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and the Crisis of
American Capitalism

Under the general editorship of J. Joseph Huthmacher, of the University of Delaware, and Warren I. Susman, of Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, the volumes in The American Forum Series bring together scholarly and interpretive essays by recognized authorities dealing with significant issues and problems in American and comparative history. Most of the essays presented in these volumes are commissioned especially for the Series and appear in print for the first time. The American Forum Series thus provides up-to-date summaries of its authors' research and ideas in their respective fields of study. A distinctive feature of the Series is the "Rejoinder" section of each volume, in which the authors comment on the essays of their fellow participants. By combining the functions of a scholarly journal with dialogue, the editors of The American Forum Series hope to inform and stimulate not only students but also scholars and teachers.

WILSON'S DIPLOMACY: AN INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM

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EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

Deep as present-day divisions over United States foreign policy may be, it should be recognized that "Great Debates" over America's proper stance in international affairs have been a recurrent phenomenon ever since the nation emerged as a significant world power at the turn of the twentieth century. At bottom, and on a philosophical level, these debates have usually pitted what are now commonly termed "realists" against so-called "idealists."[1] Realists contend that the United States should be content to play "the diplomatic game" along the more or less traditional lines established by other great powers of the past and present, wherein the "national interest" as perceived in political, economic, and strategic terms serves as the touchstone of high-policy decisions.[2] Needless to say, the effort to establish just wherein the national self-interest lies provides plenty of grist for internal argument within the realists' camp. Given the intricacies of that task, however, and given the realists' somewhat pessimistic outlook on the nature of mankind and the possibility of reforming his system of international intercourse, they would maintain that a relatively modest effort is more than enough to absorb the collective patience, intelligence, and resources of any nation, the United States included.

Idealists, on the other hand, have a much more ambitious conception of what the United States' role in world affairs should be.[3] Even before the nation was established, and ever since then, some Americans have entertained the notion that their country possessed a special "mission" to lead the peoples of the world to a better way of life both in terms of their domestic political, economic, and social arrangements, and in terms of their international conduct. Translated into the area of foreign policy, this concept necessitates that the United States work to rid the world of the traditional selfish, cynical, and frequently aggressive modes of international behavior that have prevailed in the past, producing only injustice, oppression, and war in their wake, and help institute instead a system that will be more conducive to the peace, prosperity, and advancement of all mankind. Just what form the better system should take is a question that, needless to say, has provoked intense argument within the idealists' camp. Despite the internal divisions among themselves, however, the idealists commonly share an optimistic view of human nature and of the possibility of improving man's system of international conduct.

In short they are, in contrast to the realists, reformers. To conceive of the American people's collective role on the world stage in any less terms, they maintain, is to belittle them to the level of the trouble-makers of the past, and to betray their special mission—their "exceptionalism."

Actually, the United States' foreign relations in the twentieth century have usually represented a blending of realism and idealism—a combining of her own self-interested political, economic, and strategic objectives with what many Americans, at least, have conceived as well-intentioned efforts to improve the well-being of other peoples and the level of international conduct. This blending process has resulted in the development of a shifting patchwork of specific stances in America's relations with various parts of the world and with the international community in general, in response to differing times and circumstances. In retrospect it might almost seem to present-day Americans that this "experimentation," in effect if not by design, has presented them with a series of alternatives to choose from in governing their current foreign policies—alternatives that historically, of course, frequently operated in combinations with one another.

Thus *isolationism* in its political if not economic sense, which was the keynote of the United States' attitude toward the world outside the Western Hemisphere through much of the nineteenth century, reasserted its sway in the 1920's and especially in the 1930's.[4] Some observers, rightly or wrongly, interpret the current protest against American military involvement overseas as portending another resurgence of isolationist sentiment among a large element of the population, especially the young.

Theodore Roosevelt, on the other hand, prided himself upon being an astute practicioner of traditional *"balance of power" politics* as developed by the great nations of nineteenth-century Europe.[5] To some extent all of America's leaders since Teddy Roosevelt's time have kept an eye on the world power balance, no matter what else they might be attempting to accomplish in the international arena. And according to present-day realists, of course, that should be their main preoccupation.

The earlier Roosevelt also developed the techniques of *"gunboat diplomacy"* under which the United States asserted and exercised a role as the self-appointed policeman of parts of Latin America down until the late 1920's.[6] Some commentators view America's relations with Cuba, Guatemala, and other Latin nations under the presidencies of Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson as representing a revival of the practice, if not the explicit reassertion, of that role.

Theodore Roosevelt and his successors down until the late 1930's, however, were compelled to resort to *"paper diplomacy"* (or *"kissing diplomacy"*) to back up their assertions of American territorial and Open

Door interests in the Far East, since public opinion would sanction nothing stronger than formal diplomatic agreements with Japan that relied for their enforcement on the presumed good-will and trustworthiness of the signatories.[7] Such agreements enjoyed an even broader vogue during the 1920's when they were extended to such subjects as the limitation of naval armaments among the great powers, and when more than sixty nations undertook to "outlaw" war by means of the Kellogg-Briand Pact of 1928.[8] Soon thereafter, unfortunately, all those agreements were treated as mere "scraps of paper" by nations whose ambitions they curbed. Nonetheless, a present-day variation on "kissing diplomacy" is to be found, according to some observers, among those Americans who espouse the diplomacy of "Flower Power" and "Love." Implicit in their attitude seems to be the belief that unilateral displays of good-will toward mankind on the part of the United States will solve most, if not all, of America's and the world's problems in the area of international relations, even without the formality of paper agreements, treaties, and pacts.

It remained for President Woodrow Wilson, whose diplomacy is the subject of this volume, to first propose to the United States and to the world community, in concrete form, the establishment of a system of *collective security through world organization*.[9] The idea itself did not originate with Wilson, of course, and during his administration he also engaged in balance of power politics, gunboat diplomacy, and paper diplomacy in varying times, places, and circumstances. Nonetheless Wilson was basically an idealist. (The extent to which he was also a realist is still a subject of debate, as is evident in the articles that follow.) Out of the influences that molded his life he emerged with the firm conviction that he and his country had a mission to lead the world in establishing an international body capable of imposing sanctions against peace-breakers, and capable in other ways of mobilizing the collective resources of nations to uplift the common lot of mankind. The result was his project for a League of Nations on behalf of which, perhaps, he led his own people into a catastrophic World War. At Versailles he fought, and compromised, to secure a peace treaty that incorporated the League covenant. And in the twilight of his presidency he literally spent his health in a vain effort to win acceptance of that treaty by his own countrymen.

It was inevitable, of course, that the vision, policies, and performance of such a man should be subjected to intense scrutiny both by his contemporaries and by historians; few figures in interational diplomacy—none in American diplomatic history—have commanded more attention than Woodrow Wilson. Isolationists, like the group of "Irreconcilables" who helped defeat the Treaty of Versailles in the United States Senate, rejected Wilson's handiwork from beginning to end.[10] On the other hand,

for years after Versailles many who accepted the validity of Wilson's vision sought to uncover alleged shortcomings in his preparation or tactics as a diplomat that had marred his ability to translate that vision into an equitable and workable reality. Some concluded, for example, that the President had too readily over-compromised his liberal ideals in efforts to placate the hard-nosed statemen of Britain, France, and Italy at the peace table. Others criticized his lack of rapport with the Senate and with Republican leaders as accounting for his failure to win ratification of the peace treaty. Some writers alleged that Wilson's ignorance or neglect of economic factors constituted the fatal flaw in the work done at Versailles. Others blamed Wilson's penchant for "self-determination" as resulting in the creation of an unstable middle-Europe.[11] Especially during the Second World War, when Wilson and his concept of collective security through world organization again enjoyed high favor in the United States, friendly critics combed the record of his diplomacy in search of such "mistakes," in order that President Franklin D. Roosevelt and the other American architects of the United Nations might not repeat them.

More recently in the years of the Cold War, however, and in the following disillusionment with the Cold War, Wilson's approach to America's role in world affairs has been subjected to even more fundamental, and more stinging, criticism from two directions. On one hand, as realists stepped up their attacks on the alleged American tendency to regard international affairs as a subject for reform, they frequently cited Wilson's wartime and postwar policies as prime examples of the "legalistic-moralistic" approach that is the root-trouble in American thinking about foreign affairs.[12] This position was anticipated by Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, and others, at the time of the Senate debate over the Treaty of Versailles.[13] On the other hand, New Left critics have cited those same policies as still another installment in the ongoing American effort to preserve a system of international capitalism stacked in favor of United States economic penetration—clothed as always, consciously or unconsciously, in the rhetoric of reform.[14] As the ensuing articles make clear, the essentials of the New Left position were also anticipated in some quarters at the time Wilson's diplomacy was being debated by his contemporaries. When widespread discontent with the Cold War and the Vietnam War set in during the late 1960's the New Left interpretation gained increasing support, particularly among the nation's youth.

Nevertheless, President Wilson has never lacked all-out supporters. Had he succeeded in achieving a Senate vote on the Treaty of Versailles soon after he returned from Paris, it is possible that the treaty might have been approved and the United States would have joined the League of Nations. Even after his personal ordeal ended in tragic defeat, and after the League fell far short of its exponents' expectations, there were those who staunchly sustained the luster of Wilson's diplomacy. The President's performance at Versailles was creditable enough, his defenders maintain; without his presence there the treaty would have been incalculably worse.[15] The League's downfall they attribute to those in the Senate who kept the United States from joining, and to the failure of the great powers to make full use of the its potential during subsequent crises in the 1920's and 1930's. Above all, Wilson's admirers extoll his stature as a prophetic pioneer along the road to international organization which, they contend, the world must still travel if mankind is to survive. Indeed, there is a possibility that, as the younger generation's alienation from the "old politics" and the "old diplomacy" mounts, the necessity to formulate alternate systems may lead it somewhere in the direction toward which Woodrow Wilson pointed.

It would be beyond the intent and scope of this volume to include writers representative of all the above viewpoints regarding Wilson's diplomacy. Instead, the editors have invited four scholars of different national origins, each of whom enjoys an international reputation, to discuss aspects of the Wilson story that particularly interest them. In the course of their writings the authors touch, in one way or another, upon most if not all of the pro- and anti-Wilson positions described above. But what emerges is by no means a "composite portrait," nor is such intended. Instead, we believe that these authors will convey to their audience an international perspective from which to evaluate Woodrow Wilson's many-faceted impact on his own country and generation, and upon other countries and subsequent generations—a perspective that may prove strikingly novel and illuminating for many American readers.

In the first essay Professor Arthur S. Link, the most knowledgeable Wilson scholar in the United States, presents a newly reassessed overview of Wilson as diplomatist. While Link is acknowledged to be one of Wilson's most astute defenders, it should prove interesting to note where, and to what extent, he agrees with various of the wartime President's critics. In the second article Professor Jean-Baptiste Duroselle, of the Sorbonne, surveys the changing attitudes toward Wilson and his policies manifested by the various segments of French political opinion between 1916 and 1924. Readers with a general background in American history may want to compare these currents of foreign opinion with the fluctuations in attitudes toward the President that took place in his own country during those same years. Next, Professor Ernst Fraenkel, a leading Ger-

man scholar, depicts the image of Wilson that emerged among his countrymen during the war and postwar period, and the influence which that image exerted on both internal German politics and Germany's foreign relations for years thereafter. Useful comparisons can be drawn between the impressions that Wilson made on Frenchmen on the one hand, and Germans on the other; one might also measure the extent to which those contemporary impressions anticipated the judgments of later historians. In the final essay, Professor H. G. Nicholas, a noted English authority on American studies, considers the sources of Wilson's diplomatic thinking and conduct. It is interesting to compare the analyses made by Professors Nicholas and Link concerning that intriguing subject, especially with respect to the question of Wilson's "American-ness." In the "Rejoinder" section which follows the articles, three of the contributors elucidate their views on that matter, and other aspects of the Wilson record.*

Thus the purport of this volume is, in part, biographical, presenting as it does a comparative approach to the study of Woodrow Wilson, the man and the diplomat. Yet inevitably it should serve also to raise consideration of broader questions: To what extent did Wilson's diplomacy represent distinctively American attitudes—American "exceptionalism"—regarding the nature of international relations? How much have those attitudes changed in the years that have passed since Wilsonianism flourished? Should American foreign policy be conceived and executed in terms of reforming the world order? If so, in what direction? Is the Wilsonian vision of collective security through world organization a desirable goal to work for today and in the future? In the light of history, is it a feasible objective? If not, what are the alternatives for the United States, and for the world?

Such questions obviously transcend the evaluation of the achievements of a single diplomat; ultimately they involve one's whole perception of the nature of politics, of international relations, and of the human condition in general. But so profound was Woodrow Wilson's impact on American and world history that consideration of his life's significance is inextricably bound up with these most fundamental of all issues. Few statesmen, whether their work has been for better or worse, have compelled their own and subsequent generations throughout the world to probe so deeply into the meaning, the potentialities, and the destiny of mankind's existence.

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* Unfortunately, Professor Fraenkel was unable to contribute a rejoinder for inclusion in this volume.

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NOTES

1. See Jerald A. Combs, *Nationalist, Realist, and Radical: Three Views of American Diplomacy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972); Robert Osgood, *Ideals and Self-interest in America's Foreign Relations* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953); Gabriel Almond, *The American People and Foreign Policy* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1950); and the symposium "National Interest and Moral Principles in Foreign Policy," *American Scholar* 18 (Spring 1949).

2. See Hans J. Morgenthau, *In Defense of the National Interest* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1952), and other writings; and George F. Kennan, *American Diplomacy, 1900–1950* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951).

3. See Frank Tannenbaum, *The American Tradition in Foreign Policy* (Norman, Okla.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1955); and Dexter Perkins, *The American Approach to Foreign Policy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952).

4. See Selig Adler, *The Isolationist Impulse: Its Twentieth-Century Reaction* (New York: Abelard-Schuman, 1957); William A. Williams, "The Legend of Isolationism in the 1920's," *Science and Society* XVIII (1954); Manfred Jonas, *Isolationism in America, 1935–1941* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1966); and Lloyd C. Gardner, *Economic Aspects of New Deal Diplomacy* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1964).

5. See Howard K. Beale, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Rise of America to World Power* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1956); and G. Wallace Chessman, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Politics of Power* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1969).

6. See Dexter Perkins, *A History of the Monroe Doctrine* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1955); Samuel Flagg Bemis, *The Latin American Policy of the United States* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1943); and Dana G. Munro, *Intervention and Dollar Diplomacy in the Caribbean, 1900–1921* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964).

7. See A. Whitney Griswold, *The Far Eastern Policy of the United States* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962).

8. See Merze Tate, *The United States and Armaments* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1948); Raymond G. O'Connor, *Perilous Equilibrium* (Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 1962); and Robert H. Ferrell, *Peace in Their Time* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952).

9. See Arthur S. Link, *Wilson the Diplomatist* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1957), and other writings, particularly Link's multi-volume biography that is now in progress; John Morton Blum, *Woodrow Wilson and the Politics of Morality* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1956); John A. Garraty, *Woodrow Wilson: A Great Life in Brief* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1956); and Harley Notter, *Origins of the Foreign Policy of Woodrow Wilson* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1937).

10. See Adler, *Isolationist Impulse;* and Marion C. McKenna, *Borah* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1961).

11. See Thomas A. Bailey, *Woodrow Wilson and the Lost Peace* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1944), and *Woodrow Wilson and the Great Betrayal* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1945); Harold Nicolson, *Peacemaking: 1919* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1930); John Maynard Keynes, *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1920); and Etienne Mantoux, *The Carthaginian Peace* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946).

12. See Morgenthau, *National Interest;* and Kennan, *American Diplomacy.*

13. See John A. Garraty, *Henry Cabot Lodge* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953).

14. See William A. Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* (Cleveland: World Publishing Co., 1959); Lloyd C. Gardner, "American Foreign Policy, 1900–1921," in *Towards A New Past,* ed. Barton J. Bernstein (New York: Pantheon, 1968); N. Gordon Levin, Jr., *Woodrow Wilson and World Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968); and Carl P. Parrini, *Heir to Empire: United States Economic Diplomacy, 1916–1923* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1969).

15. See Paul Birdsall, *Versailles Twenty Years After* (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1941).

ESSAYS