address at the Metropolitan Opera House,” 27 September 1918, *Wilson Papers*, 51:127-133.

destinations in the Americas nearly doubled by 1918 – rising from \$763 million in 1913 to \$1.63 billion in 1918 – and represented 25% of all American overseas commerce. After an initial decline in the first year of the war, United States exports to nearly every major South American nation increased.⁷ When the British complained of these American gains after the American declaration of war, Frank Polk defended, stating that after April 1917 United States trade with the Americas “has suffered severely.”⁸ That did not reassure the British Government.

They inevitably reacted. United States firms in Latin countries reported that English censors abused control of the international cable system, intercepting American mail, and transmitting sensitive information to British interests. Other urgent notes indicated that British firms refused to accept American goods, and used the blacklist to further their own personal interests. Members of the British elite knew of the influence these activities had on American perceptions. As a member of the Northcliffe War Mission to the United States in the summer of 1918, Arthur Willert – a correspondent for the London *Times* and representative of the British Ministry of Information in 1917-1918 – wrote to his editor of a “genuine distrust of our economic plan for ‘after-the-war.’ It crops up...even in the higher altitudes of Government. There is a suspicion that we are finding time to prepare to nobble the sunnier markets of the world while demanding the United States put everything into the war.”⁹

This suspicion arose from tangible evidence. Most symbolic, in May 1918 the State Department learned of a diplomatic mission by British military, political, and commercial agents

⁷ Burton I. Kaufman, “United States Trade and Latin America: The Wilson Years,” *Journal of American History* 58, No. 2 (September 1971): 345; Joseph S. Tulchin, *The Aftermath of War: World War I and U.S. Policy Toward Latin America* (New York: New York University Press, 1971), 30; Gilderhus, *U.S.-Latin American Relations*, 40; United States Bureau of the Census, *The Statistical History of the United States: From Colonial Times to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1976), 903.

⁸ F.L. Polk to Martin Egan, 15 October 1918, Frank L. Polk Papers, Ms 656, Box 5, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.

⁹ Gilderhus, *U.S.-Latin American Relations*, 54; Tulchin, *Aftermath of War*, 30; Arthur Willert to George Geoffrey Dawson, 21 July 1918, in *Times of London, The History of the Times: The 150th Anniversary and Beyond, 1912-1948*, Part 1 (New York: MacMillan Company, 1952), 440.

to Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina, Paraguay, Chile, and Cuba. The delegation left England on 21 April, led by Sir Maurice de Bunsen, former Minister at Lisbon and Chair of the de Bunsen Committee in 1915 which developed the foundation of Britain's war aims program concerning the Ottoman Empire. The British publically announced the purpose of the mission as to "offer congratulations to those countries that had definitely shown their sympathies with the Allied cause." Roy Howard of the United States Press Office in Buenos Aires discovered, through a private communication between Sir Maurice and Foreign Minister Balfour, that the British Government actually premised the trip "primarily as a visible sign of our intention to maintain and even largely develop both politically and economically our pre-war position on the South American continent." Howard reported that when de Bunsen arrived in Brazil, the Britons implied that the entire venture proceeded with full American knowledge. Robert Lansing confirmed, to the contrary, that prior to Howard's report the State Department received no notice of the mission.¹⁰

Reports by the American Ambassador to Brazil, Edwin Morgan, and the naval attaché in Rio of British activities in South America confirmed negative suspicions of the British venture. The English shipbuilding and munitions firm Vickers & Armstrong, one cable indicated, would receive privileged, exclusive government rights to manufacture arms and ships for Brazil, as well as to the iron, steel, and other resources of the country. Morgan wrote, "this is further proof of [a] British drive to control Brazilian trade." Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels informed Lansing of the arrangements and said, "the U.S. was lending Great Britain money, and if the

¹⁰ Edwin V. Morgan to R. Lansing, 31 May 1918, in David Healy, "Admiral William B. Caperton and United States Naval Diplomacy in South America, 1917-1919," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 8, No. 2 (November 1976): 315; R. Lansing to W. Wilson, 27 May 1918, SD 033.4120/16½; enclosed note, Maurice de Bunsen to Arthur James Balfour, 5 May 1918, found at SD 033.4120/28; Tulchin, *Aftermath of War*, 31.

people knew it was using the money to protect its commerce against America after the war they would be indignant and it would disturb our friendly relations.”¹¹

The State Department immediately initiated plans of its own in response. The Division of Latin-American Affairs proposed a mission of United States representatives to certain South American States. A special ambassador would lead the voyage. “One or two able business men should accompany this mission [as]...it is understood that Great Britain and France have announced that their commercial treaties will cease to bind them at the expiration of one year.” It might include legal advisers, bankers, and the like.¹²

The Chairman of the United States Shipping Board, Edward Hurley, sensed this renewed competitive atmosphere, and declared, “unless we continue to develop our foreign trade, after the war we can have no enduring prosperity.”¹³ Britain and the European powers were “engaged even now in preparing for the struggle for trade after the war.”¹⁴ Hurley, based on his time with British officials, therefore considered their post-War intentions as dangerous, and the interests of the United States and Great Britain as “essentially hostile.”¹⁵ Bernard Baruch, Chairman of the War Industries Board, concurred: “when the war comes to an end there is going to be a terrific scramble for raw materials.”¹⁶

The merchant marine question, perhaps of all the issues that would influence Anglo-American relations after the World War, further disrupted friendly relations at the end of the

¹¹ Jeffrey J. Safford, *Wilsonian Maritime Diplomacy, 1913-1921* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1978), 150-151; 19 July 1918, E. David Cronon, ed., *The Cabinet Diaries of Josephus Daniels, 1913-1921* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1963), 321-322 (hereafter cited as *Cabinet Diaries*).

¹² Tulchin, *Aftermath of War*, 31; [Unnamed] to F.L. Polk, 20 May, Division of Latin-American Affairs, Memorandum, “Proposed American Mission to Certain Latin-American Countries,” 31 May 1918, Polk Papers, Box 28. These plans culminated, two years later, in the tour of Secretary of State Bainbridge Colby at the close of the Wilson Administration.

¹³ Edward Nash Hurley, “The War and Foreign Trade,” 24 April 1918, in Safford, *Maritime Diplomacy*, 142.

¹⁴ E.N. Hurley to Bernard M. Baruch, 21 May 1918, *Wilson Papers*.

¹⁵ E.N. Hurley to William C. Redfield, 4 June 1918, General Records of the Department of Commerce, Office of the Secretary, 1898-1996, Record Group 40, National Archives II, College Park, Maryland, File No. 77270.

¹⁶ Bernard M. Baruch to E.N. Hurley, 16 July 1918, File No. 77270, RG 40.

War. Borne out of the realization that the United States lacked an adequate mercantile force with which it could export its own goods to foreign markets, the Shipping Act of 1916 had aided in the establishment of an unprecedented fleet for the United States. During 1917 alone, while the British Empire lost 15.8 million in oceanic tonnage, the United States added 2 million tons to its merchant marine, a near 100% increase. This enabled American exports to all regional markets – especially Latin America and Asia – to increase enormously while British income from those destinations witnessed reciprocal decline. Yet much to the Allies' complaint, the United States dispatched less than a quarter of its merchant fleet to European waters and Allied aid. Worse, in British eyes, the American Expeditionary Force made France largely through English transport. In a bid to force American ships into the transportation of the United States military, limit President Wilson's influence upon the peace-making process, and free British ships for commercial service, the English Government gradually reduced the flow of troops to Europe in August-October 1918.¹⁷ Treasury Secretary William McAdoo enjoined Wilson, "If British ships are used for commercial purposes while our ships are engaged [in troops transport]...the inevitable result will be that Great Britain will secure an undue share of the cash markets of the world."¹⁸

The United States and Britain had not yet defeated Germany in Europe, and both already initiated plans for future economic rivalry with each other. President Wilson noted,

the English, as I need not tell you, are making a great many determined efforts to see it not only that they are not put at an economic disadvantage after the war, but that they secure now by as tight arrangements as possible every economic advantage that is within their reach. They are stimulated to do this by their consciousness that our shipbuilding program will give us a very considerable advantage over them in the carrying trade, and therefore in world commerce, after the struggle is over.

¹⁷ Edward B. Parsons, "Why the British Reduced the Flow of American Troops to Europe in August-October 1918," *Canadian Journal of History* 12, No. 2 (1977), 178-179, 191.

¹⁸ William Gibbs McAdoo to W. Wilson, 26 October 1918, *Wilson, Life and Letters*, 8:526.

Though he agreed with the Chairman of the Shipping Board that “we shall [have to] make use of our shipping after the war” and that the British “are planning to dominate everything and to oust everybody [they] can,” the President judged public pronouncement of such ideas as imprudent for the time.¹⁹

The reawakened economic contest alone indicated that, contrary to the aspirations of “Atlanticists”²⁰ in both the United States and Great Britain, the War had not brought the two English-speaking “cousins” to a relationship that would overcome the most difficult questions of the post-War peace.

The almost unexpected climax of the War in September-October overshadowed all these issues as the Allied and Associated leaders focused upon the negotiation of the end of the four years’ conflict. Nonetheless, the first “climactic confrontation[s]” of the post-War between the United States and Great Britain took place in relation to the German Armistice terms.²¹

As Colonel House and Admiral Benson sailed across the Atlantic to confer with the Allied leaders on President Wilson’s behalf in October, the German Government began its entreaties for an end to the War. Conducted through Swiss intermediaries, the negotiations progressed nearly exclusively between Wilson and the German representatives. The British and French felt as though the American President had overthrown their co-equal authority to negotiate an end to the War. But the exclusion of the Entente Allies was purposeful. Wilson knew he had not gained their strict acceptance of his peace program – his Fourteen Points and

¹⁹ W. Wilson to E.N. Hurley, *Wilson Papers*, 49:374; Ray Stannard Baker, ed., *Woodrow Wilson: Life and Letters*, vol. 8, *Armistice, March 1-November 11, 1918* (New York: Doubleday, 1939), 365-366 (hereafter cited as *Wilson, Life and Letters*); Safford, *Wilsonian Maritime Diplomacy*, 157; Anne Orde, *The Eclipse of Great Britain: The United States and British Imperial Decline, 1895-1956* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1996), 57.

²⁰ Michael G. Fry, *Illusions of Security: North Atlantic Diplomacy, 1918-1922*, x, 6-15. Though many have used the term “Atlanticists” in works on Anglo-American relations, many sources credit Fry as one of the most important expositions on those who made up that crowd.

²¹ Arthur S. Link, *The Higher Realism of Woodrow Wilson and Other Essays* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1971), 123; Orde, *Eclipse of Great Britain*, 58; Tillman, *Anglo-American Relations*, 39.

the other statements like the Five Particulars – and saw Germany’s direct appeal to his office and principles as the opportunity to force his associates to finally do so. The President’s parleys with the Germans irritated the British.²² Then, somewhat suddenly, and almost unexpectedly, reports out of Britain indicated an intense hostility to one specific provision of Wilson’s Fourteen Points, not his general actions.

American war aims and principles had been well known and debated since their announcement to Congress on 8 January, and Britons raised only mild objections to Point Two, on the Freedom of the Seas, since. As late as mid-October, in two high-level meetings, no hint of trouble arose. Sir Eric Geddes, Britain’s First Lord of the Admiralty, made direct inquiry on the subject on the 12th. As head of the British Naval Mission in the United States, Sir Eric requested from Wilson an interpretation of Freedom of the Seas. The First Lord found the President ill-equipped to respond to such an query. The Chief Executive’s positions were, as yet, “obviously unformed,” only vaguely connected to the broad ideas for a league of nations, and that “his intention appears to be. . . acceptance of a principle that no one Power in [the] League of Nations shall exercise its naval strength to crush a belligerent Power without consent of [the] League.” But Geddes made no objections of any sort during the discussion.²³

On 16 October, Sir William Wiseman discussed the full range of the peace proposals and the Fourteen Points with Wilson. From Wiseman’s notes on the interview, the President’s favorite British intermediary did not caution America’s chief statesman that Point Two could

²² R. Lansing to Frederick Oederlin, 8, 14, 23 October 1918, Ray Stannard Baker and William E. Dodd, eds., *Public Papers of Woodrow Wilson* (New York: Kraus Reprint Co., 1970), 5:274-275, 277-279 (hereafter cited as *Wilson, Public Papers*); Tillman, *Anglo-American Relations*, 41; David R. Woodward, *Trial by Friendship: Anglo-American Relations, 1917-1918* (Lexington: University of Kentucky, 1993), 208.

²³ Eric Geddes to David Lloyd George, 13 October 1918, Sir William Wiseman Papers, Ms 666, Box 5, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut; Ray Stannard Baker, ed., *Woodrow Wilson: Life and Letters*, vol. 8, *Armistice, March 1-November 11, 1918* (New York: Doubleday, 1939), 456 (hereafter cited as *Wilson, Life and Letters*); William Reynolds Braisted, *The United States Navy in the Pacific, 1909-1922* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1971), 412; Harry R. Rudin, *Armistice, 1918* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1944), 101.

fracture the Anglo-American *entente* – even after the President elucidated his thoughts on sea power and the Freedom of the Seas principle. Wilson acknowledged, “this was a question which would naturally interest Great Britain more than any other country on account of the preponderance of her Navy and her position as a world-wide Empire.” He conceded, “the British Navy had, in the past, acted as a sort of naval police for the world,” and acted fairly reasonably with that power. Nonetheless, one perceives the more general American view in Wilson’s appraisal of the “many nation’s” sensitivities, which he described as “feeling that their sea-borne trade and maritime development proceeded only with the permission and under the shadow of the British Navy. The President, cloaking United States sentiments, “wondered whether the rest of the world would be willing to go on [leaving this power to the discretion of the British people]. . . so indefinitely.”²⁴

Still, a dispute over naval matters at the pre-Armistice conferences should not have surprised the President or any of his chief advisers. I.B. Laughlin, the American *Chargé d’Affaires* in London, reported to the State Department that “it is felt. . . strongly [here] that some of the points are detrimental to the interests of. . . Great Britain, and especially is this true of the second point, the freedom of the seas.” Unbeknownst to Laughlin, as he recounted the reasons for British concerns over Point Two, he hit at two of the central issues that featured prominently in the coming years, and, unresolved, remained a source of Anglo-American contention. “Britain’s future welfare is seen to be inseparably linked up with her foreign trade and premier position as a carrier for the world and to be in a large measure dependent upon her control of the waters. . . ; it is felt that her safety depends on a maintenance of that control or that an assurance

²⁴ William Wiseman, “Notes of an Interview with the President at the White House,” 16 October 1918, *Wilson Papers*, 50:347-352; House Papers, Box 179; Braisted, *United States Navy*, 412.

that such control will not pass into the hands of *any* other power.”²⁵ Yet, fearing Woodrow Wilson would take charge of every aspect of the negotiations with Germany, Prime Minister David Lloyd George informed his Cabinet of official British approval of the final American note on 24 October.²⁶

The pre-Armistice conferences which followed – intended to set the terms of Germany’s surrender, end the World War, and prepare for a peace convention – revealed the short-sightedness in Woodrow Wilson’s scheme. His run-around of the Allies had only aggravated their sensibilities. European statesmen, understandably, jealously defended their right to take a full part in arrangement of the armistice terms. The instrument to end hostilities with Turkey had only just concluded; they prepared to accept the surrender of the Austrians; therefore, the premiers in Paris wondered by what authority the President of the United States had grasped the sole power to conclude the first phase of peace with Germany on their behalf without their participation or even consultation. Though Wilson’s final note of Armistice terms, subsequently accepted by the German Government, included some language of the complaints and concerns of the Allied leaders, they remained displeased when Edward House arrived in France on 25 October to provide the United States with representation on the Supreme War Council.²⁷

Colonel House first met with his close friend, Sir William Wiseman, to ascertain British opinions, on 28 October – the day before the Supreme War Council reconvened. Wiseman, in London the week previous, reported that the Cabinet had held “some stormy sessions over the President’s peace terms.” There was, of course, the agitation over Wilson’s failure to confer with

²⁵ I.B. Laughlin to R. Lansing, Telegram No. 2823, 15 October 1918, *Foreign Relations, 1918*, Supplement 1, 1:365-367 (hereafter cited as *Foreign Relations, 1918*, Supplement 1); SD 763.72119/221 (emphasis added).

²⁶ David Lloyd George, *War Memoirs of David Lloyd George* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1937), 6:272.

²⁷ Arthur Walworth, *America’s Moment, 1918: American Diplomacy at the End of World War I* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1977), 20, 39; R. Lansing to F. Oederlin, *Wilson, Public Papers*, 5:283-285; 23 October 1918, *Foreign Relations, 1918*, Supplement 1, 1:381-383. The Allied leaders’ concerns can be found in Arthur Hugh Frazier to R. Lansing, 8, 9 October 1918, *Foreign Relations, 1918*, Supplement 1, 1:345-346, 351-354.

the Allies. The terms themselves, however, provided the main source of contention – and Number Two of the Fourteen Points in particular. “They rebel against the ‘freedom of the seas,’” Wiseman forewarned House.²⁸

The Colonel lunched with David Lloyd George; Arthur J. Balfour, the Foreign Secretary; and Rufus Isaacs, the Earl of Reading, Lord Chief Justice of England, and Ambassador to the United States. The Prime Minister took the opportunity to notify House of the unacceptability of the peace terms as they then existed, and the specific British objection to the Freedom of the Seas.

He admitted that if point two was made a part of point fourteen concerning [the] League of Nations, and assuming [the] League. . . was such a one as Great Britain could subscribe to, it might be possible for Great Britain to accept point two. He said he did not wish to discuss freedom of the seas with Germany, and if freedom of the seas was a condition of peace, Great Britain could not agree to it.²⁹

Immediately afterwards, in a private conversation with Earl Reading, House suggested that “if the British were not careful they would bring upon themselves the dislike of the world.” The potential source of this animosity: the “British Navy seemed to me to be analogous to the Germany Army,” controlling the seas as the Germans had controlled the Continent. House pondered aloud whether or not “the United States or other countries would willingly submit to Great Britain’s complete domination of the seas any more than Germany’s domination of the land. . .” House observed that the war had left but two great powers – America and Britain – but that it need not be a source of contention. He then issued the first of several purposeful warnings to high-ranking British officials at the pre-Armistice conferences. To Reading, as he had to Wiseman earlier in the day, the Colonel threatened,

²⁸ Diaries, 28 October 1918, House Papers, Box 301; Charles Seymour, *The Intimate Papers of Colonel House* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1928), 4:159-160 (hereafter cited as *Intimate Papers*).

²⁹ E.M. House to R. Lansing, 29 October, *Foreign Relations, 1918*, Supplement 1, 1:421-423; SD 763.72119/8082; *Wilson Papers*, 51:511-513; House Papers, Box 121.

that our people, if challenged, would build a navy and maintain an army greater than theirs. We had more money, we had more men, and our natural resources were greater. I believe such a program would be popular in America and should England give the incentive, the people would demand the rest.³⁰

Colonel House contributed little to the discussions of specific military and naval terms, in large part due to his near total immersion in wrangling over the Freedom of the Seas.³¹ Meeting at the Quay d'Orsay that afternoon, attendees representing the four major powers of the United States, Britain, France, and Italy, reviewed the Fourteen Points, each in turn.³² Upon the reading of Point Two, Lloyd George rose to make a short speech, "worded so as to excite Clemenceau." The British Prime Minister emphatically stated, "We cannot accept this under any circumstances: It takes away from us the power of blockade. . . . I will not make it a condition of peace with Germany." The Colonel's reply carefully avoided the specifics of the issue, at that moment. He overtly implied the President might conclude a separate peace with the German Government, announce that "the Allies do not agree to the conditions of peace proposed by me and accordingly the present negotiations [with them] are at an end," leaving the United States free to negotiate upon the terms it had always proposed. House recorded that his statement "had a very exciting effect" on the Council. Balfour pleaded for Allied unity, that only the Germans benefited from divisions between the Allies and Americans.³³ The American bluff, temporarily, shelved the Allied objections.³⁴

Ahead of the Supreme War Council conference of the 29th, House received two advisers of the American mission. First, he saw Admiral Benson, who confirmed for the Colonel the

³⁰ Diaries, 28 October 1918, House Papers, Box 301; E.M. House to Woodrow Wilson, 30 October 1918, *Foreign Relations, 1918*, Supplement 1, 1:423-424; SD 763.72119/8983; *Wilson Papers*, 51:514; *Wilson, Life and Letters*, 8:530-531; House Papers, Box 121; Braisted, *United States Navy*, 413.

³¹ *Intimate Papers*, 4:150.

³² Rudin, *Armistice, 1918*, 266.

³³ E.M. House to R. Lansing, 29 October 1918, *Foreign Relations, 1918*, Supplement 1, 1:421-423; *Wilson Papers*, 51:511-513; SD 763.72119/8082; House Papers, Box 121.

³⁴ Diaries, 29 October 1918, House Papers, Box 301.

sense of a rising “intolerant spirit” among the Allies for the Americans. Frank Cobb, the second caller, as legal adviser, reported the memorandum he and Walter Lippmann, another member of the American delegation’s legal team, wrote interpreting each of Wilson’s Fourteen Points. On the all-important Point Two, the memorandum pressed “absolute freedom of navigation upon the seas...alike in peace and in war, except as the seas may be closed in whole or in part by international action for the enforcement of international covenants.” The interpretation admitted that “limited war” presented the “crux of the whole difficulty. The question is, what are to be the rights of neutral shipping and private property on the high seas during a war between a limited number of nations when that war involves no [league treaty] issue.” The Cobb-Lippmann memorandum suggested, “the rights of neutrals shall be maintained against [all] the belligerents, the rights of both to be clearly and precisely defined in the law of nations.” The study, requested by Colonel House in part due to the debate in the Supreme War Council, first went to the President for revision; but upon reply, House intended to “use it in my discussions with the Allies [as]...the Fourteen Points are considered too vague and I am constantly asked to interpret them.”³⁵

Wilson dispatched guidance as well. Coincidentally, as the President readied a cable for the Colonel’s instruction, a noted attorney and friend gave the Chief Executive some advice of his own. He wrote the President that “it would be embarrassing for England to state her war aims [publicly],” but that the British intended to incorporate German colonies into their empire. Further, “either Mr. Balfour or some other English statesman put out the suggestion that Germany’s war fleet should be divided among the Allies in proportion to their naval losses – which means practically the whole fleet would go to England.” Wilson replied, “You may be

³⁵ E.M. House to R. Lansing, for W. Wilson, No. 6, 29 October 1918, House Papers, Box 121; Diaries, 29 October 1918, *ibid.*, Box 301; *Intimate Papers*, 4:193.

sure I am keenly alive to the dangers upon which [you] very properly dwell.”³⁶ It is, therefore, unsurprising that ahead of the second pre-Armistice conference, House received from Wilson a most serious note, the implications of which the Colonel could not misunderstand. The President reminded his representative that,

there can be no real difficulty about peace terms...if the Entente statesmen will be perfectly frank with us and have no selfish aims of their own which would in any case alienate us from them altogether. It is the fourteen points that Germany has accepted. England cannot get away from or dispense with our friendship in the future, and the other Allies cannot without our assistance get their rights as against England... So far as I am concerned, I am ready to repudiate any selfish program openly.³⁷

Colonel House replied, “if their conditions of peace are essentially different from the conditions you have laid down and for which the American people have been fighting, [I will inform the Premiers] that you will probably feel obliged to go before Congress... and ask their advice as to whether the United States shall continue [with them].”³⁸

Meeting at the French War Office on the morning of 29 October, the Supreme War Council inevitably arrived at the issue of the Freedom of the Seas. Lloyd George presented House with a draft memorandum including British exceptions to Point Two.³⁹ Before they entered Clemenceau’s office, the Prime Minister announced,

The Allied Governments have given careful consideration to the correspondence which has passed between the President of the United States and the German Government... [and] they declare their willingness to make peace... on the terms laid down in the President’s address to Congress of January 8. They must point out, however, that clause

³⁶ Sherman Leland Whipple to W. Wilson, 29 October, and W. Wilson to S.L. Whipple, 29 October 1918, *Wilson Papers*, 51:484-485; *Wilson, Life and Letters*, 8:530.

³⁷ W. Wilson to E.M. House, 29 October 1918, *Wilson Papers*, 51:504-505; *Wilson, Life and Letters*, 8:529; House Papers, Box 121.

³⁸ E.M. House to W. Wilson, 30 October 1918, *Foreign Relations, 1918*, Supplement 1, 1:423-424; SD 763.72119.8983; *Wilson Papers*, 51:514; *Wilson, Life and Letters*, 8:530-531; House Papers, Box 121.

³⁹ E.M. House to R. Lansing, No. 12, 30 October, *Foreign Relations, 1918*, Supplement 1, 1:425-427; SD 763.72119/8985; *Wilson Papers*, 51:515-517; House Papers, Box 121.

two, relative to what is usually described as the Freedom of the Seas, is open to various interpretations, some of which they could not accept. They must therefore reserve to themselves complete freedom on this subject when they enter the Peace Conference.⁴⁰

Here, the Colonel raised the specter of interminable reservations and exemptions to the armistice terms which would require negotiation, that if the British memorandum found acceptance, then Clemenceau would submit his own French exceptions, and inevitably Sidney Sonnino, representing Italy, would do the same. House indicated that, should Woodrow Wilson's peace principles suffer dilution, and the Allies insert their personal claims, the President might feel it necessary to submit Allied ambitions, reports of the pre-Armistice conferences, and so on, to Congress "and to place the responsibility upon [them] for the further continuation of the war by the United States on behalf of the aims of the Allies" – the implication being that Congress had much less tolerance for Entente machinations and would quickly turn against them.⁴¹

This threat, apparently, calmed the situation once more. House wrote, "George and Clemenceau looked at each other significantly," and the French Premier immediately dropped the threat of an "elaborate memorandum" filled with a list of armistice-terms exceptions. Without Clemenceau, Lloyd George, too, weakened, and withdrew to a position of merely asking for further interpretation of the Freedom of the Seas before it became wedded to the terms of peace, and an element in the proposed League.⁴²

⁴⁰ Allied Note, 30 October 1918, House Papers, Box 121.

⁴¹ E.M. House to R. Lansing, No. 12, 30 October 1918, *Foreign Relations, 1918*, Supplement 1, 1:425-427; SD 763.72119/8985; *Wilson Papers*, 51:515-517; House Papers, Box 121.

⁴² Diaries, 29 October, House Papers, Box 301; E.M. House to R. Lansing, No. 12, 30 October 1918, *Foreign Relations, 1918*, Supplement 1, 1:425-427; E.M. House to R. Lansing, Telegram No. 8, 30 October 1918, *Wilson Papers*, 51:511; SD 763.72119/8082.

The next day, House believed the situation improved. Much of the day's conference dwelt upon the Turkish surrender. The President approved the Cobb-Lippmann interpretation of the Fourteen Points.⁴³ The accomplishment of a settlement, it appeared, loomed large.

Subsequent to the notes received from Paris on the progress of the conferences, and no doubt with considerations of the previous four years, Wilson rejected House's happy vision. The President first reminded his representative of the goal he held in mind: "we are pledged to fight not only [to do away with] Prussian militarism but [with] militarism *everywhere*." While he "fully and sympathetically recognize[d] the exceptional position and necessities of Great Britain with regard to the use of the seas for defense," Wilson felt it his "solemn duty to authorize you to say I cannot take part in the negotiations of a peace which does not include freedom of the seas."⁴⁴

Directly addressing Lloyd George's memorandum, reserving "complete freedom on this subject" of Freedom of the Seas, Wilson averred, "I am not clear that the reply of the Allies, quoted in your No. twelve, definitely accept[s] the principle of freedom of the seas and means only to reserve the free discussion of definitions and limitations." Any reservation or reformulation amounted to near-rejection of the American peace program. The President declared, "I cannot recede from the position[s] taken. . . and I cannot change what our troops are fighting for or consent to end with only European arrangements for peace." Wilson went further, repackaging the American-versus-European-war-aims and the threat-to-inform-Congress concepts which he and House had used in the previous days, and aimed them squarely at Great

⁴³ Diaries, 30 October 1918, House Papers, Box 301; E.M. House to W. Wilson, No. 5, 31 October 1918, *Wilson, Life and Letters*, 8:534; E.M. House to R. Lansing, No. 13, 30 October 1918, *Wilson Papers*, 51:517; W. Wilson to E.M. House, 30 October 1918, *Foreign Relations, 1918*, Supplement 1, 1:421.

⁴⁴ W. Wilson to E.M. House, 30 October 1918, *Foreign Relations, 1918*, Supplement 1, 1:423, 427-428; *Wilson Papers*, 51:553; *Wilson, Life and Letters*, 8:537-539; *Intimate Papers*, 4:182-184; House Papers, Box 121 (emphasis added).

Britain. “Please insist that it be made clear before I decide whether [the terms] must be altered, or go again to Congress, who will have no sympathy or wish that American life and property should be sacrificed for British naval control.”⁴⁵

Colonel House considered the President’s messages “intemperate,” and believed “if I had read it to my colleagues, it may have lead to serious trouble.”⁴⁶ At a sitting of the Supreme War Council at Versailles on 1 November, Lloyd George once again raised the issue of the Fourteen Points. Frustrated with the Allied leaders, and possibly with his President, House outright refused to discuss the matter.⁴⁷

Returning to Paris proper, the Colonel met with Colonel Wiseman with the intention of employing unofficial diplomacy for the conveyance of uncomfortable information. House referenced the gist and tone of the President’s letters for Sir William, and then detailed the consequences that would surely result should Americans and Britons fail to reach a compromise:

unless Lloyd George would make some reasonable concessions in his attitude upon the ‘Freedom of the Seas’ . . . all hope of Anglo Saxon unity would be at an end. . . . There would be greater feeling against Great Britain at the end of the war than there had been since our Civil War.

House drew parallels to the War of 1812 and the United States’ entry into the War in 1917, both premised upon American rights at sea. Reiterating statements made in previous conversations with both Wiseman and the Prime Minister, he “repeated, with as much emphasis as I could, that our people would not consent to allow the British Government to . . . determine upon what terms our ships should sail the seas, either in time of peace or in time of war.”⁴⁸

On the 2nd, House took lunch with Alfred Harmsworth, Lord Northcliffe – the owner of the two most influential British periodicals of the day, the *London Times* and the *Daily Mail*, and

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Diaries, 31 October 1918, House Papers, Box 301.

⁴⁷ 1 November 1918, *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*; *Intimate Papers*, 4:179; Tillman, *Anglo-American Relations*, 48.

one of the United Kingdom's most ardent proponents of Anglo-American friendship – and sought to use his capacities as well. Aware of Northcliffe's sympathies, the Colonel disclosed some of the details of his exchanges and troubles with Lloyd George, "a glimpse of my difficulties with the Prime Minister." The newspaper magnate remained sure that Great Britain truly desired no personal gains out of the war, that its aims were purely noble. Before their departure, Lord Northcliffe offered House his periodicals to aid in the cause of Anglo-American amity.⁴⁹

The same day, the Supreme War Council reconvened at Versailles, where Colonel House found Lloyd George, Lord Reading, and Sir William Wiseman "waiting to take up the troublesome question..." Their meetings took up two hours time, the deliberations of which achieved little, but the tension reached "formidable proportions." House had only Wiseman willing to make suggestions constructive to the American position, but found Reading as difficult and irksome as he had been on 28 October, and Lloyd George intractable. House recorded, "I cannot bring them to the point of even admitting that the matter is one for discussion at the Peace Conference. It is the most extraordinary attitude I have ever known." The Prime Minister insisted "that Great Britain must disregard Article Two." He had yet to make a direct objection in the Supreme War Council because, "he evidently thought it unwise to have Great Britain in the position of being the main objector," and instead prompted the French and Italian leaders to raise objections as cover. Colonel House voiced concerns that the British course of action "was placing the United States in the same position toward Great Britain as Germany occupied during the war," and the American people may feel compelled to build a great navy in response, and in order "to have our rights at sea adequately safe-guarded." Lloyd George replied, "that Great Britain would spend her last guinea to keep a navy superior to that of the United States, or any

⁴⁹ Diaries, 2 November 1918, House Papers, Box 301.

other power, and that no Cabinet official could continue in the Government in England who took a different position.”⁵⁰

Following this dialogue, Lloyd George sent in Earl Reading, “believing, I suppose,” House later recalled, “that [he] would handle the subject more calmly and diplomatically than it is possible for a man of George’s temperament to do.” The subsequent discussions, however, were equally heated and passionate. A tense exchange occurred when Reading claimed that allowing discussion on the Freedom of the Seas “was like a man admitting that another man could discuss with him whether or not his house was for sale.” House quickly retorted that this allusion proved British arrogance in the matter, “that is, they considered the seas as much their private property as a man does his own house.” The Colonel cautioned that England appeared to take “the same attitude Germany took in the Spring of 1914 regarding her army. They contended that their army was not for aggression. . . . But Germany came to grief, and in my opinion, it was inevitable that Great Britain would likewise have cause to regret such arbitrary an attitude.” House continued, “that, sooner or later, we would come to a clash if an understanding was not reached as to laws governing the seas.” The Americans and Britons had become substantially incensed. House “told Reading he was [wasting] his breath, that in no circumstances would I yield the point about the freedom of the seas. . . . I let him know that it was not my intention to budge and that I had the backing of the President.”⁵¹

At the Council conference of 3 November, House “was fully prepared to exert strong pressure in order to secure from the Allies an acceptance of the President’s fourteen points. . . .” and intended to insist “that they must recognize the [Freedom of the Seas] principle, that it is a strong case for discussion at the peace conference or before.” The premiers of Britain, France,

⁵⁰ 2, 4 November 1918, *Ibid.*; *Intimate Papers*, 4:180-181; Tillman, *Anglo-American Relation*, 48.

⁵¹ Diaries, 2, 4 November 1918, House Papers, Box 301.

and Italy, and a representative of Belgium, met with House at his headquarters in Paris for the strict purpose of discussing the Fourteen Points. Point Two, once more, became the chief source of debate between Edward House and David Lloyd George. “When [we] began discussing. . . the freedom of the seas, he showed visible signs of excitement and nervousness.” Despite the Prime Minister’s somewhat agitated state, and the fact that he and House had “been keyed up to a high pitch ever since this subject has been under discussion,” they conducted the debate calmly and pleasantly. At the same time, both “felt that a crisis had come.”⁵²

Lloyd George began with a reiteration of his note of 29 October on the British and Allied position on Point Two – that “freedom of the seas is open to various interpretations, some of which [the Allies] not accept” and “they must therefore reserve to themselves complete freedom on this subject” – and that he remained wedded to that position.⁵³ House responded with quotation from Woodrow Wilson’s note of the 31st, that “I am not clear that the reply of the Allies. . . means to reserve only the free discussion of definitions and limitations [of freedom of the seas].”⁵⁴ He then read a paraphrase of Wilson’s full note. The speech that followed insisted that Point Two, among a select few others, composed the “essentially American terms in the peace program” and the President could not relinquish it. Within the freedom of the seas, “blockade is one of the questions which has been altered by the developments in this war and the law governing it will certainly have to be altered.” Addressing the British concerns directly, House answered, “there is no danger. . . that [blockade] will be abolished.” Yet rights upon the sea required “the freest and most liberal exchange of views.” And as the British did not want the

⁵² William S. Sims, for E.M. House, to R. Lansing, No. 41, 3 November, E.M. House to R. Lansing, Telegram No. 38, 3 November 1918, *Foreign Relations, 1918*, Supplement 1, 1:448, 455-457; *Wilson Papers*, 51:569-570, *Wilson, Life and Letters*, 8:546-547; SD 763.72119/9050, 9051; Diaries, 3 November 1918, House Papers, Box 301.

⁵³ Allied Note, 30 October 1918, House Papers, Box 121.

⁵⁴ W. Wilson to E.M. House, No. 6, *Foreign Relations, 1918*, Supplement 1, 1:427-428; *Wilson Papers*, 51:533; *Wilson, Life and Letters*, 8:537-539.

question discussed at the peace conference, so as to exclude Germany from its debates, House allowed, “[it] need not be discussed with the German Government” with the caveat, “provided we have agreed amongst ourselves beforehand.”⁵⁵

Premier Clemenceau, at that moment, injected himself, and announced, “We accept the principle of the freedom of the seas.” He then asked Lloyd George, “You do also, do you not?” The Briton did not: “It is impossible for any British Prime Minister to do this. . . . We are [only] willing to discuss the freedom of the seas in the light of the new conditions which have arisen by the war.”⁵⁶ If he did not conclude the agreement in this manner, “it would only mean in a week’s time, a new Prime Minister would be here who would say that he could not accept this principle.” Though this statement went little further than any comments uttered previously, House apparently considered it sufficient. Though Edward House counseled a strong definition and position on Freedom of the Seas less than a year earlier, when he and President Wilson drafted the Fourteen Points, and claimed he sought to compel British acceptance of the principle, the American representative softened his stance. The Colonel, therefore, accepted Lloyd George’s willingness to discuss the issue at the Peace Conference.⁵⁷

The Colonel regarded the 3rd as a “red letter day” and believed he had “brought Lloyd George to terms. . . .” Thereafter, from the British Embassy in Paris, House received an official letter from Lloyd George, affirming the Prime Minister’s statement in that day’s conference. It confirmed, “We [are] quite willing to discuss the freedom of the sea in the light of the new conditions [and]. . . . In our judgment this most important subject can only be dealt with satisfactorily through the freest and most liberal exchange of views.” The final agreement among

⁵⁵ Paraphrase of Wilson’s No. 6, 31 October 1918, *Intimate Papers*, 4:182-184; House Papers, Box 121.

⁵⁶ W.S. Sims, for E.M. House, to R. Lansing, No. 41, 3 November 1918, *Foreign Relations, 1918*, Supp. 1, 1:455-457; *Wilson Papers*, 51:569-570; *Wilson, Life and Letters*, 8:546-547; SD 763.72119/9051; House Papers, Box 121.

⁵⁷ *Intimate Papers*, 4:181-184.

the Allies adopted Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points – with exceptions for freedom of the seas and reparations, to be discussed at a later date.⁵⁸

Sir William Wiseman and others suggested that Edward House had “won one of the greatest diplomatic triumphs in history,” and the Colonel conceded to himself, “That is as it may be.”⁵⁹ He cabled as much to the President:

I consider that we have won a great diplomatic victory in getting the Allies to accept the principles laid down in your January eighth speech. . . . This is done in the face of. . . the thoroughly unsympathetic personnel [*sic*] constituting the Entente governments. I doubt whether any other heads of the governments with whom we. . . have been dealing quite realize how far they are now committed to the American peace program.⁶⁰

The Supreme War Council finally concluded its discussions and finalized the terms of the Armistice, which Woodrow Wilson conveyed to the German Government the next day.⁶¹

Not everyone in the United States Government saw the “acquiescence” of Lloyd George and the subsequent agreement on the armistice terms as an American *coup*. As Josephus Daniels viewed the settlement, Great Britain “agreed to all other 13 points & did not actually dissent from [those] in order to have unity,” but recognized that the British Prime Minister had skillfully avoided acceptance of Freedom of the Seas. To the Navy Secretary, the whole affair was a “great disappointment.” Robert Lansing, alone of the Cabinet members privy to the trans-Atlantic cables between Wilson and House, recognized that one of the major issues of the war still awaited real discussion. Daniels noted, Lansing “does not believe in doctrine of blockade & thinks new conditions must make a change in it.” And the President wired House that “if the

⁵⁸ Diaries, 3 November 1918, House Papers, Box 301; *Intimate Papers*, 4:187-188; W.S. Sims, for E.M. House, to R. Lansing, No. 41, 3 November 1918, *Foreign Relations, 1918*, Supplement 1, 1:455-457; *Wilson Papers*, 51:569-570; *Wilson, Life and Letters*, 8:546-547; SD 763.72119/9051; Tillman, *Anglo-American Relations*, 50-51; Walworth, *America's Moment*, 70; Woodward, *Trial by Friendship*, 218.

⁵⁹ Diaries, 4 November 1918, House Papers, Box 301.

⁶⁰ E.M. House to W. Wilson, No. 6, *Wilson Papers*, 51:594-595, House Papers, Box 121.

⁶¹ Diaries, 4 November 1918, House Papers, 301; E.M. House to W. Wilson, 4 November 1918, *Foreign Relations, 1918*, Supplement 1, 1:463-468; R. Lansing to Hans Sulzer, Swiss Minister to the United States, 5 November 1918, *Wilson, Public Papers*, 5:291-292; Rudin, *Armistice, 1918*, 285-319.

English (do not accept) our friendship and good faith and accept the principle of the freedom of the seas. . . they can count on the certainty of our using our present (military) equipment to build up the strongest navy that our resources permit and as our people have long desired.”⁶²

Back in Paris, Frank Cobb revealed to Edward House the reason for the recent row with Great Britain over the Freedom of the Seas. The Fourteen Points, well known to the world since their pronouncement by Wilson over nine months before, had “gradually [been] accepted by the British,” and “there was no conversation [concerning them] until about the time of our arrival.” Therefore, when the pre-Armistice negotiations became increasingly tense over a matter considered long settled, Cobb “was certain that there was something much deeper behind it.” In his search he discovered the source of Britain’s near hysteria: “Hurley had made that speech. . . [stating the] United States intended to build *the greatest mercantile marine in the world.*” In a lunch meeting with Lord Alfred Milner, the British Secretary of State for War substantiated for Cobb that “the Hurley speech had much to do with the flurry about the freedom of the seas.” Which speech by Edward Hurley, Chairman of the United States Shipping Board, specifically offended, Cobb makes no note in the letters to House. Nonetheless, in the months ahead of the pre-Armistice conference, Hurley had made numerous pronouncements with regards to the American merchant ship-building program (his Hog Island speech to Latin-American diplomats, perhaps, the most notable and widely publicized). In all of them, his consistent message to Americans, and the world, was that the United States intended not only to win the War with its vast mercantile marine and industrial capacity, but that it would utilize that greatest fleet after the War as well.⁶³

⁶² 4 November 1918, *Cabinet Diaries*, 346; *Wilson Papers*, 51:592; W. Wilson to E.M. House, No. 8, 4 November 1918, House Papers, Box 121; *Intimate Papers*, 4:179.

⁶³ Frank Irving Cobb to E.M. House, 8 November, F.I. Cobb to E.M. House, 11 November 1918, House Papers, Box 28 (emphasis in original); “Address of Edward N. Hurley, Chairman of the U.S. Shipping Board, to Latin-

This came not as a shock to the legal adviser, but as confirmation of American suppositions. In a memorandum for President Wilson, Frank Cobb explained that as the world conflict came to a close, economic and financial matters had already resumed their roles as the chief elements in British diplomatic calculations. “British diplomacy at this time seems to be shaped almost wholly by the interest and demands of the financial, commercial and industrial elements.” The schism over Freedom of the Seas resulted from the fact that “British shipping is the most powerful single interest in the Empire, and that its support is vital to [Lloyd George],” and so the pre-Armistice debate over Point Two was “[no] less than the ultimatum of the maritime and exporting classes that if the United States persists in building what Mr. Hurley called ‘the greatest merchant marine in the world,’ the American ships must sail under the fiat of the British Navy, and that fiat is to be the law of the sea.” Most disturbing of all, Cobb summed up the British opinion as, in a sense, “suddenly, as the war ends, the United States emerges as an overseas rival more powerful and more to be feared than Germany ever was. Hence the hysteria over the ‘freedom of the seas’”⁶⁴

Cobb and House likely missed another, and nearly as fundamentally reason for British Freedom-of-the-Seas angst – one the Chief of Naval Operations did not. Though reduced from its original, fantastic proportions, the Navy General Board unveiled a new naval construction program in September 1918 that added sixteen more capital ships upon the sixteen of the 1916 Act, and over one hundred ships of other classes.⁶⁵ Additionally, the new naval plan called for renewal of the 1916 Program – which, due to wartime initiatives, had been postponed in 1917.

American diplomats, at Hog Island,” 26 July 1918, Frank L. Polk Papers, Ms 656, Box 34, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut; “America’s Merchant Fleets,” 12 June, “Tells of Shipping Aims: To Win War and Then Carry Our Trade, Says Hurley,” 24 August, “Allied Shipyards Face Titanic Task: America Alone Must Turn Out 8,000,000 Tons a Year,” 29 September, “454 More Ships Under Board’s Plan,” 3 October 1918, *New York Times*.

⁶⁴ F.I. Cobb, Memorandum, 6 November 1918, *Wilson Papers*, 51:613-614.

⁶⁵ Charles J. Badger to J. Daniels, 10 September 1918, GB 420-2, Serial No. 867, General Board Papers.

The new proposals went public in October and November, and officially before Congress in December.⁶⁶ Woodrow Wilson agreed in a Cabinet meeting of 15 October to promote the Navy's plan, and announced his support for the programs in his message to Congress on the eve of his departure for Europe on 2 December.⁶⁷

The United States, apparently, remained committed to its desire for a great navy. Completion of the 1916 Program, along with the proposed 1918 Program, would indeed give it a navy "Second to None."⁶⁸ By September-October 1918, however, it had become apparent that the War would soon end. German defeat appeared imminent, and on 11 November the Armistice went into effect. The 1918 Program, then, was most certainly not predicated upon Germany, for it no longer posed any form of naval threat. Japan sat poised to gain new possessions in the Pacific, and like the United States was not exhausted by the Great War; the Japanese, however, appeared unwilling or unable to mount a serious naval challenge outside the Western Pacific. Planners under Captain William Pratt in the Office of Naval Operations, instead, wrote that the 1918 plans would "provide... a Navy equal to that of the greatest naval power [England]."⁶⁹ With the end of the War, and the demands of the British Admiralty for surrender of the Imperial German Navy, the American Naval Planning Section in London came to regard the German fleet

⁶⁶ "Asks \$600,000,000 for New Warships: Navy to Duplicate Its 1916 Program of 10 Superdreadnoughts and 6 Battle Cruisers," 23 October, "Daniels Presses for a Great Navy," 21 November, "Our Navy in 1920 to be Twice '17 Size: Will Have 800 Ships, Says Admiral Taylor, Against 300 Last Year," 23 November 1918, *New York Times*.

⁶⁷ 14 October 1918, *Cabinet Diaries*, 341.

⁶⁸ George T. Davis, *A Navy Second to None: The Development of Modern American Naval Policy* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1940), 238-241; Harold Sprout and Margaret Sprout, *Toward a New Order of Sea Power: American Naval Policy and the World Scene, 1918-1922* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1940), 56.

⁶⁹ Planning Committee, Washington, to W. Benson, 7 October 1918, PD 100-123, Classified, Secret and Confidential, Records of the Secretary of the Navy, 1919-1926, Record Group 80, National Archives I, Washington, D.C.

“as a balance wheel governing any undue or arbitrary ambition on the part of. . . Great Britain.”⁷⁰

Without the German navy, the United States may need to provide that role.

The War and the pre-Armistice negotiations both directly influenced the post-War naval plans. Many American leaders concluded that the Entente Powers anticipated accomplishment of selfish aims. The President suspected that England already prepared to emerge from the burdens of a unidirectional war-economy and grab a disproportionate share of global commerce.⁷¹ The London Planning Section and Admiral William Benson agreed. Believing Britain and its “fugitive allies” in centuries past had defeated four naval competitors and commercial rivals – Spain, Holland, France, and, recently, Germany – the British would not hesitate to deal the same with a fifth, “the greatest one yet,” that had, by the end of the War, attained “at least commercial equality.”⁷² Only a great navy could protect American trade against such a threat. The pro-British Pratt cautioned Admiral Benson, “if we compete openly for the supremacy of the seas it will surely cause. . . discord, because, without reasoning or justice as to the matter, the British. . . will compete with us to the best of their ability in the matter of building ships. . . . Such a competition extended over a number of years is bound to result in the same state of feeling which existed during our War of 1812.”⁷³

American officials – in the Navy, but also the civil branch of government – therefore, looked with suspicion at the British Empire as they prepared for the coming Peace Conference. Legal adviser Frank Cobb cautioned, “the British [may] plan to retard the peace negotiations and delay as long as possible the signing of a treaty. . . [for] trade considerations.” Benson wrote Secretary of the Navy Daniels that, in his opinion, English commercial intrigue dominated

⁷⁰ Planning Section, London, Memorandum, 18 October 1918, TX File, Naval Records Collection of the Office of Naval Records and Library, 1691-1845, Record Group 45, National Archives I, Washington, D.C.

⁷¹ W. Wilson to Newton Diehl Baker, Secretary of War, 26 October 1918, *Wilson, Life and Letter*, 8:516.

⁷² Planning Section, London, Memorandum No. 65, 4 November 1918, TX File, RG 45.

⁷³ William Veazie Pratt to W.S. Benson, 12 November 1918, Benson Papers, Box 35.

Versailles. As long as the Armistice remained in place, “there can be no resumption of German industry. . . . the blockade continues, [and] British trade can have a free hand in taking over the foreign markets.”⁷⁴

Not nearly as significant, but demonstrative of the division between the English-speaking nations, was the question of where the peace conference would take place. Ahead of the pre-Armistice conferences, President Wilson cabled House that he preferred a neutral city – Lausanne, Switzerland. The British agreed, and on 29 October, Colonel House and Lloyd George together resisted Premier Clemenceau’s demand for Paris. Perhaps in reaction to Lloyd George’s resistance to full acceptance of the Fourteen Points, Wilson destroyed the unified front on 7 November. He reversed his earlier preference for Lausanne, and suddenly announced the acceptability of Paris for the Peace Conference. Colonel House, reluctantly, presented the President’s new proposal. To overcome the Prime Minister’s objection, the American representative utilized the sympathetic offices of Lord Northcliffe, whom he convinced to promote Paris in the *London Times*. Without American support, the British Government conceded, and the French capital became the seat of the Conference.⁷⁵ The Americans and Britons would not agree simply for the sake of common language and an associated heritage.

More demonstrative of the political divide came in December when the British populace went to the polls one month before the world’s leaders convened in Paris. The Coalition Government, first formed during Britain’s crises of 1915-1916, attained an overwhelming majority of 526 in the 707-seat House of Commons. The Liberal and Labour parties, the

⁷⁴ F.I. Cobb, Memorandum, 30 November 1919, House Papers, Box 28; W.S. Benson to J. Daniels, 21 November 1918, VP File, RG 45.

⁷⁵ W. Wilson to E.M. House, 28 October, W. Wilson to E.M. House, 7 November, E.M. House to R. Lansing, 20 November 1918, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1919: The Paris Peace Conference* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1942-1947), 1:119, 121, 124 (hereafter cited as *Paris Peace Conference*); *Wilson, Life and Letters*, 8:524, 560; *Intimate Papers*, 4:217-220; Diaries, 29 October 1918, House Papers, Box 301; Tillman, *Anglo-American Relations*, 55.

segments of British Government most partial to Woodrow Wilson's peace program, went down to a particularly grand defeat. Leading Liberals of the Herbert Asquith faction, including former Prime Minister Asquith, were replaced by pro-Coalition Liberals or Conservatives. The division and collapse of the Liberal Party "weakened the prospects of an Anglo-American program of moderation at the Peace Conference." They no longer contributed to the formation of policy, which Wilson would have preferred. More troublesome, the British electorate had, in their vote, issued a strong demand for reparations and indemnities from Germany, a call Prime Minister Lloyd George had no choice but to comply with, a position Wilson had little sympathy for.⁷⁶

Yet the President, "convinced of his own virtue," believed the success of the Paris Conference, and establishment of his moral principles as the basis of a permanent peace, required his presence at the congress (despite advice from chief advisers against such over fears it would dilute his moral authority).⁷⁷ And two events in England fed this conviction. At the London Conference of 1-3 December, the first formal pre-Conference meeting of Allied premiers and foreign ministers, several portents of their Peace Conference programs developed. The conference agreed on the issuance of a demand for the surrender of the former German emperor and crown prince for prosecution. The French announced their intention to seek detachment of Germany's western Rhenish provinces and establish an essentially permanent military frontier. Furthermore, an inter-Allied commission on reparations would study the German economy and present a program for indemnities. When Wilson learned of these and other resolutions, he

⁷⁶ Tillman, *Anglo-American Relations*, 62; Harold Nicolson, *Peacemaking, 1919* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1965), 19-20.

⁷⁷ David Dimbleby and David Reynolds, *An Ocean Apart: The Relationship between Britain and America in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Random House, 1988), 71

ordered Edward House – sick in Paris – to contact the Entente leaders, and demand suspension of such activities until *all* the Allied and Associated statesmen arrived for the Peace Conference.⁷⁸

During his voyage across the Atlantic on the *George Washington*, the President indicated some of the positions he would advocate. As to reparations, he knew “that certain of the Allies were conspiring to appoint a commission to determine how much Germany possibly could be made to pay,” and said “he would oppose any indemnity except for the damage done by Germany...; under no conditions would he assent to the imposition of indemnities beyond the damage actually suffered.” He took a dim view of those he would be required to negotiate with. Wilson felt “the United States was the only nation which was absolutely disinterested” and he believed “the leaders of the allies did not really represent their peoples.”⁷⁹

Of the British, the President maintained criticisms engendered during the pre-Armistice conferences. Violations of American neutral rights had not been forgotten. “Militarism is no different on sea than it is on land,” and talk of joint Anglo-American naval control of the seas was nonsensical “militaristic propaganda.” Recalling the crisis of 1916, the President noted that, had Germany not proven so troublesome, he would have been “ready then and there to have it out with Great Britain on that point” of the Freedom of the Seas and American rights. The Secretary of the Navy later wrote that, on this premise, “Wilson went to Paris resolved that the ancient ambition... that one powerful nation should rule the waves must no longer prevail.”⁸⁰ How he intended to deal with these questions at the Peace Conference remained to be seen.

⁷⁸ Statement announcing intention to visit Europe, 18 November 1918, *Wilson, Public Papers*, 5:305; E.M. House to R. Lansing, for W. Wilson, No. 107, 14 November 1918, House Papers, Box 121; W. Wilson to E.M. House, 8 December 1918, *Paris Peace Conference*, 1:343; Tillman, *Anglo-American Relations*, 60.

⁷⁹ William Christian Bullitt Diary, 9-10 December 1919, *Wilson Papers*, 53:351.

⁸⁰ Tillman, *Anglo-American Relations*, 61-62; Arthur Walworth, *Woodrow Wilson*, vol. 2, *World Prophet* (New York: Longman’s Green, 1958), 217; Josephus Daniels, *The Wilson Era*, vol. 2, *Years of War and After, 1917-1923* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1946), 367.

The American delegation announced positive aspirations upon the President's arrival in Paris. In public representations, the President sounded much in favor of an Anglo-American common front. In an interview for the London *Times*, the President declared himself "a believer in the decency and honesty of the Anglo-Saxon race," and stated his "conviction [that] the people of Great Britain and America have entertained the same conception of liberty and justice." In consideration of that "same conception," Wilson felt, "it is essential to the future peace of the world that there should be the frankest possible cooperation, and the most generous understanding between the two English-speaking Democracies."⁸¹

In private, the President remained cautious. Woodrow Wilson dined with England's Ambassador in Paris, Edward Stanley, the Earl of Derby, and discussed issues of the impending peace. Wilson told the Ambassador, "he *hoped* there would be no difference between him and England," but the question of Freedom of the Seas and colonies remained two sources of division. He accepted the extensive power of the Royal Navy "on account of its widely distributed Dominions," but believed the United States, too, was entitled to such a navy "on account of its extensive seaboard." Derby reported to London, "I gather that the reason for [Wilson] suddenly wishing to go to England is that he is rather disturbed at the effect he hears that has been produced in England by the American Naval programme, and he wants to reassure England on the subject." Stanley thought the visit "should do good," but saw the source of discontent: "apparently [the President] is afraid of the strength of the English Navy now that the German Navy has disappeared."⁸²

House, despite his personal experience at the pre-Armistice conferences, believed "relations between France, England, and ourselves... seem to grow steadily better." In a

⁸¹ Report of an Interview, from our Paris Correspondent, 18 December 1918, *Wilson Papers*, 53:427; 19 December 1918, *London Times*.

⁸² Edward Stanley to A.J. Balfour, 20 December 1918, *Wilson Papers*, 53:456-457, 470-471.

conciliatory fashion, the Colonel told Sir William Wiseman he saw “no real difference. . . between the British and American point of view.”⁸³

Woodrow Wilson’s trip to England, from 26 to 31 December, indicated otherwise. The President made for London on 26 December where jubilant crowds received him. Celebration did not emanate equally from the British leaders. His official tour of the United Kingdom “scarcely advanced the cause of Anglo-American amity,” and portended ill for cooperation at the coming conference.⁸⁴

Several presidential speeches spoke positively of America’s chief associate. In Manchester, at the Free Trade Hall, and Mansion House, Wilson gave some praise to English culture and society.⁸⁵ Relative to the Peace Conference, at the Guildhall, he made reference to “Allied gallantry,” and claimed delight at the identical objectives of the leaders of the United States and Great Britain.⁸⁶ Away from the public eye, there was much less positive reflection.

The official reception at Buckingham Palace engendered substantially less good will. The President, to Lloyd George, appeared little impressed or pleased with the opulence of the State Dinner.⁸⁷ When the King raised his glass in a toast to the American armed forces, the President obliged with a short speech, acknowledging only the “great moral tide running in the hearts of men.”⁸⁸ Lord Robert Cecil, England’s greatest advocate of a league of nations – and presumably a supporter of the President’s greatest aspiration – sought Wilson out at the Buckingham reception, only to find him practically unfriendly. The two held a short conversation, and Cecil

⁸³ Diaries, 14 December 1918, House Papers, Box 301; W. Wiseman to the Foreign Office, Memorandum, 15 December 1918, *Wilson Papers*, 53:395; Wiseman Papers, Box 1.

⁸⁴ Cary T. Grayson Diary, 26 December 1918, *Wilson Papers*, 53:508-512; Tillman, *Anglo-American Relations*, 39.

⁸⁵ “Address at Mansion House,” 28 December, “Luncheon Address in Manchester,” 30 December, “Address in Free Trade Hall,” 30 December 1918, *Wilson Papers*, 53:533-534, 548-552; *Wilson, Public Papers*, 5:345-346, 349-351, 352-356.

⁸⁶ 28 December 1918, *Wilson Papers*, 53:531-533; *Wilson, Public Papers*, 5:341-344.

⁸⁷ David Lloyd George, *Memoirs of the Peace Conference* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1939), 1:180.

⁸⁸ Remarks at Buckingham Palace, 27 December 1918, *Wilson Papers*, 53:522-524; *Wilson, Public Papers*, 5:337-338.

learned nothing of Wilson's league plans.⁸⁹ Curiously, the President's most forthcoming commentary at the Palace was with a minor British official – and it was not good. F. Worthington reported that the President discarded “Anglo-Saxon” culture as a common bond that drew the two nations together for common purposes: “that term can no longer be rightly applied to the people of the United States. Nor must too much importance in this connection be attached to the fact that English is our common language.” Wilson counseled, “you must not speak of us who came over here as cousins, still less as brothers; *we are neither*. . . [and] there are only two things which can establish and maintain closer relations between your country and mine: they are community of ideals and of interests.”⁹⁰

Conferences between the President and the highest British Government officials proceeded fairly amicably, however. Wilson met privately with Lloyd George and his Foreign Secretary, Arthur Balfour, at Government offices on Downing Street. The three spoke informally of their views, “to feel what the relative positions of the two parties were.” The President revealed the central importance, to him, of the League question, and “[gave] the impression that that was the only thing that he really cared about.” Lloyd George and Balfour raised the Freedom of the Seas. They suggested that agreement on a league “would ease other matters, such as the questions of the ‘Freedom of the Seas,’ the disposal of the colonies, economic issues, etc.” Wilson thought much the same, that “having attained his object, [he] could then say that these matters could be left to be worked out by the League of Nations.”⁹¹

⁸⁹ Edgar Algernon Robert Gascoyne-Cecil, *A Great Experiment: An Autobiography by Viscount Cecil* (London: J. Cape, 1941), 63.

⁹⁰ F. Worthington, Deputy Chief Censor of the War Office, “Statement made by President Wilson to Me on the Evening of Saturday the 28th, December 1918,” House Papers, Box 173; Dimpleby and Reynolds, *An Ocean Apart*, 64; B.J.C. McKercher, “‘The Deep and Latent Distrust’: The British Official Mind and the United States, 1919-1929,” in *Anglo-American Relations in the 1920s: The Struggle for Supremacy*, ed. B.J.C. McKercher (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1990), 212.

⁹¹ Imperial War Cabinet 47, Memorandum, “Draft Minutes of a Meeting. . . . President Wilson's Visit,” 30 December 1918, *Wilson Papers*, 53:558-569.

Wilson's pre-Conference trip, then, bore mixed fruit. Wilson seemingly found Lloyd George in accord with him over the League, the issue most dear to his heart. The tour had not, however, endeared the President to those with whom he would soon negotiate. Nor was Woodrow Wilson pleased with those he met in London or the prospects of dealing with them in Paris. Upon his return to France, in a telephone conversation with Edward House, he "needed some persuasion" to agree with the Colonel that "[the American delegates] would have to work with England, rather than with France, if we hoped to get the things for which we were striving."⁹²

⁹² Diaries, 31 December, House Papers, Box 301.

CHAPTER 4

THE PARIS PEACE CONFERENCE

Countless volumes on the Paris Peace Conference of 1919 have analyzed nearly every facet of that monumental congress. With the 1914-1918 War at an end, the victorious powers had merely to reorganize the world. From 18 January to 28 June 1919, the great councils discussed every conceivable subject. Though the terms of the treaty with Germany occupied the center of attention – disposition of the German navy, distribution of conquered German colonies, reparations to be demanded, and so on – several outstanding questions between the Allied and Associated Powers received substantial scrutiny.

The first, and most dear to Woodrow Wilson, occupied nearly his every thought until its accomplishment. The League of Nations became an obsession for the President, so that he would do anything to assure its formation, and secure its acceptance. The League provided American and British statesmen with an issue over which they could heartily and fairly readily agree, and provided the two great powers a reason for unity at the conference. Additionally, the principle of the League gave Anglo-American enthusiasts on both sides of the Atlantic a source of hope for improved relations between the two nations, and an organization through which the two English-speaking powers might together reform the world. Most sources on the Peace Conference highlight this and the overall course of the convention as proof of the budding Anglo-American friendship.

Indeed, on many of the major issues of the conference – including the League of Nations – Americans and Britons found themselves in relative agreement. On a myriad of other questions, the United States and the British Empire were significantly divided. Concerning

reparations and the distribution of colonies, the United States had fundamental philosophical differences, and believed Great Britain advocated the distasteful, and immoral, position. By far the most complex and divisive of issues, however, were the naval questions. Of all the diplomatic controversies at the Peace Conference, they constituted the most problematic for the American-British relationship – at the congress, and for years thereafter.

The early stages of the Peace Conference found the American and British delegations working well together, and a unity of Anglo-American aims; but they started off sharply divided. The fate of the defeated powers' colonies was the first substantive question debated by the Council of Ten. The Dominions of Australia, South Africa, and New Zealand had each captured German colonies adjacent to their own territories, with their own troops, in conjunction with British home forces, in Africa and the Pacific. The United Kingdom obliged to support its constituent Dominions, and the Japanese did as well to safeguard their own Pacific claims on German islands in the Pacific.¹

Distribution of territorial spoils directly conflicted with Woodrow Wilson's "Peace without Victory" premise. If "annexation went on, the league of nations would be discredited from the beginning." Therefore, he proposed a mandatory system by which "the world acting as trustee through a mandatory" power would care for a relinquished colony "until the day when the true wishes of the inhabitants could be ascertained."² Though the division of opinion existed

¹ Seth P. Tillman, *Anglo-American Relations at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), 90; Council of Ten Meeting, 24 January 1919, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1919: The Paris Peace Conference*, 13 vols. (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1942-1947), 3:257-258 (hereafter cited as *Paris Peace Conference*); Ray Stannard Baker, *Woodrow Wilson and World Settlement* (Gloucester, Massachusetts: Peter Smith, 1960), 1:257-258; David Lloyd George, *Memoirs of the Peace Conference* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1939), 1:517-523.

² Council of Ten Meeting, 27 January 1919, *Paris Peace Conference*, 3:741-743; Baker, *World Settlement*, 1:261-262.

primarily between the President and the Dominions, Lloyd George was beholden to their claims, and so the question of annexation versus mandates separated the delegations.

Wilson, however, had an ally in General Jan Christiaan Smuts. The Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa looked to the establishment of the League of Nations with nearly as great anticipation as the American President, and so sought compromise on a League basis. Utilizing proposals developed in his “League of Nations – A Practical Suggestion” of December 1918,³ Smuts penned a resolution, with the consent of the other Dominions, which placed the German, and Turkish, colonies and territories under the “advanced nations as a sacred trust of civilisation [sic].” It further devised three categories of mandates – one for the Turkish lands, one for Germany’s central African colonies, and the last for German southwest African territories and south Pacific islands – which each mandatory state would hold as a trustee under the League of Nations.⁴

The Council of Ten debated the Smuts plan on 30 January in a meeting the British Prime Minister later described as “the only unpleasant episode of the whole Congress.”⁵ Lloyd George submitted the mandates proposal while Prime Minister William Hughes of Australia, representing the Dominions, gave “grudging assent.”⁶ When Wilson expressed only tepid acceptance of the plan, as a “precursor of agreement”, but not a solid foundation in the absence of the League of Nations, Lloyd George openly declared his “despair” at the President’s statement. The British Prime Minister pleaded Wilson’s assent, as it had taken great effort to bring the Dominions around to the mandatory principle at all. So Wilson agreed only

³ Doc. 5, “The Smuts Plan: The League of Nations – A Practical Suggestion,” 16 December 1918, David Hunter Miller, *Drafting of the Covenant* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, Inc., 1963), 2:23-60.

⁴ Appendix to Council of Ten Meeting, 30 January 1919, “Draft Resolutions in Reference to Mandatories,” *Paris Peace Conference*, 3:795-796; Miller, *Drafting*, 1:109-110.

⁵ Lloyd George, *Memoirs of the Peace*, 1:541.

⁶ Tillman, *Anglo-American Relations*, 95.

provisionally to the Smuts plan, until creation of the League. The questions of distribution to whom, what authority that power would have over such a mandate, and what rights non-mandatories would possess, remained unanswered at the Peace Conference – and a cause for future distress. At Paris, the Smuts plan resolved the Anglo-American mandates problem, and it quickly faded under their “highest point of harmony.”⁷

The American and British delegations proceeded quite well upon the development of the League Covenant. The principles of such an organization had been under consideration in both nations for years ahead of the Conference. The British and Dominion representatives arrived in Paris with several plans – most notably the Report of the Phillimore Committee of 29 March 1918⁸ and that of General Smuts – and major supporters in the personalities of Sir Edward Grey, the former Foreign Secretary and then President of the League of Nations Union; Lord Robert Cecil, former British Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, a member of the League Union, and special adviser to the British delegation on league questions; and Jan Smuts. On the American side, Edward House had long advocated a league, and may have helped President Wilson adopt the idea as his own. Together, they generated detailed plans about the organization of an institution in 1917-1919. And though Woodrow Wilson had never been too troubled by the details constituting a league, he took upon himself the role of the greatest advocate of a league of nations, and it became his chief aim at the Paris Peace Conference.

American work improved upon British concepts, and *vice versa*. Wilson’s second proposal, the so-called “first Paris draft,” finished and circulated on 10 January 1919, incorporated many ideas originating out the House draft of the summer of 1918, elements of the Phillimore plan, and large portions of General Smuts’s “Practical Suggestion” of December

⁷ Council of Ten Meeting, 30 January 1919, *Paris Peace Conference*, 3:785-794; Miller, *Drafting*, 2:194-202; Baker, *World Settlement*, 1:272-274; Tillman, *Anglo-American Relations*, 97.

⁸ Doc. 1, “The Phillimore Plan,” 20 March 1918, in Miller, *Drafting*, 2:3-6.

1918. The day the President completed his “second” Paris draft, Lord Robert Cecil published his own plan, based upon Britain’s Phillimore Report, but adopting various elements of the Smuts and Wilson proposals, and in many respects the Cecil and Wilson documents were similar.⁹

Together, the United States and Britain appended the fate of the League of Nations to that of the peace treaty. President Wilson, convinced that inclusion of the league plan in the treaty was essential to global acceptance, pushed for its insertion to the instruments of peace. He, therefore, made it his first order of business, and at the Plenary Session of 25 January, just one week after the Conference opened, Wilson introduced a resolution, prepared by Lord Robert Cecil, for a league clause in the treaty of peace. The British Prime Minister, David Lloyd George, immediately seconded the idea, and the Conference unanimously accepted the resolution.¹⁰

Anglo-American cooperation continued largely uninterrupted afterward. David Miller and Robert Cecil conferred over their differing drafts in the following days and delivered a nearly unified document to the President on 31 January. Only a few details – such as British Dominion representation and Freedom of the Seas – required settlement, and only Freedom of the Seas remained unsettled in a plan of 2 February developed by Miller and the British legal adviser, Sir Cecil Hurst.¹¹ The give and take over the proposed League Covenant proved a valuable bridge through Paris between Washington and London.

⁹ Charles Seymour, *The Intimate Papers of Colonel House* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1928), 4:28-35; Baker, *World Settlement*, 1:215-217, 3:67-68; Doc. 7, “Wilson’s Second Draft or First Paris Draft,” 10 January, Doc. 6, “The Cecil Plan: A Draft Sketch of a League of Nations,” 14 January 1919, in Miller, *Drafting*, 1: 34-52, 2:61-93; Tillman, *Anglo-American Relations*, 117.

¹⁰ Second Plenary Session, 25 January 1919, *Paris Peace Conference*, 3:178-187, 201; Doc. 15, “Plenary Session of the Peace Conference, 25 January 1919, Miller, *Drafting*, 2:155-164; *Intimate Papers*, 4:289-291.

¹¹ Doc. 12, “Cecil-Miller Draft,” 27 January, and “Hurst-Miller Draft” in Doc. 19, “Minutes of the Commission on the League of Nations – First Meeting,” 3 February 1919, in Miller, *Drafting*, 1:55-57, 65-64, 67-71, 2:131-141, 231-237; Diaries, 31 January 1919, Edward Mandell House Papers, Ms 466, Box 302, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut; *Intimate Papers*, 4:299-300.

Both delegations did all they could to preserve the working relationship created over the League project. When David Miller presented the new draft plan on 2 February, the President suddenly opposed it as having taken too much out. Wilson insisted upon a reworking of his own plan, and wrote a “third” Paris draft, which he insisted serve as the basis for discussion, rather than that worked out between Miller and Hurst. Colonel House warned the President that such a demand could provide an unnecessary source of division between the Americans and Britons, principally Lord Robert Cecil.¹² Why Wilson threatened to wreck the cooperative venture at that moment, and why he just as quickly reversed himself, remains unclear. Nevertheless, perhaps realizing the value of Cecil’s support in the creation of the League, the President accepted Miller’s Anglo-American draft of the 2nd, and essentially all differences between the United States and Great Britain over the League Covenant were settled as the League Commission prepared to meet.¹³

In the League Commission meetings, the Americans and Britons together pressed for use of their jointly-written Covenant draft of 2 February. When the French tried to alter the Anglo-American arrangement, the American and British representatives blocked such attempts. Thus, at the Plenary Session of 14 February, Wilson and the League Committee presented a completed Covenant, which the President read in full to the entire Conference. Lord Robert Cecil then explained the foundations of the Covenant: “no nation shall go to war until every other possible means of settling the dispute shall have been fully and fairly tried,” and “under no circumstances, shall any nation seek forcibly to disturb the territorial settlement to be arrived at as the

¹² 2 February 1919, David Hunter Miller, *My Diary at the Conference of Paris: With Documents* (New York: Appeal Printing Co., 1924), 1:105, Film J816, Reel 1, Willis Library, University of North Texas; Doc. 14, “Wilson’s Fourth Draft or Third Paris Draft,” 2 February 1919, in Miller, *Drafting*, 1:72-74, 2:145-154; *Intimate Papers*, 4:300-301; Diaries, 3 February 1919, House Papers, Box 302.

¹³ Tillman, *Anglo-American Relations*, 122-123.

consequence of this peace.”¹⁴ These were to be the principles which the United States and Britain would, in harmony, uphold; and the League of Nations, now, would bind the two powers together in pursuit of that goal.

From February through March, it appeared that the two nations sat upon the edge of a new era in diplomatic relations. Sir William Wiseman (prematurely) considered the cooperation between the delegations as opening a “New Year of the Anglo-American relations. . . as it should continue.” Whereas “pessimists declared that the Peace Congress would disclose fundamental and irreconcilable differences between the British and American people. . . where old-standing grievances and disputes which must be revived and inflamed,” the progress of the Conference, and the League project in particular, had seemingly joined the two nations together.¹⁵ Lloyd George went back to London, and Woodrow Wilson returned to the United States for the close of the Sixty-fifth Congress, and to present Congressional leaders with the accomplished League of Nations Covenant for contemplation. Edward House, British Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour, and the Supreme Council continued their deliberations, including the development of a Preliminary Peace plan, and little discord arose over the matters they discussed during the major leaders’ absences.¹⁶ It was a calm before a clash.

Few credible sources overlook the incident Josephus Daniels later called the “Naval Battle of Paris.” Many misinterpret, or go through great pains to minimize its influence.¹⁷ Often, the term defines a small set of heated meetings between the highest ranking members of the

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 132; Doc. 23, “Plenary Session of the Peace Conference,” 14 February 1919, in Miller, *Drafting*, 2:560-567; Plenary Session, 14 February 1919, *Paris Peace Conference*, 3:209-217.

¹⁵ [William Wiseman,] progress of the Peace Conference, [c. February] 1919, Sir William Wiseman Papers, Ms 666, Box 9, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.

¹⁶ Tillman, *Anglo-American Relations*, 154-159.

¹⁷ Seth Tillman, for example, describes the German distribution question as “brought to an end with a flourish of Anglo-American disharmony. [But] for reasons not easily understood, the United States elevated this minor issue over the privilege of sinking a few German ships into a matter of ‘principle’ . . .” He does not connect it to the then developing naval rivalry, each of which he details in two widely separated chapters. Tillman, *Anglo-American Relations*, 175.

American and British Governments and military establishments with respect to the American naval construction program. The “battle,” however, was but one in a campaign, carried out by the United States Navy and its defenders, against the Royal Navy, the Prime Minister, and the chief members of the British Admiralty.

During the Armistice term, the Allies required the Germans to surrender all operational submarines, the entire German merchant marine, and a substantial portion of its surface war fleet until finalization of the peace treaty. The German capital ships anchored at Scapa Flow on the Scottish coast until determination was made as to the disposition of these fleets. The Americans and Britons had agreed to post-War limitations on the German navy, but differed as to what they would be.

In early March, as the Allied nations debated the fate of German naval power, Admiral Benson resurrected his contrarian position to the other Powers, taken at earlier inter-Allied naval conferences. Based upon the advice of the London Planning Section and the Paris Advisory Staff, he opposed limitation of the German fleet in the treaty of peace, internationalization of the Kiel Canal, and other proposed terms.¹⁸ He made his program, though not his reasoning, clear to the Allies. In his commentary on the draft of the naval peace terms, Admiral Benson’s chief reservation focused on the distribution of the Imperial German Navy – and he opposed any program that gave German warships to the victorious powers. This exception, the Secretary of the Navy did not understand: “my general opinion has been against the idea of sinking the battle-ships.” Back in Washington, Daniels raised a logical question: “How could we successfully ask Congress for money to build the ships authorized if we

¹⁸ Planning Section, London, Memorandum No. 65, 4 November 1919, TX File, Naval Records Collection of the Office of Naval Records and Library, 1691-1845, Record Group 45, National Archives I, Washington, D.C.; William S. Benson to Opnav, for Josephus Daniels, Mission 318, in J. Daniels to Woodrow Wilson, 4 March 1919, Arthur S. Link, ed., *Papers of Woodrow Wilson* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966-1994), 55:425-430 (hereafter cited as *Wilson Papers*).

advocated sinking so many ships?" President Wilson confessed, "I must say I cannot quite understand this policy that Benson is proposing [either]." Daniels advised, "when you have the time. . . you you [should] send for Admiral Benson and talk with him about it." But regardless of the particulars, the Secretary maintained, "I feel, with Admiral Benson, that no nation ought to have a force, either on land or sea, to dominate."¹⁹

Whether or not President Wilson or the Secretary fully understood, Colonel House adopted the general premise behind Admiral Benson's opposition to distribution of the German war fleet. Over lunch with Lloyd George, House joined Benson's proposal with his own pre-Armistice intimidations. The Colonel warned, "if the British did not consent to the sinking of the German fleet instead of partitioning it, it would lead to a large naval program in America." As a result, he believed, "England and the U.S. would be in the same attitude toward one another in the future as England and Germany had been in the past."²⁰

The Prime Minister, initially, appeared conciliatory on the subject. Lloyd George agreed with House's narrative of the potential consequences and asked the Colonel to say as much in the deliberations of the Council of Four – and he did on 7 March. Georges Clemenceau opposed destruction of the German ships "in favor of partitioning them amongst the Allies." The Britons "were on the point of yielding" to the French proposal until House addressed Lloyd George, "that. . . [we] could never consent to the British augmenting their navy so largely; if this were done, it would surely lead to American and British rivalry in this direction." In a temporary agreement, the German navy would be distributed among the Allies, but the United States, Britain, and Japan "should sink those coming to them." At the very least, the United States and

¹⁹ J. Daniels to W. Wilson, 4 March 1919, *Wilson Papers*, 55:424-425; W. Wilson to J. Daniels, 1 March, J. Daniels to W. Wilson, 4 March 1919, Josephus Daniels Papers, Roll 66, Library of Congress, Manuscripts Division, Washington, D.C.

²⁰ Diaries, 6 March 1919, House Papers, Box 302; *Intimate Papers*, 4:356.

Great Britain, in a grand display for the nations of the world, would do so together in the middle of the Atlantic.²¹ Private conversations between high-ranking Americans and Britons quickly revealed the temporary arrangement as insufficient, however. The question of distribution was not simply about German ships. Colonel House found the British Prime Minister still dissatisfied: “he said that an agreement between Great Britain and the United States must be reached not to rival one another in naval building.”²²

The American naval advisers, apparently, understood Britain’s demands.²³ When President Wilson returned to France on 14 March, Admiral Benson and the Naval Advisory Staff at Paris presented him a memorandum of their views on the naval situation. The “Disposition of German and Austrian Vessels of War” focused primarily on the reasons for and against destruction of the surrendered warships of the defeated nations, but included several broader statements outside that central premise.²⁴

The Naval Advisory Staff observed, “the fact that the menace of German-Austrian naval power is removed renders unnecessary any increase in the strength of the navies of the European powers. On the contrary, the logical result of the elimination of this menace should be a reduction in European naval armaments.” In the opposite, “it is essential that the United States have a navy as large as that of Great Britain,” therefore it should not be subject to the same restrictions as the European nations. Two reasons were given for this “essential” increase. First, the League of Nations required a strong American fleet to counter-balance the British Royal Navy. “No international navy... could hope to cope with the British fleet. There must exist in

²¹ Diaries, 6 March 1919, House Papers, Box 302; Edward M. House to W. Wilson, No. 2, 7 March 1919, *Wilson Papers*, 55:459; *Intimate Papers*, 4:356, 368; Doc. 474, “Sir M.P.A. Hankey to Sir R. Wester-Wemyss, 7 March 1919,” in Miller, *Diary*, 6:291, Film J816, Reel 2; Tillman, *Anglo-American Relations*, 168.

²² Diaries, 10 March 1919, House Papers, Box 302.

²³ William Reynolds Braisted, *The United States Navy in the Pacific, 1909-1922* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1971), 432.

²⁴ U.S. Naval Advisory Staff, Paris, Memorandum No. 24, “Disposition of German and Austrian Vessels of War,” 13 March 1919, in W.S. Benson to W. Wilson, 14 March 1919, *Wilson Papers*, 55:515-521.

such an international force a single unit of the same nationality of equal strength.” The United States possessed no special immunity. “Should we ever fail in our international obligations, there would exist the forces of the League with the fleet of Great Britain to apply the remedy.”²⁵

The second for American naval expansion became the more lasting. The Advisory Staff specifically warned the President that, it believed, British naval plans considered the United States as its chief rival. “In the future, [Great Britain’s] sole naval rival will be the United States, and every ship built or acquired by Great Britain can have in mind only the American fleet.” *Distribution* would “give the lion’s share to Great Britain,” to between ten and twenty additional ships (while the United States would receive none). The final conclusion: “World interests demand that no single power may rule the sea against all comers. *Distribution* will establish a single power more firmly than ever in a position that dominates the sea completely. *Distribution* makes [our]. . . burden too great.”²⁶

Memorandum No. 24 had no effect, at least upon the Council of Ten. As the Supreme War Council went through each of the articles of the “Naval, Military, and Air Conditions of Peace,” they read through and accepted nearly all without trouble. But on Article 24, the phrase “All those vessels will be destroyed or broken up” was deleted, and then approved without such a provision.²⁷ Benson, however, maintained his objections, and the Navy retained its concerns.²⁸

During his time back in the United States, in February and early March, Wilson focused not on naval questions, but on his League of Nations. Friends of the League apprised the President of legitimate concerns over its provisions, held by both its supporters and opponents. These ranged from its perceived effects on domestic legislation, influence on the sovereign

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 515-517.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 517, 520-521.

²⁷ Sir Maurice Hankey’s Notes of a Meeting of the Supreme War Council, BC-52, SWC-18, 17 March 1919, *Wilson Papers*, 55:28; Braisted, *U.S. Navy in the Pacific*, 433.

²⁸ W.S. Benson, Memorandum, “Naval Terms,” 16 March 1919, *Wilson Papers*, 55:539.

powers of nations, immigration, and so forth. One issue, which both friends and enemies of the League cited as a shortcoming, was its potential interference with the Monroe Doctrine, one of the United States' most revered pillars of foreign policy. As early as 4 March, Senator Gilbert Hitchcock of Nebraska, the Democrat leader of the Senate, suggested the President make a Monroe Doctrine reservation to the League treaty in order to secure Republican votes. As Wilson returned to France, Senator Porter McCumber of North Dakota, a Republican supporter of the League, suggested amendments for insertion into the Covenant. Of these, "Third, 'That nothing... shall be construed to change or modify the policy of the United States generally known as the Monroe Doctrine.'" No less than former President William Howard Taft advised the same on 18 March, and repeated it many times thereafter. "If you bring back the treaty with the League... in it, make more specific reservation of the Monroe Doctrine... The Monroe Doctrine reservation alone would probably carry the treaty, but others would make it certain."²⁹

The British clearly saw the Americans desired protection for their old diplomatic prerogative. Sir William Wiseman, the great intermediary, urged Lord Robert Cecil to accommodate the President, and informed David Miller that a member of the British delegation had written a memorandum advising the same, publicly amending the Covenant with additions such as the Monroe Doctrine reservation.³⁰ In mid March, in consultation with Cecil and Arthur Balfour, Edward House developed a "feasible article" for amendment to the League document. The statement read, "Nothing in this Covenant shall be deemed to affect any international

²⁹ Gilbert M. Hitchcock to W. Wilson, 4 March 1919, House Papers, Box 60; Porter J. McCumber to W. Wilson, 13 March, William Howard Taft to W. Wilson, No. 19, 18 March, W.H. Taft to W. Wilson, No. 24, 21 March, Joseph P. Tumulty, for W.H. Taft, to W. Wilson, No. 41, 28 March 1919, *Wilson Papers*, 55:492, 56: 83, 157-159, 398-399; Miller, *Drafting*, 1:276-277.

³⁰ W. Wiseman to Robert Cecil, 11 March 1919, Wiseman Papers; 11 March 1919, Miller, *Diary*, 1:162-163, Film J816, Reel 1.

engagement or understanding for securing the peace of the world such as treaties of arbitration and the Monroe Doctrine.”³¹

This agreement did not indicate true reconciliation. Lloyd George, after consultation with several close advisers, foreshadowed the road he would take in his Fontainebleau Memorandum of 25 March: “The first condition of success for the League... [is] a firm understanding between the British Empire and the United States of America, and France and Italy that there will be no competitive building... between them.” Using Woodrow Wilson’s own language against him, the memorandum insisted, “Unless this is arrived at before the Covenant is signed, the League of Nations will be a sham and a mockery.”³²

The arrival of Josephus Daniels in late March “awoke the slumbering antagonism of the sea dogs,” and opened the way for the great naval confrontation of the Peace Conference “that at once threatened to end the friendly Naval relations cemented during the war, and checked for a time the forming of the League of Nations.”³³ The Secretary of the Navy made for Paris with chiefs of the Navy’s technical bureaus, his wife, and other aides, to “make a first hand study of the data obtained during the war by our Allies as particularly affecting the size and type of capital fighting ships in order that the Navy Department could carry out the proposed building program with the best judgment.”³⁴ He left unaware of the crisis his arrival would instigate.

³¹ E.M. House to W. Wilson, 22 March 1919, Papers of Woodrow Wilson, Project Records, Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey, Box 355 (hereafter cited as Papers of Woodrow Wilson).

³² George W. Egerton, “Ideology, Diplomacy, and International Organisation: Wilsonism and the League of Nations in Anglo-American Relations, 1918-1920,” in *Anglo-American Relations in the 1920s: The Struggle for Supremacy*, ed. B.J.C. McKercher (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1990), 39; David Lloyd George, Memorandum, “Some considerations for the Peace Conference before they finally draft their terms,” 25 March 1919, *Wilson Papers*, 56:264.

³³ Forrest Davis, *The Atlantic System: The Story of Anglo-American Control of the Seas* (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1941), 263; Josephus Daniels, *The Wilson Era*, vol. 2, *Years of War and After, 1917-1923* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1946), 367-368.

³⁴ Commander P.W. Foote, Personal Aide to the Secretary, “Official Diary of the Secretary’s Trip to Europe,” Daniels Papers, Roll 7. Rear Admirals R.S. Griffin, Chief of the Bureau of Steam Engineering, D.W. Taylor, Chief of the Bureau of Construction and Repair, and Ralph Earle, Chief of the Bureau of Ordinance were the three technical chiefs that accompanied Daniels to Europe.

Daniels began to anticipate the row his arrival would spark as he sailed across the Atlantic aboard the *Leviathan*. His personal secretary recorded, “invitation had been received by radio from Mr. Walter Long, the First Lord of the British Admiralty, inviting the Secretary and his party to be the guests of the British Government during their visit to the United Kingdom. Thus showing that the English outcry against our proposed increase in battleships was after all secondary to their appreciation for our services during the War.” The day Daniels arrived, 25 March, Admiral Benson and his staff met the Secretary at the train station, and followed up the reception with a “long conference” – the first of many. At the same time, the Admiralty staff – annoyed over the lack of consultation between the British delegation and the Admiralty over naval policy – advanced toward Paris, because, as Daniels later counted, “nothing could have aroused the British so much as the fear that some day another nation would have superiority on the sea.”³⁵

Subsequent days were occupied with meetings, lunches, and dinners with Benson, other members of the American Naval Advisory Staff in Paris, Colonel House, the President, and more. On the 27th, in conversations with Woodrow Wilson and David Lloyd George, the President and the Prime Minister requested the Secretary see members of the British Admiralty about naval construction, and Wilson “hoped we could talk it over and reach some right understanding.”³⁶

Had Daniels met with Edward House on 27 March or, either him or the President after, he would have discovered great obstacles to a “right understanding.” Ahead of the League of Nations committee meeting, Lord Robert Cecil informed House that “the article on the Monroe

³⁵ *Ibid.*; E. David Cronon, ed., *The Cabinet Diaries of Josephus Daniels, 1913-1921* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1963), 379 (hereafter cited as *Cabinet Diaries*); M.L. Dockrill and Zara Steiner, “The Foreign Office at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919,” *International History Review* 2, No. 1 (January 1920): 64; Daniels, *Wilson Era*, 2:367.

³⁶ P.W. Foote, “Official Diary,” Daniels Papers, Roll 7; 27 March 1919, *Cabinet Diaries*, 380.

Doctrine, which Balfour, Cecil, and I had agreed upon, was refused by Lloyd George,” and more obstructive, “Lloyd George told Cecil that he had no intention to sign any Covenant for a League until he had a complete understanding with the President concerning the United States [n]aval building program.” The Prime Minister sought to force the Americans into an agreement.³⁷ Reduction of the naval program had become Britain’s condition precedent for acceptance of the League, or at least adoption of the Monroe reservation.

Apparently, neither the President, nor the Secretary of the Navy, nor any other delegate had informed the Colonel that meetings would take place regarding the subject of naval arms. The Chief of Naval Operations, on the 28th, requested a private conference with Edward House “as to the future sizes of the British and American Navies” and revealed the plan for a high-level conference. House indicated that he had “been making the assertion, and the British have accept[ed] it, that Great Britain had a Navy more than equal to all the other navies of the world combined.” However, with the end of the War, “Russia, Germany, and Austria have no longer any [navy], and those of Italy and France are negligible. Therefore the United States and Japan are the only two Power [Great Britain has] to be reckoned with.” But House merely advised him as to matters of procedure.³⁸

Two days later came England’s “frontal assault.” Josephus Daniels met with Admiral Sir Rosslyn Wester-Wemyss, Britain’s First Sea Lord, in the Secretary’s rooms at the Ritz Hotel. Following some small talk, the two proceeded to serious matters – the American naval building program, as well as the expansion of the merchant marine. Sir Rosslyn indicated that he and others in the Admiralty felt alarmed at the idea of American fleets putting Britain in second place, an “unthinkable outcome,” and that Britain needed the largest navy afloat. The British

³⁷ Diaries, 27 March 1919, House Papers, Box 302; Braisted, *United States Navy*, 433; Tillman, *Anglo-American Relations*, 286.

³⁸ Diaries, 30 March 1919, House Papers, Box 302.

admiral outright asked the Secretary of the Navy to reduce United States naval construction, ostensibly in exchange for an agreement on the destruction of the German navy.³⁹

At some point during the conference, Admiral Benson entered the room, having learned that the meeting already began without him (a fact which greatly irritated the Chief of Naval Operations). Admirals Benson and Wemyss, “in hearty accord,” agreed the German fleet should go to the bottom of the sea, instead of to the Allied nations.⁴⁰ Yet, of Wemyss’s suggestion that the United States voluntarily remain second with respect to its navy, Benson responded that agreement to such a proposal would amount to “treason” to his own country. He continued that the United States would “never agree to any nation having supremacy of the seas or the biggest navy in the world. The Navy of the United States must have equality with the British Navy.”⁴¹ The First Sea Lord could not accept Benson’s reply: “You forget that ours is an island nation with colonies all over the globe, making the greatest navy essential to Great Britain’s existence.” The Chief of Naval Operations contended that Britain was not alone in this respect: “You must remember that the United States’ possessions extend from the Philippines to the Virgin Islands, from Alaska to the protection of the farthest portion of South America, because the Monroe Doctrine imposes a duty upon us we must always be ready to perform.”⁴² Despite their agreement on destruction of the German navy, the presence of William Benson did not facilitate discussion. The conference ended fairly quickly after the American admiral asked his British

³⁹ Harold Sprout and Margaret Sprout, *Toward a New Order of Sea Power: American Naval Policy and the World Scene, 1918-1922* (London: Princeton University Press, 1940), 63; 27 March 1919, *Cabinet Diaries*, 380; J. Daniels to D.W. Knox, 29 January 1937, UB File, RG 45; Braisted, *United States Navy*, 435.

⁴⁰ W.S. Benson, Memorandum, 16 May 1921, UB File, RG 45; J. Daniels to W. Wilson, 30 March 1919, Daniels Papers, Roll 66; Tillman, *Anglo-American Relations*, 290.

⁴¹ J. Daniels to D.W. Knox, 29 January 1937, UB File, RG 45.

⁴² *Ibid.*; Daniels, *Wilson Era*, 2:369.

counterpart by what authority he questioned the Secretary of the Navy and demanded restrictions on United States naval construction.⁴³

The meeting with Wester-Wemyss led the Secretary to reconsider his position on distribution of the German navy. Appealing to one of the President's cherished principles – disarmament – he indicated “that at first the idea of sinking [the German ships] did not appeal to me,” but,

the more I think about it, the more I am impressed by the conviction that it would be a mistake to divide the ships between the nations and for Great Britain to sink the portion that comes to her and for other nations to keep their portions. . . . they should be sunk as the result of action of all the nations. . . . The most tangible evidence of faith in reduction of armament would be the impressive act of eliminating this great fleet as one whole. If it is the best policy to sink any of them, it is best that all of them should be sunk.⁴⁴

Secretary Daniels converted to Benson's and the Navy Planning Committee's belief on such matters.

The following day, he breakfasted with Lloyd George. England's chief spokesman confirmed the statements made by Sir Rosslyn the day before, and hinted at trouble should the United States persist in its naval building programs: “Great Britain could not consent for any other nation to have superiority.” Nonetheless, he requested Daniels meet with Walter Long, the First Lord of the Admiralty, “to see if we could reach an agreement as to the size of [the United States] Navy.”⁴⁵

Ahead of the conference with Long, Secretary Daniels again consulted Edward House. The Colonel “told him it was utterly impossible to agree” to the idea “that Great Britain shall always have a larger navy than the United States.” The only potential avenue of compromise, House conceived “might [be]. . . an agreement that both should stop building after our present

⁴³ W.S. Benson, Memorandum, 16 May 1921, UB File, RG 45.

⁴⁴ J. Daniels to W. Wilson, Daniels Papers, Roll 66.

⁴⁵ P.W. Foote, “A Few Memories of the Visit to Europe. . . 1919,” Daniels Papers, Roll 7; J. Daniels to D.W. Knox, 29 January 1937, UB File, RG 45; 30 March 1919, *Cabinet Diaries*, 381.

building program was finished, so that the two navies would remain relatively in the same proper proportion as they then would be.” Cancellation of the 1918 Program posed no problem. But as to the authorizations of 1916, “I thought we should finish [those ships]. . . . This will put us fairly close to the British, perhaps, with[in] 75% of them, but with a better class of ships.”⁴⁶

Daniels’s meeting with Walter Long forwarded the House proposal. On 31 March, Secretary Daniels explained, “so far as the [1916] programme already authorized, [we] could do nothing but build those ships.” He inverted the British expectations only with respect to the larger so-called 1918 Program, recently passed by Congress: “[construction would be] dependent upon [the] League of Nations & would not be necessary if [the] League was firmly established and all nations agreed to reduction of armament.” The First Lord replied, “Lloyd George could not support [the] League of Nations if [the] U.S. accompanied it by big building programs, for Great Britain could not consent to any other nation having the supremacy of the sea.” Neither side could be placated. Britain would accept the League *only* when the United States accepted an inferior navy, while Americans would restrict naval construction *only* as long as the British Empire already adopted the League. The Secretary of the Navy disclaimed that Americans possessed a desire to precipitate a naval arms race, and “pointed out that [Great Britain] would still have more ships than America,” even after the 1916 program’s completion. Daniels disclosed American policy as merely desiring that “no single nation ought to demand [or possess] superiority of naval strength.” Walter Long replied, somewhat perturbed, that he could not accept any settlement that demoted his nation to a second-class sea power as “public sentiment in Great Britain was very much alarmed by [your] building program,” and stated

⁴⁶ Diaries, 30 March 1919, House Papers, Box 302; 30 March 1919, *Cabinet Diaries*, 380-381; Braisted, *United States Navy*, 435.

outright, “Britain could not be satisfied if [the United States] carried out [the] big building program.”⁴⁷

The week of discussions accomplished nothing. On 1 April, before his scheduled departure for Rome, Daniels conferred with Lloyd George and Long, who remained recalcitrant. “Lloyd George said [the] League would be worth nothing if we continued to build. . . . [It] would be a mere piece of rhetoric if we continued to build.” And the idea that the United States required a fleet the size of Britain’s, the Prime Minister called “preposterous.” The Secretary could only claim inability to arrange any agreement in contravention of the wishes of Congress, and insisted that the United States sought no superiority over any other nation, but could not accept inferiority in power and size to any either. When Daniels demonstrated that completion of the 1916 Program would still see the United States inferior in the number of capital ships and fleet tonnage, the Prime Minister “waived that all aside by saying that tonnage was not the determining factor. . . . that the determining factor was guns, and that if America should complete its thirteen battleships and six battle cruisers with their sixteen-inch guns, those ships would be superior to those of any other nation.” In Daniels’s later accounts, he asserts that for this reason alone, the issue of qualitative superiority, the members of the Admiralty and the First Lord had come to Paris.⁴⁸

To House, Daniels “worried over [the progress in the negotiations with the British regarding navy building], particularly of the insistence of Lloyd George that we should admit that Great Britain shall always have a larger navy than ours.” Both the Secretary and the Colonel agreed that the chief American and British negotiators provided part of the problem. Daniels

⁴⁷ 31 March 1919, Cronon, *Cabinet Diaries*, 381; J. Daniels to D.W. Knox, 29 January 1937, UB File, RG 45; Daniels, *Wilson Era*, 2:371-372, 375; Sprout and Sprout, *Toward a New Order*, 65; Tillman, *Anglo-American Relations*, 290.

⁴⁸ 1 April 1919, *Cabinet Diaries*, 381; Daniels, *Wilson Era*, 2:377; Sprout and Sprout, *Toward a New Order*, 65; Tillman, *Anglo-American Relations*, 291.

considered Benson “stubborn,” House wrote of Lloyd George as a “mischief maker who changes his mind like a weather-vane,” and he saw the President “becoming stubborn and angry,” as well as “unreasonable.” Still, “the wide division of opinion,” not simply the different personalities, “brought Lloyd George and [Daniels] to quite as great an impasse as had existed between Benson and Wemyss and Long and [Daniels].”⁴⁹

With the Secretary of the Navy out of Paris, Edward House and William Benson became the principal protagonists in the conflict – much to the Admiral’s preference. On 3 April, Benson sought out the Colonel “to tell his usual story about our Naval Building Program. . .” He now considered the Admiral “a little obsessed” with the matter. House preferred compromise. He explained, “I do not think anyone wishes to make a promise to Great Britain that our Navy shall never equal hers, but I told him if the League. . . was to have a chance of life, it would not do to start its existence by increasing armaments instead of diminishing them.” Benson agreed, but believed greater principles hung in the balance.⁵⁰

Daniels returned to Paris on 7 April, and the controversy immediately resumed. A mid-day conference with Benson, found the Admiral warning, “B[ritain] is trying to dictate naval matters in order to control commerce.” He “felt strongly that we should go on building until our Navy is as strong as Great Britain’s. . .” In separate meeting, Walter Long, again, suggested “agreements on principle to stop building. . .” The First Lord “wished us to agree to stop the 1916 programme, which we are not [yet] building and which was authorized by Congress, which would of course leave us much inferior to Great Britain.”⁵¹

⁴⁹ Diaries, 1 April 1919, House Papers, Box 302; *Wilson Papers*, 56:517-518; Daniels, *Wilson Era*, 2:379-380.

⁵⁰ Diaries, 3 April 1919, House Papers, 302; *Wilson Papers*, 56:558-560. Benson felt Daniels was too prone to compromise to American disadvantage, and preferred “the President to keep Secretary Daniels away from Paris.” The President “flatly refused” his naval adviser’s suggestion.

⁵¹ 7 April 1919, *Cabinet Diaries*, 384-385; J. Daniels to W. Wilson, Memorandum, 7 April 1919, Daniels Papers, Roll 66; *Wilson Papers*, 57:91-92; Papers of Woodrow Wilson, Box 354.

The Secretary of the Navy did not foresee a realistic chance for equitable compromise. The British Prime Minister posed too great an impediment. “Lloyd George. . . would not give a snap of his finger for the League of Nations if we keep on building. . . he [is] concerned about nothing except capital ships.” The only solution, Daniels believed – “when Great Britain sinks the ships that she will get and quits building battle cruisers, we should stop the construction of capital ships” – would not be acceptable in the United States: “the American people would [not] stand for this.”⁵²

The presence of the Secretary of the Navy, the Chief of Naval Operations, or the heads of the British Admiralty, proved as much an impediment to compromise as Lloyd George. Therefore, on 8 April, Edward House took a primary role in the controversy. The Colonel believed, “this is one of the most serious and delicate problems which has or will come before the Conference. Perhaps *there is no single one with a more far reaching importance.*” Making matters worse, “Lloyd George is stupidly bringing about a decision which ought not be raised at this time. . . . [and] is trying to [drive] a bargain by yielding on the Monroe Doctrine provided we will give way on our Navy Program.” He remained steadfast, however: “I am determined not to yield.”⁵³

On the British side, Lloyd George prudently tasked Lord Robert Cecil with the negotiations. Though Cecil possessed personal pro-American sympathies, and sought conciliation in the matter, his lengthy note to Colonel House on 8 April revealed the level of

⁵² J. Daniels to W. Wilson, Memorandum, 7 April 1919, Daniels Papers, Roll 66.

⁵³ Diaries, 8 April 1919, House Papers, Box 302 (emphasis added). Edward House was so determined to stand fast, he wrote, but did not send, a letter directly to the Prime Minister in an attempt to draw Lloyd George out. “When I asked yesterday what, if any objection you had to the clause which I submitted regarding the affirmation of the Monroe Doctrine, you told me as you have told me before that you could not consent without first coming to an agreement with the United States regarding our naval building programme.” The Colonel attempted to separate the issues, and indicate that he saw Lloyd George’s true motives. “I understand that no one but you has raised any objection to our [Monroe Doctrine] proposal, and I hope my dear Prime Minister, that you will not further insist upon the point you have raised.” E.M. House to D. Lloyd George, 8 April 1919, House Papers, Box 70a.

antipathy in various halls of the British Government and naval establishment to the United States due to its naval program.

I have found in exalted quarters that some of the recent utterances by high officials connected with the United States Navy have produced a very unfortunate impression here. . . . They have in fact conveyed the idea that the naval policy is one of expansion; that American ambition is to have a navy at least as strong or stronger than that of the British Empire, and so on.

The reason this so agitated Britons of every class, “it has been now for centuries past an article of faith with every British statesman that the safety of the country depends upon her ability to maintain her sea defence [*sic*].” This conviction ran so deep, that even he himself, “passionately desirous of Anglo-American friendship, and a convinced believer in its existence and durability,” held the same commitments to British sea power. “I must freely admit that if I were British Minister of the Navy and I saw that British naval safety was being threatened, *even by America*, I should have to recommend to my fellow countrymen to spend their last shilling in bringing our fleet up to the point which I was advised was necessary for safety.”⁵⁴

Despite these immense difficulties, Lord Robert proposed solutions. “Would it be possible. . . for you to say that when the Treaty of Peace containing the League of Nations has been signed you would abandon or modify your naval programme? I am sure that the British Government would be only too ready to give corresponding assurances.” One essential point, he requested an informal intimation “that the British sentiment on the matter would not be disregarded. . . .” Cecil also suggested a more long term idea that infringed upon the freedom of action of neither, but merely opened the way toward compromise: “the two governments [could] consult together from year to year as to their naval programmes.”⁵⁵

⁵⁴ R. Cecil to E.M. House, 8 April 1919, *Wilson Papers*, 57:143-144 (emphasis added); *Intimate Papers*, 4:418-419; Miller, *Drafting*, 1:419-420; Papers of Woodrow Wilson, Box 354; House Papers, Box 25.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

Edward House spent the next day collating opinions from various quarters of the American mission. David Miller submitted two memoranda. The first described the naval programs authorized by the Act of 29 August 1916, and initiated by appropriations of 4 March 1917 and 1 July 1918. The second discussed policy and principle. Like Admiral Benson and many others, Miller stated, “[as a] result of the war, the enormous increase of the British fleet and the ending of the German fleet has created a situation where the British naval strength is out of all proportion to any question of defense.” The legal adviser wrote that England had not planned for this condition, “but it is not healthy as a permanent condition in the world *and should be changed*, and the British should be told so plainly.” The memorandum warned the Colonel that American sentiment would not tolerate acquiescence. “To say: ‘The United States *cannot be allowed* to build as large a navy as Great Britain’ would not go down with our people.”⁵⁶

House made an evasive response to Lord Robert. The Colonel indicated, “you will find the United States ready to ‘abandon or modify our new naval programme,’ by which I understand *you* to mean our programme not yet provided by law...” i.e. the 1918 Program. He also sounded conciliatory by writing,

I am. . . certain you will find us ready and willing to consult with the British Government from year to year regarding the naval programme of the two Governments. The President himself has, I think, made our intentions in this matter quite clear. . . in which he said “It is essential to the future peace of the world that there should be the frankest possible cooperation, and the most generous understanding between the two English-speaking Democracies.”⁵⁷

House confided to his diary, “I promise nothing whatsoever. It is merely the spirit of his suggestion[s] that I am accepting.” On one of the most serious sources of contention, the 1916 Naval Program, he admitted, “I particularly reserve and insist upon the completion of our past

⁵⁶ D.H. Miller to E.M. House, Memorandum, 9 April 1919, House Papers, Box 81 (emphasis added); Miller, *Drafting*, 1:422.

⁵⁷ E.M. House to R. Cecil, 9 April 1919, House Papers, Box 25 (emphasis added); *Intimate Papers*, 4:420; Papers of Woodrow Wilson, Box 354; E.M. House to W. Wilson, 9 April 1919, *Wilson Papers*, 57:179-180.

naval program. It is only the future with which we deal.” And though the President considered the reply “a little stiff and that the British would not like it,” he approved of its contents.⁵⁸

The British representative responded in a letter with “hearty agreement. . . . I should hope that in the case of America & England that this obligation [of consultation] will be carried out in cordial cooperation.” A conversation between House and Cecil revealed much more, however.

The Colonel reiterated that

the programme which the United States Government were now working on was one sanctioned some little time ago, and its execution had been postponed by the diversion of all the energies of the United States authorities towards building the quantities of small craft. . . for the anti-submarine campaign. But for that it would have been completed. . . . As it was, contracts had been made for the whole of it, and almost all of it was either begun or on the point of being begun. As all this had been done under authority of Congress he was himself doubtful whether the President could interfere with it.

House also had to repeat the line that the President, nor anyone else in the United States (though, he admitted, Admiral Benson could have been the sole exception), thought “of building a fleet in competition with that of Great Britain.” At the same time, the Colonel worried that “if the matter were stirred in public at all now, national spirit on both sides would be aroused and no accommodation would be possible.”⁵⁹

Lloyd George initially rejected the House letter as unsatisfactory. In reply, House told Cecil that the Monroe Doctrine and naval questions “had nothing to do with each other” and “the United States was not going to bargain, but was going to take the position it believed to be right.” He did not want the letter on the naval program back, “because it represented the policy of the United States; . . . the amendment on the Monroe Doctrine would be presented at tonight’s

⁵⁸ Diaries, 9 April 1919, House Papers, Box 302; *Wilson Papers*, 57:178-179; E.M. House to W. Wilson, 9 April 1919, House Papers, Box 121a.

⁵⁹ R. Cecil to E.M. House, 10 April 1919, House Papers, Box 25; *Intimate Papers*, 4:420-422; Papers of Woodrow Wilson, Box 354.

session, and the British could oppose it as if they saw fit.” The Colonel found Lord Robert Cecil “much impressed” and “very much upset.”⁶⁰

The bluster apparently impressed the Prime Minister as well, and the House-Cecil conversations of 10 April settled the matter. David Miller and Lord Robert Cecil, later that day, fixed placement of the Monroe Doctrine amendment as a separate article in the League Covenant. During a separate meeting with House, Lloyd George’s final acquiescence in the Colonel’s assurances arrived.⁶¹ The British never again raised the issue of American naval construction at the Peace Conference. The “agreement” that the United States *might* modify the pending 1918 Naval Program, and *consider* discussing future naval plans with England periodically, ended the discussion. In reality, the two parties achieved nothing. As Josephus Daniels later described it, “the Battle was a Draw,”

John Bull did not get from Uncle Sam his recognition of Britain’s primacy or agreement to cease the construction of a Navy that would be equal of the greatest in the world, or let up in the construction of a merchant marine. . . . [and] the British held to their national religion – domination of the seven seas.⁶²

Neither promised anything of substance, and the agreement never became a formal arrangement – merely a “maritime truce.”⁶³ Colonel House informed the Secretary of the Navy of the broad outline of what transpired between 8 and 10 April, but did not provide Daniels with any of the relevant documents.⁶⁴ William Benson never heard of the discussions. Lloyd George did not object to a Monroe Doctrine clause in the League of Nations Covenant, but the United States continued to debate fleet expansion. The “Naval Battle of Paris” closed, but questions of naval

⁶⁰ Miller, *Drafting*, 1:425.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 426-427; R. Cecil to E.M. House, 10 April 1919, House Papers, Box 25; *Intimate Papers*, 4:423; Lloyd E. Ambrosius, *Woodrow Wilson and the American Diplomatic Tradition: The Treaty Fight in Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 117.

⁶² Daniels, *Wilson Era*, 2:384.

⁶³ Sprout and Sprout, *Toward a New Order*, 72.

⁶⁴ Diaries, 12 April 1919, House Papers, Box 302.

armaments, and the potential for a post-War competition in capital ship construction, remained wide open.

And disposal of the German fleets remained so as well. Though the agreement of 8-10 April brought the American and British delegations back into alignment as far as destruction of the German warships went, the French desperately desired some portion of the German tonnage, and so the major powers reached no agreement whatsoever.⁶⁵ Even as the Allied and Associated Powers prepared to present the treaty to the German Government in June, the question remained unanswered.⁶⁶

The truce, however, resolved the League question. At the Commission meeting of 10 April, just as House and Cecil concluded their tentative arrangement, President Wilson introduced the proposed Monroe Doctrine Amendment. When Ferdinand Larnaude, one of the French members of the League committee, rose to oppose the article, Lord Robert Cecil spoke as its most ardent non-American supporter. After some debate, and through Anglo-American defense, the French withdrew their objections and affixed the amendment to the Covenant.⁶⁷ Following a concession by Wilson in a memorandum to Canadian Prime Minister Sir Robert Borden – signed along with Lloyd George and Georges Clemenceau – promising Dominion membership on the League of Nations Council, the great powers agreed that work on the Covenant had finished.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Baker, *World Settlement*, 1:388.

⁶⁶ Tillman, *Anglo-American Relations*, 169, 173-174. The issue remained for a later phase of the Peace Conference, which allocated the proceeds of the ultimately scrapped German warship tonnage to the Allied and Associated Powers based upon losses during the War. Great Britain received 70%, which the United States was given 2%, despite American objections, while only France and Italy retained functional battleships. Meetings of the Council of Heads of Delegations, 17, 28 November, 9 December 1919, *Paris Peace Conference*, 9:188, 201-202, 345-347, 537.

⁶⁷ Doc. 19, “Minutes of the Commission on the League of Nations – 14th Meeting,” 10 April 1919, Miller, *Drafting*, 1:439-452, 2:371-374; *Intimate Papers*, 4:423-427.

⁶⁸ Letter in “Notes of a Meeting Held at President Wilson’s House,” 6 May 1919, Miller, *Drafting*, 1:489.

Therefore, at the Plenary Session of the Conference on 28 April, the nations assembled formally and unanimously adopted the Covenant. President Wilson nominated a Briton, Sir Eric Drummond, as Secretary-General of the new organization.⁶⁹ Historians still herald the accomplishment as the “highest achievement of Anglo-American cooperation” – as well it was.⁷⁰ On no other issue did the American and British delegations work together so well, and overcome so many obstacles, in order to achieve this common goal. In spite of the other difficulties of the Conference, Woodrow Wilson saw this as the one aim of which nothing else could interfere. Ironically, it provided the seeds of discord back in the United States.

Underneath the agreement at the League of Nations Commission, American and British policy continued to clash. Scholars have argued that “on no issue at the Peace Conference did . . . policies conflict more directly” than on the matter of reparations. Thomas Lamont, the J.P. Morgan partner and representative of the Treasury on the American peace delegation, considered the subject of reparations as having “caused more trouble, contention, hard feeling, and delay at the Paris Peace Conference than any other point of the Treaty.”⁷¹

American plans demanded compliance with the pre-Armistice Agreement, which assessed against Germany a reasonable, fixed sum, for defined damages. The United States made minor claims, and largely consolidated reparation demands into relinquished German merchant ships. The British program, however, remained ill-defined due to the conflicting promises made to Colonel House at the pre-Armistice conferences in November 1918 and to the British

⁶⁹ Plenary Session, 28 April 1919, *Paris Peace Conference*, 3:286-315; Doc. 33, “Plenary Session of the Peace Conference,” 28 April 1919, Miller, *Drafting*, 1:493-495, 2:699-704.

⁷⁰ Tillman, *Anglo-American Relations*, 299.

⁷¹ Margaret MacMillan, *Paris, 1919: Six Months that Changed the World* (New York: Random House, 2001), 180; Tillman, *Anglo-American Relations*, 229, 258; Thomas W. Lamont, “Reparations,” in *What Really Happened at Paris: The Story of the Peace Conference, 1918-1919*, eds. Edward Mandell House and Charles Seymour (New York: C. Scribner’s Sons, 1921), 259; Benjamin D. Rhodes, “The Image of Britain in the United States, 1919-1929: A Contentious Relative and Rival,” in *Anglo-American Relations in the 1920s: The Struggle for Supremacy*, ed. B.J.C. McKercher (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1990), 190.

electorate the following December, as well as the principles discussed at the Inter-Allied Conference in London on 2 December, and in the establishment of the Commission on Reparations and Indemnities. As the British leadership, spurred on by its populace, expanded its indemnity claims, the Americans remained loyal to a strict adherence to the limited reparation demands as agreed in November.⁷²

At the Peace Conference, the Plenary Conference of 25 January established a Commission on the Reparation of Damage. On 10 February, the British commissioners submitted a memorandum which asserted that the Allies had “the absolute right to demand the whole cost of the war” from Germany, a position wildly inconsistent with the earlier agreements (which the American memorandum advocated). President Wilson refused to even consider such a scheme, and rejected the British premise. By March, the British dropped the enormous demands.⁷³

When a subcommittee of the Commission debated the idea of demanding a fixed sum from Germany, the British representative, Lord Walter Cunliffe (former Governor of the Bank of England), proposed a figure of \$120 billion. The United States commissioners countered with \$15-25 billion. The British, with French support, insisted that such a minor sum could not work. Lamont and Lord Cunliffe attempted to arrive at a compromise number – between \$30 and \$47 billion. But then, according to Thomas Lamont, the other British commissioner, John Hamilton, Viscount Sumner, “went off the deep end, and refused to compromise at all.”⁷⁴ Thus, when the

⁷² Tillman, *Anglo-American Relations*, 229-232.

⁷³ Plenary Session, 25 January 1919, *Paris Peace Conference*, 3:199-202; Reparation Commission, 10 February, W. Wilson to R. Lansing, 24 February, 1919, Philip Mason Burnett, *Reparation at the Paris Peace Conference from the Standpoint of the American Delegation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1940), 1:613-614, 2:298-307; S.P. Tillman, *Anglo-American Relations*, 235-236.

⁷⁴ Reparation Commission, Second Subcommittee, 21 February 1919, Burnett, *Reparation*, 2:621-624; Tillman, *Anglo-American Relations*, 238; Lamont, “Reparations,” 277

full Commission met again in early March, Cunliffe announced that it remained impossible to agree on a fixed sum as a basis for reparations demands.⁷⁵

In late March, Lord Sumner informed the American financial experts that Britain intended to include military pensions within the cost of civilian damages.⁷⁶ The Prime Minister considered the addition of pensions worthy of insensible, in part, because without the British portion of reparations would be small, though the empire's investments in the course of the course of the war had been great – greater than any other of the Allied Powers. Lloyd George dispatched Jan Smuts to secure Wilson's capitulation in the matter. Through the President's great respect for the South African general and their working relationship in the cause of the League, General Smuts succeeded. On 1 April Wilson indicated he was "very much impressed" with Smuts's arguments. When American financial experts opposed inclusion of pensions as inconsistent with the pre-Armistice Agreement, the President replied, "I don't give a d*mn for logic. I am going to include pensions!"⁷⁷

The reparation debate, however, was never solely about the amount Germany would pay. One of the major inspirations behind the British, and Allied, demands for German money lay in the desperate need for funds to shore up their weakened economies. The Allied nations, Britain and France especially, lost much, economically speaking, in the war, and borrowed extensively in the United States. The proposals of British Treasury representative John Maynard Keynes centered on American acceptance of German reparation bonds in payment for Allied war debts to the United States.⁷⁸ Though the Americans, and Britons, rejected Keynes's ideas (much to his

⁷⁵ Reparation Commission, 8 March 1919, Burnett, *Reparation*, 2:373.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 1:719-725; Baker, *World Settlement*, 2:383.

⁷⁷ Lloyd George, *Memoirs of the Peace*, 1: 491-492, 495-496; Lamont, "Reparations," 272; John Foster Dulles, Memorandum, 1 April 1919, Burnett, *Reparation*, 1:775-776.

⁷⁸ Roberta Allbert Dayer, "Anglo-American Monetary Policy and Rivalry in Europe and the Far East, 1919-1931," in *Anglo-American Relations in the 1920s: The Struggle for Supremacy*, ed. B.J.C. McKercher (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1990), 162.

disaffection), the British delegation, and Lloyd George, adopted the view that unless the United States limited or canceled the Allied war debts, Britain required large reparations from Germany.⁷⁹ American financial experts sought to limit the burden placed upon Germany so as to permit its economic recovery and quicken the opening of its market to United States commerce, while they suspected Britain and the Allies intended the opposite. Thus, as with so many of the post-War questions in Anglo-American relations, personal economic considerations underlay the dispute.

Similar calculations went into the distribution of the German merchant marine. When the United States declared war in April 1917, it seized the vessels it had proposed purchasing in 1914-1915. Britain and the Allies sought to have all such ships redistributed among the victorious powers in proportion to wartime losses – as the French proposed for the German war fleet. The United States, however, insisted that all merchant vessels remain with the nations which had seized them.⁸⁰ At the Spa Conference of 17 March, the Brussels Agreement permitted temporary allocation of German commercial ships, on favorable terms to the United States. In the agreement between Woodrow Wilson and David Lloyd George, the President made it clear that the United States did not intend to release its captured merchant ships, and they constituted the only reparations claim the Americans would make.⁸¹ When the subcommittee in Paris tasked with question could not reach consensus on their ultimate disposition, however, the Allies sided

⁷⁹ Frank Costigliola, *Awkward Dominion: American Political, Economic, and Cultural Relations with Europe, 1919-1933* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1984), 34; Robert E. Bunselmeyer, *The Cost of the War, 1914-1919: British Economic War Aims and the Origins of Reparation* (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1975), 173.

⁸⁰ Second Subcommittee, Reparation Commission, 31 March 1919, Burnett, *Reparation*, 1:112-118.

⁸¹ E.M. House to W. Wilson, No. 2, 7 March 1919, *Wilson Papers*, 55:458-459; *Intimate Papers*, 4:357-368; House Papers, Box 121a; Jeffrey J. Safford, *Wilsonian Maritime Diplomacy, 1913-1921* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1978), 187-188; Tillman, *Anglo-American Relations*, 171-172.

against the Americans and submitted the British-written report which called for all Allied and Associated Powers to relinquish seized enemy merchant vessels for redistribution.⁸²

Lloyd George concluded a special arrangement on shipping with the President on 3 May. They agreed that each of the Allied and Associated Powers would keep all ships captured during the War, and would pay for the excess tonnage over what one would have received in a proportional distribution scheme.⁸³ Further, under the auspices of the Allied Maritime Transport Executive and as a provision of the Brussels Agreement, the Allies released 200,000 tons-worth of German liners – including the famous *Imperator*, one of the largest ships afloat – for repatriation of the American Expeditionary Force.⁸⁴

To further aggravate Anglo-American relations, in the last months of the Peace Conference, the Irish question reemerged – which could have caused nearly as much difficulty as the naval and economic issues. Three American advocates of Irish independence – Edward Dunne, former Mayor of Chicago and Governor of Illinois; Frank Walsh of Missouri, a lawyer and co-chairman of the National War Labor Board in 1918; and Michael Ryan, Philadelphia City Solicitor and President of the United Irish League of America – wrote Edward House, on behalf of the Irish Race Convention of February 1919, that they sought time in Paris, “to obtain, if possible, for the delegate selected by the people of Ireland, a hearing at the Peace Conference.”⁸⁵ The man for whom they sought safe passage and an audience before the British Empire’s delegation was none other than Éamon De Valera of Easter Rising fame and the new provisional President of the recently declared Irish Republic. Walsh, Dunne, and Ryan travelled to Paris in

⁸² Second Subcommittee, Reparation Commission, 5 April 1919, Burnett, *Reparation*, 1:119, 2:730-734. The United States representative’s dissent merely became an attachment to the report.

⁸³ “‘Wilson-Lloyd George Agreement’ concerning German Tonnage,” 8 May 1919, *Paris Peace Conference*, 13:845-848; Burnett, *Reparation*, 1:1124-1126.

⁸⁴ Safford, *Wilsonian Maritime Diplomacy*, 194.

⁸⁵ Frank P. Walsh, E.F. Dunne, Michael J. Ryan to E.M. House, for W. Wilson, 18 April 1919, Wiseman Papers, Box 5.

late April, and House duly requested such of David Lloyd George, on their behalf. The Prime Minister consented “to see [them]... in connection with the Irish problem...” Ireland was too complex a problem for Britain to deal with at the Peace Conference, much less in conjunction with a foreign power’s involvement, but in deference to House and the American delegation, the Prime Minister agreed to meet with the Irish-American delegation

because I thought that it would not only be a good thing for me to hear at first hand the views of the representatives of some millions of American citizens of Irish decent, but that it might also be useful if they could learn from me the difficulties which even those British statesmen who were most sympathetic to Irish self-government had had to encounter when attempting to settle the Irish problem.

Unfortunately, for Walsh, Dunne, and Ryan, Lloyd George found himself “too busy with the Peace Treaty” to meet with them. Instead, the British Government permitted the Irish-American delegation to stop first in Ireland *en route* to Paris.⁸⁶

“To my amazement I now find that these gentlemen, so far from investigating the Irish problem in a spirit of impartiality, announced on arrival in Dublin that they had come there to forward the disruption of the United Kingdom and the establishment of Ireland as an independent Republic.” Walsh, Dunne, and Ryan, immediately insulted British imperial authority and embarrassed the United States mission in Paris for introducing such a high-profile element to the island with implicit American blessing. On 9 May Lloyd George informed House

it is impossible for the British Government to permit inflammatory speeches of this kind to be delivered... [and] I am also sure that you will agree with me that it is now quite impossible for me to see men who have so strangely abused an opportunity for helping to bring about that real reconciliation in Ireland which I so long to see and which I know that you also have so much at heart.⁸⁷

President Wilson fully understood the repercussions. Not only had “the American Committee of Irishmen... made it exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, to render the assistance we were

⁸⁶ D. Lloyd George to E.M. House, 9 May 1919, House Papers, Box 70a.

⁸⁷ D. Lloyd George to E.M. House, 9 May 1919, House Papers, Box 70a.

diligently trying to render,” but their actions “so inflamed English opinion” that “we are utterly at a loss how to act in the matter without involving the government of the United States with the Government of Great Britain in a way which might create an actual breach between the two.”⁸⁸

The Colonel immediately replied to Lloyd George that the intention of the Irish-American committee had not been to see the Prime Minister themselves, but merely “to ascertain whether the British Government would be willing to give the delegates of the so-called Irish Republic safe conduct to Paris.”⁸⁹ Washington proved somewhat less conciliatory. When the American Embassy in London received inquiries as to how the United States could have granted visas to these Irish-American agitators, the State Department replied “responsibility for presence of Irish delegates in Great Britain and Ireland rests entirely with British authorities. . . . Passports were only granted by [the] President after conference with Reading. . . . [and] this action was taken at direction of Lloyd George.” The Senate introduced a resolution on 6 June demanding “the American peace commission at Versailles to endeavor to secure for Edward [*sic*] De Valera. . . a hearing before said peace conference in order that they may present the cause of Ireland,” and the House of Representatives overwhelmingly expressed sympathy for Irish independence.⁹⁰ The Irish question did not, however, add to Anglo-American difficulties at the Peace Conference because of the League accomplishment. The new international organization, Wilson believed, would serve as the forum through which injustices – including the centuries-old British domination of Ireland – might find adjustment.⁹¹

⁸⁸ W. Wilson to J.P. Tumulty, 8 June 1919, *Wilson Papers*, 60:298.

⁸⁹ E.M. House to D. Lloyd George, 9 May 1919, House Papers, Box 70a.

⁹⁰ F.L. Polk to J.W. Davis, 16 May 1919, Frank L. Polk Papers, Ms 656, Box 26, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut; S. Res. 48, 6 June 1919, Congress of the United States, *Congressional Record: Proceedings and Debates of the Congress* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1919), 58, Part 1:728; H.C. Allen, *Great Britain and the United States: A History of Anglo-American Relations, 1783-1952* (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1955), 719.

⁹¹ Tillman, *Anglo-American Relations*, 197.

As late as the 31st of May, the American commissioners discussed “what to do with the Irish-American Delegation’s request for a hearing.” Due to their speeches for Irish independence and against British authority, which had so troubled Lloyd George and his compatriots, the American mission “determined not to see them officially. . . . [only] unofficially and separately.” As to their request that Irish representatives be allowed transport to Paris to advocate self-determination, “we do not feel that we have a right to ask a foreign government to permit its own subjects to come to Paris.”⁹² When the President finally met with Frank Walsh in June, he stated that the Irish-American group had “kicked over the apple cart” and ruined any chance of securing a hearing for De Valera.⁹³ Woodrow Wilson knew that overt interference in a purely British matter would inevitably invite opposition to his own objectives.⁹⁴ Nonetheless, to Joseph Tumulty, the President’s private secretary, he indicated, “there never could be a real comradeship between America and England until this issue is out of the way.” And the refusal to allow De Valera passage to Paris diverted the Irish leader to a new tour of the United States, which Tumulty warned might intensify the problem.⁹⁵

Amongst all the ancillary issues of the Peace Conference, one must not lose sight of the fact that the treaty with Germany remained its central aim. When the draft treaty became public in late May, the major powers found an imperfect document. British Liberals and Labourites, in particular, saw the treaty – so seemingly “divergent from the spirit of Wilsonianism” – as reflecting none of their idealistic aspirations, blamed President Wilson for failing to secure his

⁹² Diaries, 31 May 1919, House Papers, Box 302; *Wilson Papers*, 59:645.

⁹³ Herbert C.F. Bell, *Woodrow Wilson and the People* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, Doran, and Co., 1945), 319.

⁹⁴ Tillman, *Anglo-American Relations*, 197.

⁹⁵ Joseph Patrick Tumulty, *Wilson as I Know Him* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1922), 394-395, 403-404.

Fourteen Points in its provisions, and wholeheartedly abandoned their former standard-bearer.⁹⁶ The British delegates, too, who had painstakingly helped draft it, found themselves dissatisfied, and at the last minute sought to change certain elements.⁹⁷ Wilson, for his part, blamed the Britons for the treaty's failings:

*They ought to have been rational to begin with and then they would not have needed to have funk'd at the end. They ought to have done the rational thing. . . . We did not keep them from putting irrational things in the treaty, we got very serious modifications out of them. If we had written the treaty the way they wanted it, the Germans would have gone home the minute they read it.*⁹⁸

Nonetheless, throughout June, the Council of Four debated modifications to the treaty, some of which became new articles in the treaty.

When the celebrated phase of the Paris Conference concluded on 28 June with the signature of the instruments of peace and the world leaders' departures the following day, its effect on Anglo-American relations could, at best, be judged as mixed. The delegations had cooperated on the foundation of the League of Nations to such a degree that many in both countries anticipated that a new era in trans-Atlantic friendship had dawned. The Conference had not endeared American and British statesmen to each other. Behind the closed doors of the Ritz Hotel, the Crillon, and the Majestic in Paris, their leaders clashed over questions of monumental importance. None had seen true resolution, and all would remain to interfere with the diplomatic relations in the immediate years of peace.

⁹⁶ Akira Iriye, *The Cambridge History of American Foreign Relations: The Globalizing of America, 1913-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 59; C.F. Brand, "Attitude of British Labour toward President Wilson during the Peace Conference," *American Historical Review* 42, No. 2 (January 1937): 251-252.

⁹⁷ Tillman, *Anglo-American Relations*, 344-346.

⁹⁸ Meeting of American Delegates, 3 June 1919, *Paris Peace Conference*, 11:222 (emphasis added).

CHAPTER 5

THE ASSOCIATION SOURS

“One of the most hopeful signs for the Anglo-American *entente* of the future has been the close co-operation of the British and American delegates to the [Paris] Congress. They are working in utmost harmony, knowing, as every British and American statesman knows, that the future peace and prosperity of the world lies, not on the knees of the gods, but in the perfection and sincerity of Anglo-American understanding in the days to come.” James Davenport Whelpley, April 1919, *Fortnightly Review*.

The public façade of harmony between the United States and Great Britain at the Paris Peace Conference inspired many such outpourings of hope for a new future based on the unity of the “Anglo-Saxon” races. Together, Americans and Britons would reconstruct the world torn apart by four years of war. These aspirations either overlooked or ignored the rapid reestablishment of, not a friendly, but heated and at times underhanded contest for economic hegemony between the two “brotherly” nations. As one historian described the immediate post-War retrenchment, “once the ‘Hun’ was vanquished, America’s wartime mood of comradeship with Britain soon faded and was replaced by a growing disillusionment about moral crusades and foreign entanglements.”¹

Across the globe, the American fears – ignited by the de Bunsen Mission to South America – were confirmed as the British Government and English firms utilized their unique positions as beneficiaries of American credit and monopolizers of the international cable system to secure business deals United States interests believed within their grasp. With the creation of the League of Nations, elements of the American population perceived a new threat to their international position. Voiced through the Senate, suspicion of the British Empire definitively

¹ Benjamin D. Rhodes, “The Image of Britain in the United States, 1919-1929: A Contentious Relative and Rival,” in *Anglo-American Relations in the 1920s: The Struggle for Supremacy*, ed. B.J.C. McKercher (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1990), 187.

reemerged, and the League debate in particular became the locus of all the formerly sequestered damnation of “perfidious Albion,” held at bay during the War.

By the summer of 1919, relations had declined to such a degree that the British Government dispatched one of its most veteran statesmen, Viscount Edward Grey of Fallodon, to communicate Britain’s goodwill to the United States Government and negotiate a path toward reconciliation. His failed mission displayed how far into disrepair Anglo-American diplomatic relationship had fallen in so short a time, and witnessed a restart of the naval contest that only lay dormant as both Americans and Britons sought to check it through the auspices of the League.

The impetus behind the growing apprehension arose from many quarters. The future architect of the “Special Relationship” himself, Winston Churchill, remarked that the “complete alteration of our financial position [in relation] to America” caused by the War, altered Anglo-American perceptions.² Commercial considerations reclaimed the forefront in the Anglo-American relationship even as world leaders assembled in France. The new American Ambassador in London, John Davis, confided to his official diary, “all of us...[apprehend] growing competition for trade between the U.S. and Gt. Britain.”³ The United States emerged from the First World War as the one true victorious power. Its new commercial position, based upon its economic explosion, expansion in production capacity, increased global exports, and enhanced financial footing, elevated America’s standing (to the relative decline in Britain’s). The American economy, between 1913 and 1919, in terms of the United States’ Gross National Product, nearly doubled. American firms exported \$7.92 billion-worth of merchandise in 1919,

² War Cabinet Conclusions, 534(1), 19 February 1919, Cab. 23/9, in Robert Self, “Perception and Posture in Anglo-American Relations: The War Debt Controversy in the ‘Official Mind,’ 1919-1940,” *International History Review* 29, No. 2 (June 2007): 307.

³ Diaries, 30 January 1919, John W. Davis Papers, Ms 170, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut, Box 13.

versus \$2.47 billion in 1913.⁴ England's production capabilities, strained in the War, could not keep up. In its most important industries – ship construction, coal, steel – production and exports declined significantly during the same period, with the exception of steel, which increased only slightly.⁵

The War transformed the United States from a debtor into a creditor nation – especially for the Entente Governments – while Britain's role as global investor declined. In 1914, American debts to foreign creditors amounted to an estimated \$2-2.5 billion. By the official end of the European war in 1921, the Allied Governments owed Americans over \$10 billion in war-debts, and Britain held the largest share at \$4.227 billion.⁶ England's role as an international source of capital fell further as it liquidated 15% of international assets between 1914 and 1919 due to the exigencies of war.⁷ With huge debts owed to the United States, and an outdated and war-worn economic infrastructure, Britain feared it could be outclassed by American competition. Britain retained the ability to compete, however. It possessed an extensive overseas empire, and access to global markets. Though England owed billions in war debts to the United States, its Dominions, Colonies, and war-time allies owed far more; therefore the British remained a net creditor as well.⁸ Fierce competition, out of such conditions, became inevitable, and looked to be the beginning of the new norm in Anglo-American relations.

⁴ Frank C. Costigliola, "Anglo-American Financial Rivalry in the 1920s," *Journal of Economic History* 37, No. 4 (December 1977): 914; United States Bureau of the Census, *The Statistical History of the United States: From Colonial Times to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1976), 224, 884.

⁵ Benjamin H. Williams, *Economic Foreign Policy of the United States* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1929), 19; Herbert Feis, "The Industrial Situation in Great Britain: From the Armistice to the Beginning of 1921," *American Economic Review* 11, No. 2 (June 1921): 252-258.

⁶ Self, "War Debt in the Official Mind," 285; Costigliola, "Financial Rivalry," 914.

⁷ Kathleen Burk, "The House of Morgan in Financial Diplomacy, 1920-1930," in *Anglo-American Relations in the 1920s: The Struggle for Supremacy*, ed. B.J.C. McKercher (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1990), 126.

⁸ Frank Costigliola, *Awkward Dominion: American Political, Economic, and Cultural Relations with Europe, 1919-1933* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1984), 34; Niall Ferguson, *The Pity of War* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 328.

The British used their unique position as near-monopolists of international communications to counter. In January 1919, the Under-secretary of State, Frank Polk, learned of “rumors in the business world” (much like those heard out of South America), and asked the United States Ambassador to England to investigate allegations “that the British Government are holding up letters and telegrams addressed to American business houses, not only from northern neutrals but, but also Belgium. . . . [as] it is freely charged that the British mercantile houses are receiving their cables and mail.” Personally, Polk doubted the allegations.⁹ In confirmation of the gossip, American bankers in Belgium, negotiating a loan with the government in Brussels, discovered that the British Government had indeed learned of the discussions through its control of Atlantic and former German cables. They offered \$45 million to the Belgians to aid that country in reconstruction. The proposed loan, of course, went toward purchase orders in the United Kingdom. When the Anglo-Belgian arrangement concluded, the Belgian Government ended its negotiations with the New York bankers. Not only had the Britons swept in and captured contracts Americans sought, but did so with the use of United States Government loans – out of the \$2.6 billion in government-to-government aid to Allied nations between 1918 and 1920.¹⁰

Not only did England appear willing to abuse American loan money, but increasingly closed the empire to American business. Unlike the Paris economic resolutions of 1916, the British protectionist movement in favor of imperial preference remained after the War. Lloyd George’s Coalition pledged continued adherence to the principle of protection in the “Khaki”

⁹ Frank Lyon Polk to John W. Davis, 2 January 1919, Polk Papers, Box 4.

¹⁰ Carl P. Parrini, *Heir to Empire: United States Economic Diplomacy, 1916-1923* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1969), 49-50; Akira Iriye, *The Cambridge History of American Foreign Relations: The Globalizing of America, 1913-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 65.

Election of December 1918.¹¹ The British instituted an injunction against importation of certain goods – such as shoes and certain auto parts – to guard British firms against outside competition, instituted as a war measure, and “strong sentiment” urged retention.¹² When import restriction came up for reconsideration, the American Commercial Attaché informed Ambassador Davis that such would continue “for the sole purpose of protecting the home market against American invasion,” and he suggested “no little irritation is felt by American business men, especially those like the various shoe companies who have established their chain of shops here and are not permitted to fill their stocks.”¹³ Davis recorded, “I can hardly conceive of any means of accomplishing [protection to British manufacturers]...which would be surer to provoke international ill-feeling and lead to reprisals.”¹⁴

“Our Senators blew up over the British embargo,” Polk reported to the Ambassador in London on 10 February. John Weeks, a Republican from Massachusetts, introduced a resolution to the Senate on 4 February, noting that “this [prohibition on the importation of additional American products by] the British Government is in direct conflict with point No. 3 [respecting economic barriers] of the fourteen points of peace,” and directed the Secretary of State to “inform the Senate, if not incompatible with the public interest, what steps. . . have been taken by the Department of State to request the British Government to modify or suspend such prohibition.”¹⁵ In discussion of the resolution, Democrat James Reed of Missouri stated,

Great Britain has no sooner extricated herself from the jaws of the German war monster than she proceeds selfishly to put up the bars of her trade against us. . . . I want the resolution passed, but I do not want to see its passage regarded as a mere formality.

¹¹ Robert E. Bunselmeyer, *The Cost of the War, 1914-1919: British Economic War Aims and the Origins of Reparation* (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1975), 49.

¹² Diaries, 30 January 1919, J.W. Davis Papers, Box 13.

¹³ 3 February 1919, *ibid.*

¹⁴ Diaries, 10 February 1919, J.W. Davis Papers, Box 13.

¹⁵ F.L. Polk to J.W. Davis, 10 February, F.L. Polk Papers, Box 4; J.W. Davis Papers, Box 10; S. Res. 438, 4 February 1919, Congress of the United States, *Congressional Record: Proceedings and Debates of the Congress* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1919), 57, Part 3: 2665.

He further contrasted the pending embargo with the idealistic aspirations, borne out of the War, emanating from Paris, of an Anglo-American *entente* and a league of nations to preserve the future peace:

We have recently had a great deal of talk about the brotherhood of man. . . . It is time we began to take a sane view of life. . . . I hope this embargo England has just laid against us will be a warning to those of you who have been walking with your heads in the stars, those of you who have been singing psalms to universal goodness. . . [that] before we can get our troops back to our shore, Great Britain, that you went yonder to save, is proceeding to gain every advantage she can.

Members of the Wilson Administration echoed the same concerns. Secretary Daniels wrote the President, “it is evident that commercial interest is underlying every factor under consideration by the various nations, except ourselves. This is particularly true in the case of Great Britain.”¹⁶

Further factual indications existed that Britain sought to “gain every advantage” across the world – especially in the field of petroleum. The War proved the supreme industrial and military importance of oil to the existence of great nations.¹⁷ After the War, Britain appeared ready to grasp an enormous share of international reserves, by any means necessary. In an incident dating back to September 1918, one Ismail al-Housseini, a representative in Jerusalem of the Standard Oil Company of New York, reported he “was asked by an officer belonging to the staff of the Occupied Enemy Territories Administration to open to him [Standard Oil] offices in order to see. . . plans which are connected with. . . claims in Palestine.” Under orders of General Arthur Money, British officers confiscated from al-Housseini maps of surveyed oil lands in the region. Another Standard Oil employee warned the State Department, “there is one thing that I can very plainly say, that is, that by every means possible [the] British will prevent any

¹⁶ 5 February 1919, *Congressional Record*, 57, Part 3:2730, 2733; Josephus Daniels to Woodrow Wilson, 28 April 1919, Josephus Daniels Papers, Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Washington, D.C., Roll 42.

¹⁷ John A. DeNovo, *American Interests and Policies in the Middle East, 1900-1939* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1963), 167; *idem*, “The Movement for an Aggressive American Oil Policy Abroad, 1918-1920,” *American Historical Review* 61, No. 4 (July 1956): 855-858; Williams, *Economic Foreign Policy*, 57-58.

American Petroleum Company from operating or producing in any territory which they may retain after the war.”¹⁸ The Department requested its Embassy in Britain “inquire the reason for which [the action] was taken.”¹⁹ The Foreign Office made no reply until June. George Nathaniel, the Earl Curzon of Kedleston, Acting Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, claimed that

the offices of the Standard Oil Company in Jerusalem were only entered after the proper application had been made to the Spanish Consul, who was at the time representing American interests. . . . [and he] stated that. . . Ismael L. Husseini and Suleiman Bey Nassif were not registered as holders of American rights. These gentlemen raised no objection to the investigation at the time.²⁰

The al-Housseini affair, initially, appeared but a minor, isolated incident.

The summer proved such behavior as indicative of official policy. Three New York Standard geologists traveled to the Levant to resume operations interrupted by the Ottoman war with the Allies, and the local British military authorities prohibited them from investigating any claims they deemed un-worked as of before the War. Under this description, British officials counted seven oil concessions as “not yet begun” because Standard had not initiated drilling. Further, the geologists in Jerusalem believed British telegraphers stole privileged information by virtue of their control of the cable offices.²¹ Lord Curzon made the policy official, and finally refused permission for Standard Oil of New York to work any of the sixty-four claims in

¹⁸ H.C. Gole, Standard Oil Company of New York, to F.L. Polk, 18 March 1919, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1919* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1934), 2:250 (hereafter cited as *Foreign Relations, 1919*); United States Department of State, Decimal Files, General Records of the Department of State, 1756-1999, Record Group 59, National Archives II, College Park, Maryland, No. 467 St 25/32 (hereafter cited as “SD”).

¹⁹ William Phillips, for F.L. Polk, to J.W. Davis, No. 120, 18 March 1919, *Foreign Relations, 1919*, 2:252; SD 467.11 St 25/32.

²⁰ George Nathaniel Curzon to J. Butler Wright, American *Chargé d’Affaires*, 3 June 1919, in J.B. Wright to F.L. Polk, No. 843, 5 June 1919, *Foreign Relations, 1919*, 2:253-254; SD 467.11 St 25/33.

²¹ L.I. Thomas to Standard Oil Company, New York, 16 August, in L.I. Thomas to F.L. Polk, 18 September 1919, SD 467.11 St 25/41; DeNovo, *American Interests in the Middle East*, 171.

Palestine. Consul-General Otis Glazebrook in Jerusalem asserted that British action proved, “they wish to control all economic value in this district.”²²

The entire concept of mandates complicated the issue. The official form of the British mandate over Palestine, or any other oil-rich regions, had yet to reach settlement in the spring of 1919. The Paris Congress deferred formulation of the mandate system to after the creation of the League of Nations and the treaty with Germany. Edward House went to London immediately after the conclusion of the Peace Conference on 28 June, and began work with the Commission on Mandates on 8 July. Not until August did the Commission develop the plan for Class A Mandates, under which mandatory powers would govern the former Ottoman territories.²³ Though conclusion of the Turkish peace treaty remained one year distant, Britain already knew what lands it would claim.

With the territories in hand, and the documents legitimizing control over them, Britain moved to incorporate the new mandates into the empire. At the Paris Peace Conference, Americans believed these mandates would be governed, economically-speaking, by the “open door.” That August, however, the House of Commons inserted a provision in a finance bill for institution of imperial preference in the mandated territories. During the League debate one Senator would comment,

In the imperial preference tariff bill. . . there is to be thrown around all the possessions of the British Empire what is in effect a protective tariff. Of course, this is well within their right. . . . [But] in this bill the territories for which the British Empire receives a mandate from the league. . . are included as a part of the British possessions for the purposes of this preferential tariff. . . . It ought to serve as a warning that the day of rivalry, of business

²² E.L. Woodward, Rohan Butler, and J.P.T. Bury, eds., *Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-1939*, 15 vols. First Series (London: H.M. Stationary Office, 1946-), 4:352, 366, 382, 406 (hereafter cited as *British Documents, 1919*); Otis Glazebrook to Robert Lansing, 1 October 1919, *Foreign Relations, 1919*, 2:257; SD 467.11 St 25/38.

²³ Paul C. Helmreich, *From Paris to Sèvres: The Partition of the Ottoman Empire at the Peace Conference of 1919-1920* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1974), 29-30; Diaries, 14 July 1919, Edward Mandell House Papers, Ms 466, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut, Box 303; J.W. Davis, for E.M. House, to W. Wilson and R. Lansing, No. 2751, 9 August 1919, Arthur S. Link, ed., *Papers of Woodrow Wilson* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966-1994), 62:243-247 (hereafter cited as *Wilson Papers*).

competition, between these countries is by no means at an end. . . . Great Britain will do as she has always done.²⁴

Leo Amery of the British Foreign Office, however, believed no inconsistencies existed in the policy. “It would hardly be compatible with the spirit of the mandate if, in any respect, we treated the mandated territories less well than those which were under our original sovereignty.”²⁵

This trend emerged as a movement in the United States pushed for greater investment in foreign oil resources. This aspiration – forwarded chiefly by Franklin Lane, Secretary of the Interior; Mark Requa, one of the most influential consultants at the Bureau of Mines; Van Manning, Director of the Bureau; and George Otis Smith, Director of the Geological Survey – gained added urgency after the First World War because, as they believed, the United States had expended much of its petroleum resources in the service of Allied victory. For decades, the American oil industry accounted for sixty to seventy percent of global production. Many in the industry and the government began to worry that domestic sources might soon run out. As Americans feared their ability to dominate the market declined, Britain appeared poised to grasp it. British interests gained a significant interest in the Royal Dutch-Shell Company, which rivaled the Standard Oil companies across the world. The American Government assumed Britain had acquired control of Lord Cowdray’s operations in Mexico. The British Government owned the controlling shares of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, which in turn controlled the Turkish Petroleum Company, sought to exploit the petroleum resources of Mesopotamia and other parts of the former Ottoman Empire. Whereas British firms represented just over 4% of world oil production by the end of the World War, in 1919 the British Empire suddenly possessed over

²⁴ William Borah, 22 October 1919, Congress of the United States, *Congressional Record: Proceedings and Debates of the Congress* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1919), 58, Part 7:7323.

²⁵ L. Amery to G.L. Beer, 23 July, in Whitney Shepardson to J.W. Davis, 8 August 1919, J.W. Davis Papers, Box 9.

half of the estimated reserves of the world.²⁶ In two separate memoranda, the Office of the Foreign Trade Adviser reported, “[The British] are leaving no stone unturned to gain control of all oil properties on the surface of the earth,” and warned that the English would resort to whatever means necessary to acquire these resources, even to “buy or steal outside and inside the United States.”²⁷

The situation inspired congressional debate in the summer of 1919. On 28 July, Miles Poindexter of Washington introduced a resolution to the Senate requesting

the Federal Trade Commission...to investigate and report...[upon] combinations in restraint of trade, or unfair competition if the same exists...relative to the cost, market price, production, distribution, and sale to the Government or to private consumers of fuel oil, gasoline, kerosene, or other petroleum products.

During discussion, James Phelan of California warned that “English interests were acquiring California properties.” Worse,

the attractive oil-producing regions of the world have been closed to the entry of Americans. All of these areas, with the exception of Mexico and parts of Central and South America lie within British and French possessions or spheres of influence. British and Dutch nationals control practically all the world’s petroleum industry that is not controlled by our companies. Great Britain and British nationals are alive to the fact that production...will be the dominating factor from now on and it is their plan to secure concessions...or other rights.

The result, Phelan warned, “unless Americans are encouraged to go abroad, future oil production will all be in the hands of British nationals within the next few years.” In agreement, Reed Smoot noted, “there is no question but that England has the start of all other countries.”²⁸

²⁶ DeNovo, “An Aggressive American Oil Policy Abroad,” 862-865; 8 April 1919, E. David Cronon, ed., *The Cabinet Diaries of Josephus Daniels, 1913-1921* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1963), 385 (hereafter cited as *Cabinet Diaries*); Edward Mead Earle, “The Turkish Petroleum Company – A Study in Oleaginous Diplomacy,” *Political Science Quarterly* 39, No. 2 (June 1924); 226-271.

²⁷ Office of the Foreign Trade Adviser to William Phillips, 3 July, Arthur C. Millspaugh, Foreign Trade Office, to Lay, Memorandum, 9 September 1919, SD File 467.11 St 25/34, 36.

²⁸ S. Res. 138, 28 July, James Phelan, 29 July, Reed Smoot, 22 August 1919, *Congressional Record*, 58, Part 3:3303-3304, 4162.

When the Senate began consideration of the law that became the Mineral Leasing Act in 1920 – which allowed for restrictions against non-American exploration of resources in the United States – Britain’s increasing domination and control of foreign oil lands figured heavily. Smoot commented on 22 August, “if all the reports be true, it may be but a very few years until most of the production in this country is controlled by foreigners. . . . England now controls the wonderful oil fields of Persia, of Roumania, and of other countries.” The idea that restrictions against foreign developers might inspire reprisal, Phelan countered, “if England has initiated this policy and controls the oil of the world to a very great extent, should we fear England as a matter of retaliation? Not at all. She has instigated it.” Colorado Democrat Charles Thomas, tepidly agreed, “so far as Great Britain’s restriction is concerned, it may or may not justify us in adopting similar legislation.”²⁹

Thus, instructed by the State Department, John Davis spoke to Lord Curzon in London about the growing appearance of preferential practices in Palestine and Mesopotamia on 14 October. The American Ambassador said “there was a growing feeling, particularly among American oil interests, that there was some design to discriminate against them.” Davis specifically referenced the detention of the geologists in Jerusalem, as well as other instances that came to mind. Curzon replied that “he knew nothing of the. . . instances which I had mentioned, except that he insisted that until the question of mandates was settled no representatives, either of British or Foreign concerns, should be permitted to circulate through the occupied territory.”³⁰

However, further reports of discrimination arose out of Mesopotamia. Standard Oil of New York sent two of its surveyors to Baghdad merely “to investigate petroleum conditions in

²⁹ 22 August 1919, *Congressional Record*, 58, Part 3:4162-4163.

³⁰ “Memorandum of a conversation with Lord Curzon at his house. . . October 14th,” in J.W. Davis to F.L. Polk, 21 October 1919, Polk Papers, Box 4.

Mesopotamia.” According to E.J. Sheffield, one of the members of the expedition, he was “forbidden to operate by British authorities.” At the same time, Sheffield reported, “a geologist, probably employed by the Shell group, has been working in Mesopotamia for four months past” – despite Curzon’s supposed proscription against oil exploration of any kind, by anyone. Oscar Heizer, the American Consul-General in Baghdad, confirmed Sheffield’s claims for Robert Lansing in November.³¹

The United States Government initiated the first in what became a long series of protests in late October. In the matter of the Standard Oil geologists at Jerusalem, the State Department instructed Ambassador Davis

to endeavor to secure the removal of the restrictions on the[ir] movements. . . . We feel on the information here that there has been interference, serious from the point of view of financial costs and future precedent. . . . [and] we are of the opinion that the British justification for the interference with the exercise of these rights furnish[es] insufficient excuse.³²

As to the prohibition against Sheffield in Mesopotamia, “please intimate to [the] British Government that [this] Department expects that representatives of private American concerns will be allowed equal privileges with those of [the] British. . . in Mesopotamia as well as Palestine.”³³

The oil dispute jaded American views of merchant marine interests as well. Standard Oil of New Jersey claimed title to nine oil tankers held in European ports under its German subsidiary, Deutsch Amerikanische Petroleum Gesellschaft. The Allied nations insisted that New Jersey Standard no longer owned these ships because they had been seized as enemy property

³¹ R. Lansing to J.W. Davis, Telegram No. 6138, 30 October 1919, *Foreign Relations, 1919*, 2:259-260; Oscar Heizer to R. Lansing, 19 November 1919, SD 467.11 St 25/51; William Stivers, *Supremacy and Oil: Iraq, Turkey, and the Anglo-American World Order, 1918-1930* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1982), 111-112; DeNovo, *American Interests in the Middle East*, 173.

³² W. Phillips to J.W. Davis, Telegram No. 6120, 24 October 1919, *Foreign Relations, 1919*, 2:258; SD 467.11 St 25/41a.

³³ R. Lansing to J.W. Davis, Telegram No. 6138, 30 October 1919, *Foreign Relations, 1919*, 2:259-260; SD 467.11 St 25/45a.

during the War; as such, the Reparation Commission would distribute the vessels to the Allied and Associated Powers based on wartime losses. In September, the Supreme Economic Council, without American consultation, ordered the disputed tankers removed to Britain's Firth of Forth. To members of the Wilson Administration and the Shipping Board, the move appeared as one of many to further Britain's goal to gain the upper hand over America's strongest petroleum corporations.³⁴

Robert Lansing informed the President, "the retention of the *Imperator* group of ships by the Shipping Board [is] in retaliation for alleged arbitrary action by Great Britain."³⁵ In an effort to pressure the Allies for release of the Standard-DAPG tankers, the Shipping Board – then under the chairmanship of former Chicago judge and counsel for the Emergency Fleet Corporation, John Payne – decided to withhold transfer of the eight passenger liners allocated to the United States by the Allied Maritime Transport Executive under Wilson-Lloyd George agreement of May 1919. Lansing noted, "Great Britain has been caused great inconvenience and expense," because, ahead of the transfer, "crews for all these boats were sent over here on the basis of the Shipping Board's [original] promise for redelivery of August 11." The Administration, however, did not back the Shipping Board's actions. The Secretary of State never supported Payne's move and sought compromise with English authorities in the *Imperator* matter. Under-secretary of State Polk, representing the United States at the Supreme War Council in Paris until the end of the year, wrote the American Ambassador in London, "I have just fought an unsuccessful fight for the Standard Oil Company, in connection with those d*mn tankers. If the Government is going to have me represent the Standard Oil, I think they should at least allow me to charge the

³⁴ B.W. Palmer to A.C. Kirk, 5 June, Norman Armour to F.L. Polk, 21 September 1919, SD 862.85/78, 102; Ellis Loring Dresel to F.L. Polk, 23 September 1919, Polk Papers, Box 5; Jeffrey J. Safford, *Wilsonian Maritime Diplomacy, 1913-1921* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1978), 205-206.

³⁵ R. Lansing to W. Wilson, 5 November, in Joseph P. Tumulty to W. Wilson, 11 November 1919, *Wilson Papers*, 64:8.

usual legal rate of corporation lawyers.”³⁶ The *Imperator* controversy, however, provided yet another irritant in an already aggravated relationship.

Other reports of interactions between Americans and Britons added to the general impression that the Anglo-American friendship had gone stale. On 28 June, the HMS *Southampton*, under command of Rear Admiral Sir Allen Hunt, docked at Montevideo. On the occasion of his arrival, the local English Club put on a dinner in the Admiral’s honor, and both Britons and Americans in resident at the Uruguayan received invitation. The United States Consul-General, David Byers, “toast[ed] to the British Navy. . . which the British subjects present considered warmly eulogistic. . .” Admiral Hunt followed, and “delivered a rather lengthy address in which he made no comment whatever upon the American Navy or the part played by the United States in the war.” The Consul wanted to believe the omission as one of “oversight; but I cannot resist the feeling that the Admiral’s failure to give credit to the American Navy was intentionally offensive. . . . My impression that Admiral Hunt is distinctly unfriendly toward the United States is shared by the only other American here who has to my knowledge had an opportunity to form an opinion.” Byers considered it indicative of “the unfriendly feeling existing between American and British colonies in certain Latin American countries,” and “it is desirable that the [State] Department be informed as to the attitude towards the United States of the official representatives of other countries, especially where, as in the present case, their activities cannot be expected to further the interests of harmony.”³⁷ Two months later, the State Department reported the incident to the Navy, and requested that Josephus Daniels station an

³⁶ R. Lansing, Memorandum, “*Imperator* Shipping Controversy,” in J.P. Tumulty to W. Wilson, 11 November 1919, *Wilson Papers*, 64:9; F.L. Polk to J.W. Davis, 15 November 1919, J.W. Davis Papers, Box 10; Polk Papers, Box 4.

³⁷ David J.B. Byers to R. Lansing, No. 183, “Relations between Americans and British: visit to Montevideo of Rear Admiral Hunt,” 19 July 1919, SD 711.41/29.n

American vessel at Montevideo “where it can neutralize the activities of Rear Admiral Hunt and promote United States prestige.”³⁸

The commercial contest added fuel to the fiery debates over the Treaty of Versailles and the League of Nations on the floor of the United States Senate, which provided a grand stage for the venting of retrenchment against Britain, and mirrored the course of international affairs. England, of course, did not constitute the sole issue in the League question. Article X on the new international organization’s relation to sovereignty and defense of the *status quo*, American rights in the League, concerns over other nations’ interference in United States domestic issues, and other matters at different times occupied the central thoughts of those who discussed the League Covenant. But within these debates, Senators voiced suspicions of foul English intentions. The League itself received a violent thrashing; but of all parties, the British Empire fell victim surprisingly often as well.

A fair amount of anti-League agitation originated with the “hyphenated” elements of the American population – Irish-Americans especially, already pr-disposed against Britain. In deference to the rising problem of Irish independence, the United States Senate passed a resolution on 6 June, “that. . . earnestly requests the American peace commission at Versailles to endeavor to secure for Edward [*sic*] De Valera, Arthur Griffiths, and Count George Plunkett a hearing before said peace conference in order that they may present the cause of Ireland.” The House of Representatives passed its own resolution of sympathy with Irish independence by an overwhelming majority.³⁹ When Éamon de Valera, Ireland’s provisional President, could not secure a position at the Paris Peace Conference, he went to the United States at the end of June.

³⁸ Alvey A. Adey to J. Daniels, 26 September 1919, SD 711.41/29b. Daniels responded, “at present there is no vessel available for sending to South American waters,” but considered that such might be done in the future. J. Daniels to R. Lansing, 15 October 1919, SD 711.41/30.

³⁹ S. Res. 48, 6 June 1919, *Congressional Record*, 58, Part 1:728; H.C. Allen, *Great Britain and the United States, 1783-1852* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, Inc., 1955), 719.

Governors, state legislatures, and a myriad of American private and public figures officially welcomed the Irish nationalist. Across the eastern seaboard, de Valera promoted a bond drive for his Dáil Government, which had declared independence from Britain in late-1918. His tour received wide coverage throughout the country, and Ireland's "First Minister" became something of a celebrity in the United States.⁴⁰

The Irish-American population constituted, by far, the most influential ethnic group in the United States. With a total population just under 60 million (over the age of 21, as counted in the 1920 census), over 1.13 million Americans had been born in Ireland, and 3.12 million native-born citizens were born to Irish parents. This constituted a strong voting bloc. In May 1919, when the Peace Conference published the draft treaty, the Irish in America noted the lack of any recognition for Irish self-government. They, like their brothers in Ireland, focused their anger at the President and his League when they returned to the United States. To many Irish-Americans, Britain had co-opted Wilson's idealism to thwart Irish national ambitions. Anti-League activists in the Senate welcomed the support of these Irish-Americans in the treaty fight, and coordinated their propaganda campaigns.⁴¹

The British saw danger in Irish activities, and apparent Senate complicity. Lord Reading, the British Ambassador until May 1919, spoke directly to Frank Polk, the Acting Secretary of State in Lansing's absence, about the developing Republican-Irish-American alliance. In particular, the Ambassador feared that many senators, previously on friendly terms and sympathetic

⁴⁰ F.M. Carroll, *American Opinion and the Irish Question, 1910-1923: A Study in Opinion and Policy* (Dublin: Gill and MacMillan, 1978), 149-154; Alan J. Ward, *Ireland and Anglo-American Relations, 1899-1921* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1969), 214-218.

⁴¹ Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics*, 598, 600; Joseph P. O'Grady, "The Irish," in *The Immigrants' Influence on Wilson's Peace Policies*, ed. Joseph P. O'Grady (University of Kentucky Press, 1967), 56-59, 76; Lloyd E. Ambrosius, *Woodrow Wilson and the American Diplomatic Tradition: The Treaty Fight in Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 140; Carroll, *American Opinion and the Irish Question*, 142-143.

to the United Kingdom, had begun to turn against Great Britain on account of this new association and in opposition to the League.⁴²

By no means did the Irish create the increasingly evident antipathy. For most members of the opposition – the “Irreconcilables” – an international organization like the League of Nations appeared incompatible with United States sovereignty. Northeastern, Republican Senators like Frank Brandegee of Connecticut, Bert Fernald of Maine, Joseph France of Maryland, George Moses of New Hampshire, and Philander Knox of Pennsylvania, harkened back to George Washington’s Farewell Address, warning against “entangling alliances,” and rallied around the Monroe Doctrine, or a corollary to it, as an injunction against not only European intervention in the affairs of the Western Hemisphere, but United States involvement in European politics.⁴³ Another source of anti-League sentiment arose from the reemergence of preexistent anti-British feeling itself, in the United States and the Senate. The Republican Party had long been considered “pro-British,” but a large faction within the party – the westerners, western progressives, and some populists⁴⁴ – not only “twisted the lion’s tail” come election time, but suspected England of undue interference in the American and world economy.⁴⁵ William Borah of Idaho typified the Republican, western, populist wing. In the late 1890s, he and other “Silver” Republicans out west abandoned the regular party organization as the free-silver movement incorporated an aspect of “Anglophobia” because of Britain’s advocacy of the gold standard. When Borah entered the Senate, he regarded Great Britain as an especially dangerous nation because of its economic penetration of the United States, and because “too many Americans

⁴² F.L. Polk to R. Lansing, 16 April, F.L. Polk to R. Lansing 7 May 1919, Polk Papers, Box 9.

⁴³ Ralph A. Stone, *The Irreconcilables: The Fight Against the League of Nations* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1970), 1, 21, 183-188.

⁴⁴ Miles Poindexter of Washington, John Kendrick of Wyoming, Albert Fall of New Mexico, Hiram Johnson of California, and Robert La Follette and Irvine Lenroot of Wisconsin, all represented different aspects in this spectrum.

⁴⁵ Selig Adler, *The Isolationist Impulse: Its Twentieth-Century Reaction* (London: Abelard-Schuman, Limited, 1957), 42-44.

assumed commonality of interests with the British, which in his opinion did not exist.” This lack of commonality he saw confirmed during the War when Britain, like Germany, violated American neutral rights.⁴⁶

Senator Borah became the greatest spokesman of these opponents of the League. He declared the Covenant “the greatest triumph for English diplomacy in three centuries of English diplomatic life.” Borah asked, rhetorically, “What has England given up in his league. . . ? What has she surrendered. . . . Did she surrender the freedom of the seas. . . . Has she surrendered her claim for the largest navy?” Based on his reading of the cables out of Paris, the reason Great Britain relinquished none of its power, he and his fellow anti-League Senators regarded the League document as “lifted almost bodily [the Covenant]. . . from the constitution proposed in January by General Smuts [of South Africa].”⁴⁷

Resistance to the establishment of a League existed within the Democrat Party ranks as well. Missouri’s James Reed became one of the most implacable foes of the organization. Like the Republican opponents, he feared abrogation of the Monroe Doctrine, surrender of American sovereignty, and inevitable involvement in world conflicts. Like his Republican colleagues, Reed worried about undue British power in the international association. “The British Empire will, in all probability, constitute the controlling influence of the league.”⁴⁸

The sources of Britain’s “controlling influence” flowed from several avenues, but the so-called “six votes” question became most enduring line of attack against the British Empire and the League. After President Wilson presented his proposed league plan to the Senate during his

⁴⁶ Robert James Maddox, *William E. Borah and American Foreign Policy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1969), xv-xviii, 11-22; Allen, *Britain and the United States*, 524; Thomas Andrew Bailey, *A Diplomatic History of the American People* (New York: Appleton, Century, Crofts, 1964), 477.

⁴⁷ 21 February 1919, *Congressional Record*, 57, Part 4:3914.

⁴⁸ D.W. Morrow to Thomas W. Lamont, 7 March 1919, Polk Papers, Box 30; 22 February 1919, *Congressional Record*, 57, Part 4:4026-4027.

break from the Peace Conference in February-March, William Borah noted “that the [British] dominions are in this document recognized as nations before the world. . . . when they finally settle down to the business, England will have one vote, Canada one vote, New Zealand one vote, Australia one vote, and South Africa one vote.” In contrast, the United States, “brought into being by our fathers. . . with all her wealth and resources will have but one vote. . . . five votes against our one.”⁴⁹ During the progress of the League of Nations Commission in Paris, Britain added India as a sixth voting Dominion. Hiram Johnson of California commented, “Not only has Britain written the league, safeguarded her augmented territories for all time. . . . but she has in the same spirit given herself a preponderance of voting power to guard against any future contingency. . . with England six votes, the United States one.”⁵⁰ Senator Reed quipped, “admission of the dominions and colonies. . . indicates that Great Britain is ‘on the job.’”⁵¹

“Enhanced” voting power for Britain did not appear as the great bogey to every member of the Senate. Porter McCumber, a pro-League Republican from North Dakota, averred that “some of [Great Britain’s] self-governing colonies are allowed a vote, not in the council, which will undoubtedly settle all of the great international questions, but in the assembly to which some international questions might by some possibility be referred.” Henry Ashurst of Arizona believed such agitation resulted solely from a “spell of bewitching oratory,” and “all those who want to get votes began to ‘twist the lion’s tail,’” but the reality did not accord with the bluster. “Read the cold print: we found Great Britain had one vote in the council, which is the controlling functionary of the league.”⁵²

⁴⁹ 21 February 1919, *ibid.* 3914.

⁵⁰ 12 June 1919, *ibid.*, 58, Part 1:506.

⁵¹ 22 February 1919, *ibid.*, 57, Part 4:4027.

⁵² 18, 20 June 1919, *ibid.*, 58, Part 2: 1271, 1445.

To the claim that England's "six votes" had no power outside the supposedly toothless League Assembly, Senator Reed answered, "the assembly has the power to create and control the council. . . . [and] circumstances might arise in which the power of the assembly could be employed to deprive us of a fair decision by the council in matters vital to our interests." He further stated that "international disputes by the unanimous decisions of the Council may be completely nullified by any twelve non-Council members of the Assembly refusing to concur in the unanimous decision of the members of the Council." The British Empire, therefore, in his judgment, held a "dangerous, if not dominating, control of the League," through its six votes. Henry Cabot Lodge casually commented during the debate, "the distinction the President draws, as I understand it. . . is that though they are eligible for the council they can not vote in the league. Is that about it?" Reed replied, "that seems to be it. . . . The President insists that the fact that the British Empire has six votes and the United States one is utterly immaterial. . . . If it be true that the United States can always with its one vote offset the six votes of the British Empire, then it is equally true that with one vote the United States can offset the vote of the other thirty-one members of the league."⁵³

Wilson himself became so concerned about the persuasiveness of the Irreconcilables' anti-British arguments that he felt compelled to respond to their charges during his western tour. "The *energy* of the League. . . resides in the Council, not the Assembly, and. . . in the Council there is a perfect equality of votes." As to the Assembly, the President insisted, "there is only one thing that [it] votes on in which it can decide a matter without concurrence of all the states represented upon the Council, and that is the admission of new members to the League." Before an audience in Denver, he reiterated, "the Assembly doesn't vote. So that bubble is exploded." In Pueblo, Wilson asked, "do you think it unjust, unjust to the United States, that speaking parts

⁵³ 22 September 1919, *ibid.*, Part 6:5706-5708, 5710.

should be assigned to the several portions of the British Empire?... Those speaking parts cannot translate themselves into five votes that can in any matter override the voice and purpose of the United States.”⁵⁴ “That settles the matter,” he declared.⁵⁵

It did not settle the matter for the Senate. Reed stunned his colleagues on 22 September when, in contradiction of the President and his supporters’ claim that the British Dominions would be confined to the League Assembly, he introduced the letter, written to Canadian Prime Minister Sir Robert Borden on 6 May at the Paris Peace Conference, into the *Congressional Record*. Georges Clemenceau, David Lloyd George, and Woodrow Wilson, he announced, jointly assured Borden, “we concur in his view that...representatives of the self-governing dominions of the British Empire may be selected or named as members of the [League] council. We have no hesitation in expressing our entire concurrence in this view.”⁵⁶ In response to the prospect of six British votes thwarting justice against the United States’ one, Senator Johnson introduced an amendment for attachment to the League of Nations ratification resolution. It

provided, that when any member of the league has or possesses self-governing dominions or colonies or parts of empire, which are also members of the league, the United States shall have votes in the assembly or council of the league numerically equal...⁵⁷

Even Republicans voted down the amendment, but not because they opposed Johnson’s premise. Instead, the majority preferred reservations to the treaty, elucidating American textual interpretations or exempting certain issues from application upon the United States.⁵⁸

In every field of interest, American and British positions had come into conflict. With the active phase of the Peace Conference over for mere months (American representatives remained

⁵⁴ “A Luncheon Address in San Francisco,” 17 September, “An Address in the Denver Auditorium,” 25 September, “An Address in the City Auditorium in Pueblo, Colorado,” 25 September 1919, *Wilson Papers*, 63:320, 491, 505; *Wilson, Public Papers*, 5:229, 386, 404 (emphasis added).

⁵⁵ “A Luncheon Address in San Francisco,” 17 September 1919, *Wilson Papers*, 63:320.

⁵⁶ 22 September 1919, *Congressional Record*, 58, Part 6:5710.

⁵⁷ Johnson Amendment, 23 October 1919, *ibid.*, 58, Part 7:7355.

⁵⁸ “Senate Defeats Johnson Proposal: Treaty Amendment for Equalizing Vote in League Lost 38 to 40,” 27 October 1919, *New York Times*.

in Paris under the direction of Frank Polk until November), Anglo-American relations had already suffered a significant decline. Edward House could sense the shift in the attitude. From London, the Colonel wrote Wilson a letter of warning: “Almost as soon as I arrived in England I sensed an antagonism to the United States. . . . *They dislike us collectively.*”⁵⁹

Many cited Britain’s lack of official representation in Washington as evidence of the troubles. With the departure of the Earl of Reading in May 1919, the British Embassy lacked an official occupant. Secretary Lansing wrote the American Ambassador in London, that “there is coming a lot of criticism about the failure of the British Government to send an Ambassador to Washington. At this time to leave the embassy. . . in the hands of a *chargé* seems open to a just complaint.” Some, such as Irish agitators, insinuated “that the British Government are not sending a representative because they can find no one who wants to come over to a country which is hostile to the British,” and “they claim that this shows that the British Government see more clearly than our Government the anti-British sentiment of our people.”⁶⁰

This lack of representation, however, allowed for the appointment “of someone who could act behind the scenes as a moderator. . . .” In England, Edward House assisted the British Foreign Office in recruitment of one of its most veteran statesmen. During the summer of 1919, the Lloyd George and Lord Curzon pursued Viscount Edward Grey of Fallodon for the task. The former foreign secretary appeared a highly logical choice. Grey’s pro-American sentiments had gained him many friends in the United States. As a fellow liberal, Woodrow Wilson respected him for many reasons, especially his dedication to the concept of the League and his presidency of the British League of Nations Union. The United States Government might also be honored by

⁵⁹ E.M. House to W. Wilson, 30 July 1919, House Papers, Box 121a; *Intimate Papers*, 4:494-496 (emphasis added).

⁶⁰ R. Lansing to J.W. Davis, 10 July, R. Lansing to J.W. Davis, 29 July 1919, J.W. Davis Papers, Box 9; Douglas L. Smith, “Viscount Grey’s ‘Special Mission’ and Postwar Anglo-American Relations,” *Southern Quarterly* 11, No. 3 (April 1973): 257.

the unprecedented reception of a former foreign secretary. Equally important, Grey maintained a close friendship with Edward House, the American President's closest adviser, and whom the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary doubtlessly believed still held great influence.⁶¹

They requested the Liberal-Labourite Lord Haldane "press Grey to accept the post of Ambassador to the United States," and he in turn sought Colonel House "to assist in this effort." In deference to Lord Grey's poor health and failing eyesight, the British Government asked he go to the United States as a temporary special envoy, tasked with the settlement of specific issues that vexed Anglo-American relations. "The matters Curzon and [Lloyd] George told Haldane they wished Grey to deal with were the Irish question, the Navy Building Program, and the League of Nations." At a dinner in Cambridge on 28 July, the three discussed the proposal. Grey accepted, but with certain stipulations. Though under the direction of the Foreign Office, the former Secretary "insisted there must be a British program regarding Ireland before he would consent to go to America, and it must be a program that *he* could accept and advocate in the United States." Grey considered the Irish question, "the most difficult."⁶² Likewise, he urged that his instruction provide "the United States could build as large a navy as she desire... [and] Great Britain would not compete since the United States could outbuild her... but more so particularly for the reason that there was no cause to fear with the United States." The British Empire would only ask that its freedom of action be respected with reference to the European powers, just as it would recognize with the United States *viz.* Japan. "As to the League... neither of us thought

⁶¹ Leon E. Boothe, "A Fettered Envoy: Lord Grey's Special Mission to the United States, 1919-1920," *Review of Politics* 33, No. 1 (January 1971): 80; George W. Egerton, "Ideology, Diplomacy, and International Organisation: Wilsonism and the League of Nations in Anglo-American Relations, 1918-1920," in *Anglo-American Relations in the 1920s: The Struggle for Supremacy*, ed. B.J.C. McKercher (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1990), 42; 14, 15 Aug. 1919, *New York Times*; Smith, "Grey's Special Mission," 262.

⁶² Diaries, 28 July 1919, House Papers, Box 303 (emphasis added); Edward Grey to E.M. House, Memorandum, 11 August 1919, House Papers, Box 53. He later indicated an acceptable program followed the outline proposed by Lord Robert Cecil, of a home-rule regime, "modeled on everything Canada now has," excluding Ulster. But these ideas remained incomplete.

there would be any difficulty.” But Lord Grey required acceptance of *his* opinions on those important topics as a condition of his appointment.⁶³

House promptly wrote Wilson of the conference with Grey, of the proposed special mission, and the “three matters that the Government [has] in mind to settle with the United States. . . .” In relaying Grey’s opinions on the naval, Irish, and League questions, he described them as “the liberal point of view and not the conservative or the one held in naval circles.” In consequence, the Colonel anticipated the British Government “will soften in their insistence that he go to Washington.”⁶⁴

Despite the differences of opinion within the English Government, and with Lloyd George and Curzon, consideration of Lord Grey’s appointment continued. Feeling the need for his presence in Washington outweighed the necessity of unity of opinions, the Prime Minister, after consultation with Andrew Bonar Law, “accepted Grey’s policy in regard to the naval program of the United States and Great Britain. . . .” and their discussions on the Irish question proved “satisfactory” to the former foreign secretary. On 8 August, House informed the President that “an announcement may be made immediately,” and “if Grey goes under these conditions the most vexatious subjects between the two countries will be in a fair way for settlement.”⁶⁵ The Colonel congratulated Lloyd George “upon setting Lord Grey’s consent to go to the United States. His appointment will have a splendid influence. . . . to bring our two countries closer together.”⁶⁶ The Prime Minister believed, “no more important mission ever left the shores of Britain than that which Earl Grey has so patriotically undertaken. . . . [because] the peace of the

⁶³ Diaries, 28 July 1919, House Papers, Box 303; E.M. House to W. Wilson, 30 July 1919, House Papers, Box 121a.

⁶⁴ E.M. House to W. Wilson, 30 July 1919, House Papers, Box 121a

⁶⁵ Diaries, 7 August 1919, House Papers, Box 303; E.M. House to W. Wilson, 8 August 1919, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1919: The Paris Peace Conference*, 13 vols. (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1942-1947), 11:630-631.

⁶⁶ E.M. House to David Lloyd George, 12 August 1919, House Papers, Box 70a.

world depends on a complete understanding being established between the two great English-speaking commonwealths.”⁶⁷

The hope and promise of Edward Grey’s special diplomatic mission foundered even with announcement of its initiation. With surprising indifference to long-standing diplomatic protocol, Bonar Law made public the appointment on 13 August 1919 without first officially notifying the State Department of the proposed mission at any time in July or August. In conversations with the British *Chargé d’Affaires* in the days after the announcement, Secretary Lansing expressed “surprise that the State Department as yet knew nothing of Viscount Grey’s appointment,” and “he thought it very extraordinary that the appointment should be announced in the House of Commons *before* notification to the State Department.”⁶⁸ London claimed it sought to avoid delays. Lord Curzon informed the Embassy in Washington that “advantages of securing the Viscount outweighed adherence to usual protocol.”⁶⁹

The Foreign Office could be forgiven its apparent lack of tact, as well, for the fact that it believed the American Government fully informed of the pending embassy. Through the conduit of Edward House, details of the Grey appointment had been dispatched frequently between 30 July and 11 August to Woodrow Wilson, who presumably apprised his own State Department. House even inquired of his President, “do you expect to make your speaking tour, and will you be back [in Washington]” to receive the special envoy.⁷⁰ The Colonel, however, never received response to any of his messages to Wilson following the President’s departure from Paris in June 1919. With the debate over the League of Nations – begun in earnest in July – and a western tour

⁶⁷ D. Lloyd George to J.W. Davis, 9 September 1919, J.W. Davis Papers, Box 9.

⁶⁸ R.C. Lindsay to G.N. Curzon, 16 August 1919, *British Documents, 1919*, 5:986.

⁶⁹ “Viscount Grey Accepts the Appointment of British Ambassador Here Temporarily,” 14 August 1919, *New York Times*; R.C. Lindsay to G.N. Curzon, 16 August, G.N. Curzon to R.C. Lindsay, 19 August 1919, *British Documents, 1919*, 5:986-987; Smith, “Grey’s Special Mission,” 261.

⁷⁰ E.M. House to W. Wilson, 11 August 1919, *Papers of WW*, 62:255; House Papers, Box 121a.

in its defense in September, nearly all Woodrow Wilson's attentions focused upon that single issue. Whether or not he read any of the Colonel's letters remains unknown. Nonetheless, the State Department received the news with surprise, and some irritation that they had not been consulted beforehand about the appointment.

The mission quickly turned "into a diplomatic nightmare."⁷¹ Even more unfortunate for Lord Grey, he arrived at the most inopportune moment possible. As he stepped on American shores on 27 September, news broke of the President taking ill while on his speaking circuit.⁷² Worse, Wilson's stroke of 2 October left him seriously incapacitated. Robert Lansing informed the disappointed special ambassador on 7 October that nothing could be brought before the President, possibly for two months, because of his condition. Grey recognized, "it is of little use to discuss matters of first importance with any official except the President," and explained to Curzon that "everything is in suspense... [and] no one can say what provision will be made for conducting Government if he is incapacitated" due to Wilson's illness.⁷³

Wilson's illness explains only part of the reason why Lord Grey never met with the President, even in a ceremonial capacity. The White House could have arranged an interview, even brief and perfunctory. The King and Queen of Belgium and the Prince of Wales, on their official visits to the United States, all spent short moments with Wilson, despite his incapacity (in elaborately staged receptions).⁷⁴ In consideration of the important nature one might believe the United States would accord relations with Great Britain, and therefore reception of that

⁷¹ Egerton, "Ideology, Diplomacy, and International Organization," 42.

⁷² *Idem*, "Britain and the 'Great Betrayal': Anglo-American Relations and the Struggle for United States Ratification of the Treaty of Versailles, 1919-1920," *Historical Journal* 21, No. 4 (December 1978): 892; News Report, "Wilson Very Ill, Condition Cause of Real Anxiety," 27 September 1919, *Wilson Papers*, 63:527-528.

⁷³ Desk Diary, 8 October 1919, Robert Lansing Papers, MC083, Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey, Box 12; E. Grey to G.N. Curzon, No. 1420, 4 October, E. Grey to G.N. Curzon, No. 1430, 7 October 1919, *British Documents, 1919*, 5:1003, 1007.

⁷⁴ J.W. Davis to E.M. House, 4 December 1919, J.W. Davis Papers, Box 9.

nation's official representative, Grey's inability to reach the President in any way raises a legitimate question.

To fully understand the Special Ambassador's rebuff, one must examine "[a] most amazing and wholly unprecedented episode in Washington diplomatic annals."⁷⁵ The cause lay in Grey's inclusion of Major Charles Craufurd-Stuart as a member of his staff. Grey believed Craufurd-Stuart indispensable, as he had served as Earl Reading's private secretary during his ambassadorship in Washington in 1918. The Major, however, had seriously offended members of the Administration during his time in the British Embassy with off-color jokes – particularly at the expense of Edith Bolling Wilson, the President's wife.⁷⁶

Secretary Lansing later wrote the American Ambassador in London that "Craufurd Stuart is the real cause of the President's declining to see Grey, even for a moment."⁷⁷ When the White House learned of the Major's presence in Grey's *coterie*, Breckinridge Long, the Assistant Secretary of State, informed Robert Lansing, that through his personal physician, Admiral Cary Grayson, President Wilson "demanded immediate recall of Major Stuart." The Secretary of State dutifully went to Sir William Tyrrell at the British Embassy, and informed him of the President's wishes.⁷⁸ A week later, Lansing spoke to Lord Grey about the matter. The Special Ambassador "agree[d] to have his name removed from Diplomatic List & that he not appear at receptions," but Grey felt summary dismissal unwarranted. "Grey resisted, wanted proofs, and put in Stuart's defense." Lansing spoke again to Tyrrell, and reminded Grey's assistant that "the mere expression of the President's wish was enough," and in keeping with diplomatic tradition.

⁷⁵ George W. Egerton, "Diplomacy, Scandal, and Military Intelligence: The Craufurd-Stuart Affair and Anglo-American Relations, 1918-1920," *Intelligence and National Security* 2 (October 1987): 110.

⁷⁶ Phyllis Lee Levin, *Edith and Woodrow: The Wilson White House* (New York: Scribner, 2001).403-406; Egerton, "Ideology, Diplomacy, and International Organization," 44.

⁷⁷ R. Lansing to J.W. Davis, 1 January 1920, J.W. Davis Papers, Box 9.

⁷⁸ Desk Diary, 30 October 1919, Lansing Papers, Box 12; *Wilson Papers*, 63:606.

Despite the Secretary of State's efforts, the British Embassy delayed and defended Craufurd-Stuart for two full months.⁷⁹ Therefore, over a petty affair, Britain's special representative never saw the President, nor gained official status in the United States.

Unable to present his credentials to the Chief Executive, and disallowed to return for the time being, Edward Grey made what he could of his mission. The Special Ambassador spent a significant portion of his time traversing the "six-votes" issue, which Senators constantly raised as cause for concern in the League debates, as he believed "opposition to British... power in League Assembly seems to be [the] most serious danger to [the] Covenant in [the] Senate."⁸⁰ The Senate dropped Johnson's amendment in favor of Irvine Lenroot's reservation, which provided, "the United States assumes no obligation to be bound by any election, decision, [etc.]... in which any member of the league and its self-governing dominions, colonies, or parts of empire, in the aggregate have cast more than one vote."⁸¹ Grey repeatedly requested from the Foreign Office instruction regarding how he should answer American charges that the enlarged British vote, and the League itself, might be used against United States interests, to little avail. Lord Curzon initially informed Grey that "there has been no time to consult the Dominion Governments, and you will no doubt bear in mind the great risk involved in expressing opinions on the status and rights of the Dominions and of India."⁸² Despite the enormous implications, the Foreign Office would not provide its representative a line of defense. Grey warned, "even after ratification I am told that six votes to one will be a sore point [in] this country."⁸³

⁷⁹ Desk Diary, 6 November 1919, Lansing Papers, Box 12; *Wilson Papers*, 64:3; R. Lansing to J.W. Davis, 1 January 1920, J.W. Davis Papers, Box 9; Egerton, "Ideology, Diplomacy, and International Organization," 44-45.

⁸⁰ E. Grey to G.N. Curzon, No. 1443, 11 October 1919, *British Documents, 1919*, 5:1008.

⁸¹ The Lodge resolution of ratification, containing the fourteen reservations, 19 November 1919, *Congressional Record*, 58, Part 9:8778.

⁸² E. Grey to G.N. Curzon, No. 1439, 9 October, E. Grey to G.N. Curzon, 15 October, E. Grey to G.N. Curzon, 24 October, G.N. Curzon to E. Grey, No. 1925, 24 October 1919, *British Documents*, 5:1008-1010, 1012.

⁸³ E. Grey to G.N. Curzon, 1 November 1919, *British Documents, 1919*, 5:1014.

The original purposes of Ireland and the naval question fell into relative obscurity early in Grey's American venture. The issue of Irish Home Rule largely moved toward resolution on its own, without American interference. Neither the United States, nor England, could settle on naval programs until the Senate voted on the Treaty and the League. By mid-October, Near Eastern affairs eclipsed all those matters and further hindered the Grey mission.

After the War, British military and economic agents arranged an understanding, just shy of a protectorate, with Persia, ratified on 9 August 1919. The American Minister in Tehran, John Caldwell, reported to the State Department that the agreement pledged a British guarantee of Persian political and territorial independence, provision of military and economic experts for the Persian Government, modern equipment of the Persian army, government loans, assistance in the improvement of infrastructure, and more. Later that month, Caldwell announced, "[the] British Army now occupy [the country]."⁸⁴

As with the appointment of Grey as Special Ambassador, the Foreign Office informally notified Washington of the Anglo-Persian negotiations through Colonel House, believing he would convey such information to President Wilson on the British Government's behalf. The treaty, like Grey, took the State Department by surprise. Lansing wrote John Davis on 20 August, "the Anglo-Persian agreement has caused a very unfavorable impression upon both the President and me. . . . The secrecy employed and the silence observed seem contrary to the open and frank methods which ought to have prevailed." The Secretary of State then requested the American Ambassador to inform Curzon, "we cannot and will not do anything to encourage such

⁸⁴ J.L. Caldwell to R. Lansing, Telegram No. 160, 11 August, J.L. Caldwell to R. Lansing, Telegram No. 163, 16 August 1919, *Foreign Relations, 1919*, 2:698-699; SD 741.91/21, 22; G.N. Curzon, Memorandum, 9 August 1919, *British Documents, 1919*, 4:1119-1122; Houshang Sabahi, *British Policy in Persia, 1918-1925* (London: Frank Cass and Company, Ltd., 1990), 141.

secret negotiations or to assist in allaying the suspicion and dissatisfaction which we share as to an agreement negotiated in this manner.”⁸⁵

Concerns for Persian independence figured into American reaction against the agreement. In the Senate, Republican James Watson of Indiana stated, of the new Anglo-Persian relationship, “I will not call it a colony, but [Great Britain] has control of Persia.” Robert La Follette considered the Shadom, like Egypt and other territories, as “reduced substantially to protectorates of the Empire...”⁸⁶ But oil weighed far heavier.⁸⁷ California Democrat James Phelan regarded the action in Persia as demonstrative of “the nationalistic sentiment... dominant in Britain,” toward grasping oil resources across the globe. McCormick wondered aloud, “if this treaty were as innocent on its face, why were the negotiations conducted in secret?” and told his fellow senators that “any of those who are interested in the Anglo-Persian situation [and] have followed the financial columns of the British press, they will have noted certain consolidations of oil interests.” Borah described the affair as “Great Britain [having] stepped behind the curtain and closed a deal with Persia which gave her command of the highways of the Far East and placed under her control the last virgin fields of the world’s oil supply.”⁸⁸

The day before the Senate voted on the League and the Treaty, Robert La Follette delivered a monumental speech, inspired by the Anglo-Persian disclosures, the recent oil debates, and the commercial contest. The Senator from Wisconsin asserted,

the menacing political problems that go with [this Treaty are]...the far-reaching economic effect of this vast territorial transfer to Great Britain upon her ultimate control of the trade routes and the commerce of the world, to all of which we are asked not only to consent, but also to guarantee and defend.

⁸⁵ G.N. Curzon to R.C. Lindsay, 18 August 1919, *British Documents, 1919*, 4:1135-1136; R. Lansing to J.W. Davis, Telegram No. 5844, 20 August 1919, *Foreign Relations, 1919*, 2:700; SD 741.91/23.

⁸⁶ James Watson, 23 October, Robert La Follette, 18 November 1919, *Congressional Record*, 58, Part 7:7373, Part 9:8722.

⁸⁷ Smith, “Grey’s Special Mission,” 265.

⁸⁸ James Phelan, 29 July, Medill McCormick, 6 October, William E. Borah, 22 October 1919, *Congressional Record*, 58, Part 3:3305, Part 7: 6446-6447, 7323.

He ranged across the globe, from Africa, to the Middle East, to Asia, and in each he recounted all the possessions the English had gained as a result of the War. “By the peace settlement, Great Britain acquires control over vast natural resources and unlimited supplies of raw materials.” The year 1919 witnessed a new era in British protectionism to guard these new lands and resources. The League would assure Britain’s grip on these spoils, allow for exclusion of the United States from those lands, all while Americans must protect the *status quo* establish by Britain and the other imperialist powers.⁸⁹

The failure of the Treaty and the League reinforced a growing belief in the British Admiralty and Foreign Office. Up until the day the Senate voted on League membership, the British Government overlooked the fact that the United States resumed its 1916 capital-ship construction program – of which fifteen progressed toward completion, and one battleship already entered service – and though the Administration dropped its promotion of the 1918 proposals, the Navy had not, and a significant portion of the Congress sought its passage.⁹⁰ While United States entrance into the League appeared possible, the British Government largely discounted American building plans, and delayed consideration of its own naval estimates. Six days after the Senate rejected the League of Nations Covenant, the Foreign Secretary forwarded revised instructions to Britain’s Special Ambassador in Washington from the Prime Minister.

In considering Navy Estimates, [the] Cabinet wish[es] to have fullest possible information about naval policy of the United States. We have no desire to enter into [a] naval competition with [the] United States, but cannot afford to ignore what they are doing.

⁸⁹ 18 November 1919, *ibid.*, Part 9:8720-8728.

⁹⁰ Thomas H. Buckley, *The United States and the Washington Conference, 1921-1922* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1970), 24; John R. Ferris, “The Symbol and Substance of Seapower: Great Britain, the United States, and the On-Power Standard, 1919-1921,” in *Anglo-American Relations in the 1920s: The Struggle for Supremacy*, ed. B.J.C. McKercher (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1990), 67-68.

The Government and the Admiralty thus desired an appraisal of the current standing of the United States Navy, as well as future plans.⁹¹

Other incidences demonstrated that the American and British navies no longer regarded one another with the same respect developed during the War. On 16 December, an American officer requested the use of the wireless telegraph office aboard the HMS *Renown*, and the captain aboard refused. As a result, Admiral Albert Niblack, Director of Naval Intelligence, “made occasion for a deliberate change of policy” and informed the British Naval and Air Attachés “that for future, for granting naval and air information, a reversion must be made to [the] pre-war arrangement by which such information is only given in exchange for information of equal value.”⁹² Unable to improve Anglo-American relations in any substantial way, Grey dispatched three reports on the American navy throughout late-November and early-December.⁹³

As the first full year of peace came to a close, the Anglo-American *entente* so many in the United States and Great Britain aspired to appeared to have essentially ended. The “war after the war” in the field of commerce, as many Americans perceived, arrived. A scramble for international resources – especially oil – appeared to have begun in earnest, and already irritated Anglo-American relations. On both sides of the Atlantic, statesmen and naval officials could no longer ignore the naval contest developing between the United States and Royal navies.

⁹¹ E. Curzon, for D. Lloyd George, to E. Grey, 25 November 1919, *British Documents, 1919*, 5:1037-1038.

⁹² Smith, “Grey’s Special Mission,” 272; E. Grey to G.N. Curzon, No. 1678, 16 December 1919, *British Documents, 1919*, 5:1062.

⁹³ E. Grey to G.N. Curzon, 26 November, R.C. Lindsay, for E. Grey, to G.N. Curzon, No. 710, 28 November, E. Grey to G.N. Curzon, No. 1673, 12 December 1919, *British Documents, 1919*, 5:1038-1039, 1046-1047, 1062.

CHAPTER 6

RED INAUGURATED: THE FOUNDATIONS FOR AN ANGLO-AMERICAN WAR PLAN

The United States military establishment did not view the end of the War as the achievement of the greatest in Anglo-American aspirations. The demise of the German state in November 1918, and the German fleet at Scapa Flow on 21 June 1919 left the British Empire and the United States as the two greatest maritime powers – a fact not lost upon American naval leaders. Whereas the Navy’s Planning Committee in Washington wrote as late as 7 October 1918 that “the most probable combination against would be Germany, Austria, and Japan in alliance,” opinions changed radically within the month.¹ Influenced by the growing estrangement between the United States and England in May-October 1918, naval policy-makers – in Paris during the pre-Armistice conferences – came to regard the German battle fleet as “a balance wheel governing any undue or arbitrary ambition on the part of...Great Britain,” and feared that destruction of German sea power would leave England the “dictator of Europe.”² Wide differences between Admiral William Benson and the Allied naval leaders, and the sharp dispute over Freedom of the Seas and American naval expansion between Edward House and David Lloyd George at the pre-Armistice conferences, convinced these planners that with the German Empire dismantled, “there is no occasion for Great Britain to possess a Fleet greater than her present Fleet, unless the power of the Fleet is designed to restrain *us*,” and that Britain must not

¹ William Reynolds Braisted, *The United States Navy in the Pacific, 1909-1922* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1971), 305; Planning Committee to William S. Benson, “Building Policy,” 7 October 1918, William S. Benson Papers, Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Washington, D.C., Box 42.

² Planning Section, London, Memorandum, 18 October 1918, Memorandum, TX File, Naval Records Collection of the Office of Naval Records and Library, 1691-1845, Record Group 45, National Archives I, Washington, D.C..

occupy “so commanding a naval position that she may regulate the high seas through the world in accordance with her will” – as it had done during the World War.³

As the Allied and Associated leaders prepared to meet in Paris for the great Peace Conference, the Navy’s plans for future naval policy took on greater dimension and detail, and looked to the possibilities of future conflict. The London Planning Section – Admiral William Sims’s organization, developed during the War to formulate naval policy – declared it “necessary to reconsider conclusions arrived at [in previous memoranda]. . . with a view to determining what changes, if any, should be made in these conclusions, in order that our building programme may be directed to serve our national interests and preserve our national security.” The new memorandum established certain assumptions which it anticipated the peace treaty would accomplish: disposal of German naval power, automatic promotion of the United States Navy to second place, and the Royal Navy relatively stronger than before the War “and without any restraining naval influence of consequence in Europe.” Central to the Planning Section’s arguments,

we see that: The world is to be left with one great Navy – *The British Navy*; and with one other navy that may possibly grow to be a rival of the British Navy – *The American Navy*. . . Any addition made to the British Fleet must be made with reference to the United States as a possible enemy. Any additions made to the United States Fleet must be made with reference to Great Britain as a possible enemy.⁴

The planners believed, understandably, that many factors existed to “make war between the United States and Great Britain unlikely,” and listed them out. The summary considered present sentiment between the two nations as generally positive. They recognized that Americans lacked aggressive aims, at the Peace Conference, or afterward. In the economic realm, the

³ Planning Section, London, to W.S. Benson, Memorandum, 30 October 1918, TX File, RG 45 (emphasis added); Planning Section, London, Memorandum No. 65, “United States Naval Interests in the Armistice,” 4 November 1918, TX File, RG 45; Benson Papers, Box 42.

⁴ Planning Section, London, Memorandum, [c. January] 1919, Benson Papers, Box 42 (emphasis in original).

dependence of Britain on American commerce, British investment in the United States, “sound economic sense of the British government,” all suggested the folly of an Anglo-American war. Additionally, as it had for decades, Canada remained “hostage” against British infidelities.⁵

“But in spite of these happy obstacles to war,” the Planning Section warned, “war may come; so we have come to examine the possible causes of war.” From the first, the antecedents of a true war plan against Great Britain always derived from considerations of the circumstances through which such a war might arise. The memorandum dwelt upon the Freedom of the Seas, that vexatious question so problematic during the recent War. “It is well known that British and American views regarding Freedom of the Seas are widely at variance.” The planners noted, “one has but to scrutinize our diplomatic correspondence during the first years of this war when the United States was still neutral to see in the questions there discussed elements of danger.” Outside belligerent rights, the United States sat at the forefront in certain world policies, with “unselfish motives,” which might conflict with the presumably more self-centered British intentions.⁶ The pre-Armistice conferences had demonstrated how diplomatically disruptive these issues remained, and how far the Americans and Britons were from reaching a conclusive solution.

Drawing on Mahanian philosophy, trade rivalries provided the heart of international conflict for centuries, and the peace would, they believed, inevitably bring Anglo-American commercial competition.⁷ “Successful trade rivalry strikes at the very root of British interest and British prosperity, and may even threaten the existence of the British Empire.” The American economy had expanded as a result of the War to greater dimensions than anyone could have

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Anne Orde, *The Eclipse of Great Britain: The United States and British Imperial Decline, 1895-1956* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), 64; Azar Gat, *A History of Military Thought: From the Enlightenment to the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 442-454.

anticipated, and the economic rivalry between the United States and Great Britain already resumed in 1918. Relative to that expansion, “the war has caused a revival of the American Merchant Marine. . . . [and] the peaceful pressure it will exert towards getting its share of trade will arouse the anxiety of the British Government.” The Planning Section anticipated a stiff English response, “Repressive Measures on our trade Expansion,” which would result in American reprisals. “If British trade is seriously threatened, her people may feel that war is justified – as a measure of self-preservation.”⁸

The remainder of the memorandum proposed fleet construction and discussed the operations that the United States Navy could conceivably undertake. Every aspect of the proposed building program and probable actions were premised upon the Royal Navy. In its conclusions, the London Planning Section summarized the basic naval policy of the United States, “for the present,” as that the British navy should serve “as the maximum probable force which we must be prepared to meet.”⁹

The Naval Advisory Staff, established in Paris, replaced the London Planning Section during the duration of the Paris Peace Conference, but by no means altered the fundamental ideas it created. In part, this resulted from the fact that Rear Admiral Harry Knapp and Captain Frank Schofield both served on the Planning Section in London. William Benson and Captain Luke McNamee were the two new additions, and the Chief of Naval Operations fully supported the conclusions of his London antecedent.¹⁰ The Staff affirmed its continuity with the Planning Section in its submissions on naval questions to President Wilson during the Conference. During the debate over distribution of German warships, the Paris advisers remained convinced, “in

⁸ Planning Section, London, Memorandum, [c. January] 1919, Benson Papers, Box 42.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Braisted, *United States Navy*, 427.

[the] future, [Britain's] sole naval rival will be the United States, and every ship built or acquired by Great Britain can have in mind only the American fleet.”¹¹

Admiral Benson presented the President with an updated “Naval Policy” memorandum as Colonel House and Lord Robert Cecil attempted to resolve the Anglo-American impasse over the naval construction question between 8 and 10 April 1919 – though the Admiral himself was not privy to the negotiations. The Advisory Staff wrote, “we cannot advance our external interests, nor can we influence world policy, except by way of the sea.” Against this, “with its world wide supporting organization, [the Royal Navy] is strong enough to dominate the seas in whatever quarter of the globe that domination may be required.” This, the naval men believed, would interfere with United States’ interests. Even though the League appeared a nearly accomplished fact, “a power so absolute that that it may disregard other powers with impunity, is less apt to act with justice than if there be a balancing influence of force as well as of world opinion to oppose it. This is true within a league of nations as well as without.”¹²

Reiterating assertions made in the London Planning Section’s memorandum of December 1918-January 1919, the Naval Advisory Staff insisted,

the constant effort of Great Britain through the centuries has been to acquire control of the foci of the sea commerce of the world. . . . The British negotiations at the Peace Conference are conducted with these objects frankly in view. Their attainment is possible largely through British strength at sea. The possibility of future war is never absent from the minds of statesmen, so we see in the British negotiations [*sic*] a very careful attention to the preservation of their present military domination of the sea.

Recalling the previous four years of American economic development, they noted, “we are setting out to be the greatest commercial rival of Great Britain on the seas.” That carried an inherent threat retaliation from England. “Every great commercial rival of the British Empire has

¹¹ U.S. Naval Advisory Staff, Paris, Memorandum No. 24, “Disposition of German and Austrian Vessels of War,” 13 March 1919, in W.S. Benson to W. Wilson, 14 March 1919, *Wilson Papers*, 55:517

¹² U.S. Naval Advisory Staff, Paris, Memorandum No. 25, “United States Naval Policy,” 7 April, in W.S. Benson to W. Wilson, 9 April 1919, *Wilson Papers*, 57:180-183.

eventually found itself at war with Great Britain – and has been defeated.” Echoing sentiments heard in the halls of Congress, the recent British war with Germany they now began to reinterpret as partly inspired by the desire to eliminate commercial competition. “Every such defeat has strengthened the commercial position of Great Britain.”¹³

Benson provided the reasoning upon which the naval advisers based their April conclusions in two letters to the Secretary of the Navy in May. With Germany defeated, the Navy’s top minds believed, “Great Britain is finally determined to fully re-establish her supremacy, not only on the high seas, but in all the markets of the world.” Economic incidences provided the proof of this aspiration. The Chief of Naval Operations cited Chinese concessions to the British Government for a system of radio stations in that country, and recalled “that De Bunson [*sic*] mission to negotiate secret treaties with the South American countries. . .” Drawing on his own personal experience at the Peace Conference, the Admiral wrote, “the last six months of constant contact with the foreign governments, and particularly with Great Britain, has convinced me that *we are on the threshold of the keenest and most active commercial competition that the world has ever seen.*” The Admiral insisted, “America has no ambitions that are hostile to any part of the British Empire or to British commerce, but America is concerned regarding the attitude of the British Empire toward the commerce of other nations.” The controversies over belligerent-neutral rights never found resolution in 1914-1916, and the League merely shelved Freedom of the Seas. Should another war erupt between Great Britain and a third power, he expected such a dispute would, inevitably, arise again. In peace time

¹³ *Ibid.*, 183-185; Papers of Woodrow Wilson, Project Records, Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey, Box 354; Benson Papers, Box 11.

“‘Equality of opportunity in world trade,’ [is] another principle to which we are pledged, [but] can never be possible as long as one power is capable of dominating the seas.”¹⁴

Officially, however, throughout this time, neither the War, nor Navy Departments possessed any official war plans. This largely resulted from two factors. First, the planning organizations in both departments, and the coordinating Joint Army and Navy Board, fell into disuse out of Wilsonian antipathy for their activities during a crisis with Japan in 1913, and the President’s suspicions of war planning.¹⁵ Second, the United States needed no war plans until it assessed the new international arrangement. This the London Planning Section and the Paris Naval Advisory Staff remedied in their policy pronouncements of November 1918-May 1919.

In April, the War and Navy Departments initiated the first steps in the reorganization of the Joint Army and Navy Board – the planning which would eventually develop war plans for the United States armed forces. Assistant Secretary of the Navy Franklin Roosevelt pushed for its revival, as did the Army General Staff, which considered the time right for the development of new war plans in conjunction with the Navy. On 2 June, War Secretary Newton Baker wrote Josephus Daniels of his conception for a new coordinating board. Those who occupied the offices of Army Chief of Staff and directors of the War Department’s Operations Division and War Plans Division would retain permanent positions on the Joint Board, as should corresponding Navy Department officers. A subordinate Joint Planning Committee, to study and report on questions of national defense forwarded by the Joint Board, should also be created to consist of three representatives of the General Staff’s War Plans Division, as well as three

¹⁴ W.S. Benson to Josephus Daniels, 5 May, [W.S. Benson], Memorandum, [c. 5 May] 1919, Josephus Daniels Papers, Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Washington, D.C., Roll 42 (emphasis added).

¹⁵ Harry E. Yarnell to J.S. McKean, Memorandum, “Building Program,” 7 April 1919, RG 45, Box 678; Braisted, *United States Navy*, 124-138.

members of the same under the Chief of Naval Operations.¹⁶ Therefore, on 24 July, Baker and Daniels issued orders for the reestablishment of the Army and Navy Board, to achieve “common conclusions regarding all matters calling for cooperation of the two services.”¹⁷

Nearly two months after the re-creation of the Joint Board, Navy Commander H.H. Frost delivered a lecture on a Planning Committee Paper to the incoming 1919-1920 students at the Army’s General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth. The presentation, “The Strategy of the Atlantic – The Red Plan,” included all the premises developed earlier in the year. Frost announced in his introduction, “there remains only one nation – Great Britain – which can fight a war with us.” As before, no reason existed to anticipate an Anglo-American war any time in the immediate future. “England is in no condition... for another great war.” The British national debt, a trade imbalance, limited production capacity, social conditions, and the emerging shift from an Empire to a Commonwealth, rendered conflict – for the time being – unlikely. Yet as the London Section surmised less than a year before, “there is always the possibility that the British, however friendly they may wish to be, may be forced into a war to maintain their commercial supremacy on the seas, which is essential to the existence of the British Empire.” Those same conditions that Frost counted as trending against a war between the two nations, might in fact provide the source:

desperate conditions which exist...[may] drive her into a war, if it becomes demonstrated that they can be improved in no other way... It is evident that no nation, which bases its prosperity [– as Britain does –] on trade, can exist with an adverse trade balance... [and] the United States is the direct cause... If it develops that we can successfully compete with England on the seas, this adverse balance will be maintained.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 469-470; Newton Diehl Baker to J. Daniels, 2 June 1919, WPD 8921-18, Records of the War Department General and Special Staffs, 1860-1952, Record Group 165, National Archives II, College Park, Maryland; Steven T. Ross, *American War Plans, 1890-1939* (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 2002), 96.

¹⁷ N.D. Baker and J. Daniels, Memorandum, 24 July 1919, JB 301-147, Records of the Joint Army and Navy Boards and Committees, 1903-1947, Record Group 225, National Archives II, College Park, Maryland.

As a result of the commercial competition, and Britain's desperation, the Planning Committee predicted, "a nation doomed to commercial defeat will usually demand a military decision before this commercial defeat is complete." Commander Frost insisted, "I think you will agree that the Army and Navy should have plans prepared for meeting any possible enemy," and outlined basic plans for a conceived war against the British Empire and necessary warship construction to implement those plans.¹⁸

In the late fall, the plans divisions and committees began developing actual plans.¹⁹ Those developed in 1919 technically provided for the defense of specific American security objectives instead of against certain powers, but these plans anticipated only Britain, or Japan, capable of mounting expeditions in these treatments. In October, the Navy's War Plans Division constructed an assessment of United States forces in the Panama Canal Zone and blueprints for its defense. Japan could, conceivably, attack the Canal from the west. Should the Royal Navy launch an assault from the east, the division expanded beyond the simple repulse of British forces from the Caribbean, and planned for large-scale, combined Army-Navy operations against the British islands of Bermuda, Jamaica, the Bahamas, as well as an offensive against Canada. In November, the naval members of the Joint Planning Committee pressed for a Joint Board plan for Canal defenses, which they completed on the 14th, though these focused – logically – on Panama instead of potential ancillary theaters.²⁰

As the branch most likely to engage against Britain, the Navy took the lead in policy and planning – as one can deduce from Navy, War, and Joint Board records – and the same held true with respect to estimates for the post-War military. Every naval policy memorandum developed

¹⁸ H.H. Frost, Planning Committee Paper, No. 6, "The Strategy of the Atlantic – The Red Plan," 3 September 1919, Records of the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, 1875-1989, Record Group 38, Box 5.

¹⁹ J.S. McKean, memorandum, PD 198-1, 21 October 1919, Secret and Confidential Correspondence of the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations and the Office of the Secretary of the Navy, 1919-1927, Record Group 38.

²⁰ Ross, *American War Plans*, 110-112.

during 1919 countenanced the dimensions of warship construction upon the strength of the British navy and, as demonstrated, perceptions of Britain's post-War economic intentions. The London Planning Section memorandum of December 1918-January 1919 insisted on resumption of the 1916 Building Program, and advocated additional construction in 1918-1919, because "any additional made to the British Fleet must be made with reference to the United States as a possible enemy."²¹ Captain Harry Yarnell, in the Office of Naval Operations, observed, in connection with the armed forces' lack of war plans, that "we cannot expect Congress to have any clearer ideas of what the requirements are, than what we possess ourselves."²²

The Navy General Board, therefore, submitted a memorandum on naval and building policy to the Secretary of the Navy in September 1919. In summation of the Navy's general policy, the Board recalled, "since 1915, the General Board has advocated and adhered to the Naval Policy that 'the Navy of the United States should ultimately be equal to the most powerful maintained by any other nation in the world. . . . not later than 1925.'" The post-World War settlement had not altered this imperative: "the proceedings of the recent peace conference have shown us that agreements, both secret and open, among the other nations of the world are still in force and are looked upon favorably by most of the world powers, notwithstanding the opposition of the United States." Great Britain remained the chief offender, ever protective of its economic privileges. The General Board warned, "sooner or later, the commercial interests of our maritime commerce, if we continue to promote its growth, will come into opposition and threaten the interests of Great Britain." Already, English behavior indicated a "growing jealousy and alarm" at American economic expansion. Incorporating language heard on the floor of the Senate, and in other naval notes, the memorandum maintained,

²¹ Planning Section, London, Memorandum, [c. January] 1919, Benson Papers, Box 42.

²² H.E. Yarnell to J.S. McKean, Memorandum, "Building Program," 7 April 1919, RG 45, Box 678.

in every such case in the past Great Britain has resorted to war to eliminate from competition with her any nation which has seriously threatened her maritime commercial supremacy. The General Board believes that Great Britain will not hesitate to engage in war alone or enlist the help of Japan, or any other nation, against the United States to protect the interests of British maritime commerce when our merchant marine in its growth reaches such magnitude as to threaten or endanger the... supremacy of that of Great Britain.

In consequence, “since we aim to build up our merchant marine... we must also build up our Navy to a strength sufficient to support and protect our sea-borne commerce” against England.²³

Irrespective of its subsequent developments, the foundational elements of WAR PLAN RED did not emerge out of the idle minds of bored colonels and captains in need of “something to do.”²⁴ In stark contrast to the assertions of most modern writers,²⁵ military planners carefully evaluated the international situation created by the World War, and developed a tailored naval policy to match. A sanguine view of the British Empire resulted, as did the foundational basis for the war plan the Army and Navy Joint Board began to construct.

²³ C.J. Badger, for the General Board, to J. Daniels, “Naval Policy; Building Program, 1921,” 22 September 1919, GB 420-2, Serial No. 928, Classified, Secret and Confidential, Records of the Secretary of the Navy, 1919-1926, Record Group 80, Box 54.

²⁴ Thaddeus Holt, “Joint PLAN RED,” *Military History Quarterly* (1988): 48

²⁵ Steven T. Ross, *American War Plans, 1919-1941*, vol. 1, *Peacetime War Plans, 1919-1935* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1992), ii; Henry G. Gole, *Road to Rainbow: Army Planning for Global War, 1934-1940* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2002), xvii; Thaddeus Holt, “Joint PLAN RED,” *Military History Quarterly* (1988): 48-55; William Reynolds Braisted, “On the American Red and Red-Orange Plans, 1919-1939,” in *Naval Warfare in the Twentieth Century, 1900-1945: Essays in Honour of Arthur Marder*, ed. Gerald Jordan (London: Croom Helm, Ltd., 1977).

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

The first years of the post-World War One era set the tone for the subsequent decade in Anglo-American relations. While some questions – such as over oil and merchant marine – became less of a disruption within a few short years, other issues grew in intensity. The United States economy boomed in the 1920s, and expanded into more international markets. The developing Atlantic naval contest required the calling of two separate conferences. An agreement on battleship construction at the Washington Conference in 1921-1922, settled only one disruptive element in the realm of naval arms. The issue, therefore, continued to disrupt Anglo-American relations throughout the decade, and the United States and Britain never moved further than *détente* during the 1920s. In fact, the relationship suffered even greater decline in 1927-1929 during the “cruiser crisis,” which caused this nadir. Not until the next decade, when the two great powers settled all their naval differences at the London Conference of 1930, and common threats from Asia emerged after 1931, and Europe after 1935, did Americans and Britons finally produce overriding mutual interests.¹

Ample evidence reveals that – contrary to the common narrative of the “Anglo-American” and “Atlanticist” historians of the past century – the First World War did not forge a new union of spirit between the English-speaking nations. The experiences of the War – the blockade, the blacklist, and like measures – engendered American antipathy for British

¹ B.J.C. McKercher, *Anglo-American Relations in the 1920s: The Struggle for Supremacy* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1990), 4; Stephen W. Roskill, *Naval Policy between the Wars*, vol. 1, *The Period of Anglo-American Antagonism, 1919-1929* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1979), 20, 300-330; Phillips Payson O’Brien, *British and American Naval Power: Politics and Policy, 1900-1936* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1998), 149-173, 179-202, 210-218.

seapower. The defeat of the Central Powers had not erased memories of the 1914-1916 Anglo-American controversies; and after the War, leaders like Woodrow Wilson, Edward House, William Benson, and others, sought an answer to “English navalism” as they had to “German militarism.” The War further elevated the United States to the rank of first-class powers. Its industrial and financial might suddenly rivaled that of the British Empire. Economic and military advisers feared that the British might resort to its naval power to check American expansion, as they believed it did during the conflict.

The foregoing demonstrates, against the assertions of several scholars, that United States military planners especially gave serious study to the new world that confronted them in 1918-1919 and drew conclusions accordingly. They looked at the course of the World War, and saw that, had the United States possessed a navy of the first-rank, it would not have suffered the depredations of the German submarine, nor the indignities of the Royal Navy. With Germany defeated, only Britain remained capable – in their opinion – to challenge American growth. Further, as was seen, it appeared apt to do so. Once again, the military establishment and the public administration drew from the events of the War and immediately after to reinforce their suspicions. They came to regard the blockade as a British plot to halt, or at least limit, the expansion of American global trade. The de Bunsen Mission to South America they viewed as a demonstration of England’s determination to steal away markets from under America’s nose, while the War continued, in secret. With the end of the War, the engagements between American and British leaders did little to endear the nations to one another. Their debates, at times sharp and heated – not those of the brotherly. The United States Navy, in particular, saw these exchanges as proof a return to Anglo-American antagonism, and Britain’s hostility to American naval and merchant expansion. The mixed record of the Peace Conference illuminates only that

the leaders of the United States and Great Britain did, in fact, agree when it came to shared interests – such as the League of Nations. In almost every other area, however, the delegations disagreed, because they did not share common interests.

The first full year of peace witnessed the gradual drift of the two great powers, as well as the beginnings of what became WAR PLAN RED. The foundational elements of America’s war plan against the British Empire, thus, emerged not out of the theoretical need for a generic, large-scale plan (as has so often been alleged), but in reaction to the events of the day. Planners saw Britain as a potentially hostile nation, which would regard the United States’ rise in strength as a threatening challenge to Britain’s historic economic and maritime supremacy. In the end, as B.J.C. McKercher observed, it did not matter whether those who determined foreign and military policy based their calculations on accurate appraisals, “the perception of reality was reality when making and implementing policy.”² This perception created PLAN RED.

² B.J.C. McKercher, “‘The Deep and Latent Distrust’: The British Official Mind and the United States, 1919-1929,” in *Anglo-American Relations*, 222.

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