

2009



H-Diplo Roundtable Reviews

www.h-net.org/~diplo/roundtables

Volume X, No. 7 (2009)

10 March 2009

Erez Manela. *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007. ISBN: 978-0195176155.

Roundtable Editor: Thomas Maddux

Reviewers: Cemil Aydin, Matthew J. Connelly, David S. Patterson, Odd Arne Westad

Stable URL: <http://www.h-net.org/~diplo/roundtables/PDF/Roundtable-X-7.pdf>

Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Introduction by Thomas Maddux, California State University, Northridge..... | 2 |
| Review by Cemil Aydin, University of North Carolina-Charlotte | 6 |
| Review by Matthew J. Connelly, Columbia University | 11 |
| Review by David S. Patterson, Independent Scholar..... | 14 |
| Review by Odd Arne Westad, London School of Economics and Political Science | 17 |
| Author's Response by Erez Manela, Harvard University | 21 |

Copyright © 2009 H-Net: Humanities and Social Sciences Online.

H-Net permits the redistribution and reprinting of this work for non-profit, educational purposes, with full and accurate attribution to the author(s), web location, date of publication, H-Diplo, and H-Net: Humanities & Social Sciences Online. For other uses, contact the H-Diplo editorial staff at h-diplo@h-net.msu.edu.

Introduction by Thomas Maddux, California State University, Northridge

In Thomas Bailey's classic *A Diplomatic History of the American People*, President Woodrow Wilson arrived on the *George Washington* at Brest on December 13, 1918 for the start of the Paris Peace Conference, and received, from Brest to Paris to London and Rome, an enthusiastic welcome as a second messiah. It was definitely a "Wilsonian Moment" which Bailey captured in his text and monographs on Wilson and WWI. However, Bailey necessarily moved Wilson and the focus at Versailles to the major issues that preoccupied Wilson, Lloyd George, and Georges Clemenceau: Germany, the League of Nations, and Europe. In his recent *From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations since 1776*, George Herring offers a similar perspective on the "Wilsonian Moment." Herring does reflect the changed perspective of the 21st century and notes at several points that Wilson's rhetoric of self-determination and emphasis on its universality in the "New Diplomacy" based on the League of Nations stirred up considerable hopeful expectations among leaders of colonial peoples from Egypt to Korea. In several references to Erez Manela's study, Herring notes the ensuing disappointment among colonial leaders and an ensuing shift to the left in the anti-colonial movement.¹

The reviewers agree that Manela's book represents not only a significant addition to the literature on the First World War peace negotiations and settlement but also an important shift in perspective to an international history approach. By focusing on the colonial world with emphasis on Egypt, India, China, and Korea, Manela redirects the perspective on the "Wilsonian Moment". Manela makes it clear that the opportunities and challenges of this period were evident to actors at the time, and that he has not imposed an empty analytical device upon the past. Manela devotes significant attention to Wilson, the development of his ideas on self-determination, the shifts in his ideas and their relationship with Vladimir Lenin's ideas, as well as the manner in which Wilson's ideas were circulated by telegraph, international news agencies, and the U.S. propaganda campaign led by the Committee on Public Information. The most original contribution in Manela's study comes when he shifts focus to how colonial nationalist leaders enthusiastically welcomed Wilson's rhetoric in their speeches on self-determination, appropriated his principles, and used them to shift their organizations and movements to demand nationalist independence, sooner or later, from the colonial powers. "The principle of nationalism, which rejected the legitimacy of empire and took the self-determining nation-state as the sole legitimate entity in international relations," Manela concludes, "thus became a central component of the new international order that anticolonial activists saw emerging." (61-62)

The reviewers do raise some questions and reflections on international history as well as suggestions for extending the focus of the "Wilsonian Moment" to broaden its significance:

1.) Matthew Connelly suggests that Manela's study has to meet three critical tests to persuade historians that international history has enduring merit, (1) whether "the subject

¹ George Herring, *From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations since 1776* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008): 418-427.

at hand is international in scope,” (2) whether it became international “because of structural similarity in initial conditions, or interaction among the leading protagonists, or some other factor that can only be identified through the broadest possible approach,” and (3) whether the analysis is “sufficiently grounded in local contexts to convince area specialists that they have to look at them in a new way....” (1-2) Connelly suggests that Manela has considerable success on these three tests but raises other issues, such as a transnational context on “the way Wilsonianism encouraged activism among minorities within the colonial metropolises and influenced state formation—or disintegration—as in the case of China.” Connelly also would have welcomed more on how the different national actors “interacted or at least learned from one another’s example.” (2-3)

2.) David Patterson approaches the subject of international history from another perspective, microhistory as exemplified in Manela’s “intensive and sustained focus” on a six-month period with an examination of national self-determination. Patterson concludes that Manela is successful in exploring the “Wilsonian moment”, both on the side of Wilson, the leaders in the four countries, their hopes and efforts to make the most of their opportunities, and the ensuing anti-colonial protests and rebellions that took place in the aftermath of Wilson’s failure to accomplish much on self-determination in their arenas. Patterson, however, suggests that more macrohistory on the broader democratic surge of the period and the efforts of anticolonial reformers before and after Wilson would have strengthened Manela’s study.

3.) Connelly, Cemil Aydin and Odd Arne Westad suggest that Manela’s study raises important questions about those leaders who did not join in the “Wilsonian moment” and instead pursued their interests in different terms, such as with the Khalifate movement, or the Pan-Africanists. In another sense Connelly notes a need for comparative history on Manela’s topic to examine why many colonial capitals did not witness anti-colonial protests as occurred in North and West Africa. Aydin approaches Manela’s analysis from both sides, noting the existence of the “Wilsonian Moment” among Ottoman Muslim intellectuals and political leaders who shared the hopes of Manela’s leaders to use Wilsonian principles at the peace conference and in Japan where the excitement over Wilsonian principles was evident even among Pan-Asianists. Aydin also raises three points for further discussion, most specifically, (1) the relationship of Wilsonian ideas to pre-war anti-colonial internationalism; (2) the question of whether or not Manela’s focus on Wilson reinforces the prevalent “Euro-American centered narratives about the international history of decolonization” and the desirability of pursuing the interaction among non-Western nationalist actors; and (3) how the “Wilsonian Moment” compares with other movements in the period such as Lenin and the Bolsheviks which Manela views as having less impact until disappointment sets in over Wilson, and “Pan-Islamic activism in the form of the Caliphate Moment” and the “Mustafa Kemalian Moment”. Odd Arne Westad, who would like more discussion on five issues, views the Leninist moment as already a competitive factor before the Versailles conference and suggests that views of the U.S. were more mixed than Manela suggests in China and elsewhere.(2)

4.) The reviewers raise questions about Wilson with respect to his role and impact. Patterson, for example, questions Manela’s sympathy for the anticolonial leaders who

turned to Wilson and his ideas and tried to make the most of them and the moment. Patterson questions the realism of these leaders: “They were educated and intelligent leaders, yet they uncritically idolized Wilson and fervently believed that their appeals for his support would internationalize the nationalist movement and coerce the imperial powers ... to acquiesce in their independence.” (3) Connelly suggests that some readers might find Wilson’s role exaggerated and that insufficient attention has been devoted to broader political-economic trends that influenced the reaction of people in different places to the self-determination message. Westad questions whether Wilson ever really intended for his principles to extend beyond Europe and “mainly got caught up in his own rhetoric with regard to non-Europeans” on self-determination. (3)

5.) Finally, Manela offers revealing glimpses into how Wilson perceived the “Wilsonian Moment” from his first major address on the new international order in 1916 to his deferral of self-determination issues outside of Europe to the new League of Nations. Manela tends to confirm existing historiographical assessments on Wilson and self-determination, noting his earnest idealism, his willingness to broaden self-determination in response to the enthusiasm of colonial leaders beyond the European theater, his increasing preoccupation with dealing with European leaders and their stances on the League, Germany, the new states in Eastern Europe, and the Bolshevik revolution, and the resistance he encountered from many advisers on taking a firmer, immediate stance on self-determination with respect to Manela’s case studies. Westad questions whether Wilson’s ideas were as influential as Manela suggests in comparison with the impact of the war itself in undermining Western power and credibility. Manela paints a revealing picture of Wilson worried about the hopes he generated over self-determination and the reaction that would ensure when the failure to accomplish much became evident.

Participants:

Erez Manela is the Dunwalke Associate Professor of American history at Harvard University. He received his Ph.D. in 2003 from Yale University, winning the John Addison Porter Prize and the Mary & Arthur Wright Prize for his dissertation. He has published a number of articles and essays in the *American Historical Review*, *International Journal*, *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, and *Middle Eastern Studies*, and in a number of edited volumes. Manela is currently working on a history of the global campaign to eradicate smallpox in the twentieth century.

Cemil Aydin studied at Boğaziçi University, İstanbul University, and the University of Tokyo before receiving his Ph.D. from Harvard University in 2002. He has conducted research as junior scholar at the Harvard Academy for International and Area Studies and as a post-doctoral fellow at Princeton University. He teaches at the University of North Carolina-Charlotte. His publications include *Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia: Visions of World Order in Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian Thought* (Columbia University Press, Global and International History Series, 2007), and a co-edited special volume on “Critiques of the ‘West’ in Iran, Turkey and Japan” in *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 26:3 (Fall 2006). Aydin is currently writing a book on transnational Islamic thought

during the era of decolonization and the Cold War. He is also going to contribute a book to the Routledge series on Themes of World History.

Matthew Connelly is associate professor of history at Columbia University. His new book, *Fatal Misconception: The Struggle to Control World Population*, was published by Harvard University Press in 2008. He is also the author of *A Diplomatic Revolution: Algeria's Fight for Independence and the Origins of the Post-Cold War Era* (Oxford University Press in 2002). He is currently working on a critical study of how forecasting, projections, and future scenarios became tools of governance. His research articles have appeared in such journals as *The American Historical Review*, *Past & Present*, and *Comparative Studies in Society and History*. He has also published commentary on international affairs in *The Atlantic Monthly*, *The National Interest*, and *The Wilson Quarterly*. He received his B.A. from Columbia (1990) and his Ph.D. from Yale (1997).

David S. Patterson has served as a historian in both academia and government. Besides teaching at several major universities, he was for several years chief editor of the *Foreign Relations of the United States* series at the U.S. Department of State. He is author of *Toward a Warless World: The Travail of the American Peace Movement, 1887-1914* (Indiana University Press) and many articles in the fields of diplomatic and peace history. His recent book is *The Search for Negotiated Peace: Women's Activism and Citizen Diplomacy in World War I* (Routledge, 2008).

Odd Arne Westad received his PhD in history from the University of North Carolina in 1990. He is Professor of International History at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE). He co-directs the LSE Cold War Studies Centre with Professor Michael Cox, and is an editor of the journal *Cold War History* and the editor (with Professor Melvyn Leffler) of the forthcoming three-volume *Cambridge History of the Cold War*. Professor Westad has published twelve books on international history and contemporary international affairs. His 2006 book *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* won the Bancroft Prize, the Akira Iriye International History Book Award, and the Michael Harrington Award from the American Political Science Association. Other major books from recent years include *The Cold War: A History in Documents and Eyewitness Accounts* (2003; with Jussi Hanhimäki); *Decisive Encounters: The Chinese Civil War, 1945-1950* (2003), and *Reviewing the Cold War: Approaches, Interpretations, Theory* (2000).

In this groundbreaking work on the international struggles of decolonization and the future of the world order in 1919, Erez Manela persuasively demonstrates the historical significance of what he calls the “Wilsonian Moment” for understanding the later story of nationalism and empires. After carefully narrating the four case studies of nationalist resurgence and activism in Egypt, India, China, and Korea in a very short span of time, with very similar language of rights and legality of self-determination inspired by Wilson’s principles, Manela demonstrates the “broad anticolonial nationalist upheaval that was inherently international” (p. ix). While presenting his case for the interconnectedness of various anti-colonial struggles, which were often studied in their national contexts in isolation from each other, Manela argues that the failure to realize some of the promises of Wilsonian universalism at the Paris Peace Conference was as important as the initial firing of nationalist imaginations by Woodrow Wilson’s rhetoric. In fact, “the disillusionment that followed the collapse of the Wilsonian Moment” (p.5) is crucial in understanding the interwar era mood of anti-colonial nationalism.

Manela’s nuanced argument is not celebratory of the rise of American power or the promotion of American idealism. In fact, for him, the long-term significance of the Wilsonian Moment lies in the tension between the empowerment of the legitimacy of anti-imperial demands and the very betrayal of the demands of equality and self-determination by the post-WWI settlement among the victorious empires in Paris. Although the non-Western actors lost their confidence in international law, or the League of Nations, the idea of the illegitimacy of the empires and the inevitability of national liberation became the defining characteristics of the interwar period. Manela’s research illustrates why we should consider the 1919 Wilsonian Moment a turning point in the history of decolonization, despite the disappointments created by the Paris Peace Conference. Something changes from the 1910s to the 1920s in the sense that the anti-colonial nationalists began to claim a natural “right” to self-determination, though the idea of requiring merit of civilization to deserve nationhood continued to be used by imperial elites, League of Nations officers, and even nationalists themselves.¹ New norms of legitimacy and rights popularized by the rising nationalist movements led to the demise of empires, despite the fact that the British, French and Japanese empires hoped to bolster their power after their victory over their rivals.

I should here note that during my research on the impact of WWI in Japan and Ottoman Turkey, I was struck by how Erez Manela’s Wilsonian Moment argument applies to public opinion in these two non-Western empires as well. Ottoman Muslim intellectuals and political leaders were as enthusiastic about the Wilsonian Principles as anti-colonial nationalist leaders. In fact, the Ottoman Empire’s leaders hoped to achieve an acceptable peace agreement for themselves at the Paris Peace Conference by appealing to the “Wilsonian Principles” in their official memorandum. It was the harsh rejection of Ottoman

¹ For the importance of internalized discourses of “standard of civilization” in pre-Wilsonian era anti-colonial thought, see Cemil Aydin, “Beyond Civilization: Pan-Islamism, Pan-Asianism and the Revolt against the West” *Journal of Modern European History*, 4:2 (Fall 2006): 204-223.

demands, and the Muslim perception of the betrayal of the idea of self-determination, that strengthened the Turkish War for Independence under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal. Imperial Japan was an ally of the British Empire and thus it was on the side of victorious powers at the end of WWI. Yet, even in Japan, the Wilsonian Principles led to great excitement among various segments of the public, even among Pan-Asianists. In fact, Japan's proposal for race equality at the Paris Peace Conference reflected the optimistic universalism at the end of WWI coinciding with this "Wilsonian Moment".²

Erez Manela's well formulated and argued book is exemplary for the discipline of global history, especially in the way Manela demonstrates how to execute a multi-archival, multi-lingual research project to tell a truly international story. Taking Manela's arguments as a starting point, I would like to raise three points for further conversation and research

1. Did the Wilsonian Moment encapsulate an already existing trope of anti-colonial nationalism, namely Western imperialism's betrayal of Enlightened universal values? Manela's book teaches us that we have to see the development of nationalism in various parts of the world from the international angle, in the context of global forces of legitimacy and solidarity. Since there was a tradition of anti-colonial internationalism before the "Wilsonian Moment," how should we relate the Wilsonian Moment to the pre-1919 anti-colonial internationalisms, as seen in Pan-Islamic or Pan-Asian visions of solidarity or various forms of socialist and liberal projects of cooperation?³ As I have tried to illustrate in my own research on Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian thought, both the projects of Muslim solidarity against the "modern crusade" of imperialism or ideas of solidarity of the yellow race against "white hegemony" emphasize a language of contradictions between Western ideals of civilization and imperial reality. Similar to the disappointments of the failure of the Wilsonian promise, earlier pre-WWI versions of demands for equality and autonomy in the non-Western world underlined imperialism's betrayal of the promise of equality, autonomy and civilization embedded in Western universalism of the Enlightenment.⁴ In that sense, was there not an earlier, simmering feeling of disappointment generated by the betrayal of the universalist promises of Western enlightenment if we read the writings of Egyptian nationalists like Mustafa Kamil or Indian leaders such as Rabindranath Tagore and Aurobindo Ghose, or Chinese nationalist Sun Yat-sen?⁵ Similarly, was not anti-colonial nationalism already internationalist before WWI, as is best exemplified by Sun Yat-sen's contacts in Tokyo, which included not only his Japanese supporters, but figures from India,

² Miwa Kimitada, "Japanese Opinions on Woodrow Wilson in War and Peace." *Monumenta Nipponica* 22, nos. 3-4 (1967): 368-389.

³ See my work on Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian thought, Cemil Aydin, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia: Visions of World Order in Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian Thought* (New York: Columbia University Press, Global and International History Series, 2007). Also see Rebecca Karl, *Staging the World: Chinese Nationalism at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2002).

⁴ For example, Halil Halid, a Young Turk intellectual exile in Europe, wrote extensively about the contradiction between European universalist ideals of civilization and its imperialist policies before WWI. See Halil Halid, *The Crescent Versus the Cross* (London: Luzac, 1907).

⁵ Stephan N. Hay, *Asian Ideas of East and West: Tagore and His Critics in Japan, China, and India* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970); J. Y. Wong, ed., *Sun Yatsen: His International Ideas and International Connections* (Sydney, N.S.W.: Wild Peony, 1987); Michael Laffan, "Watan and Negeri: Mustafa Kamil's 'Rising Sun' in the Malay World," *Indonesia Circle*, no. 69 (1996): 157-175.

Vietnam or the Philippines?⁶ Anti-colonial struggles in the Islamic world, often associated with Islamic modernism, were also interconnected. For example, the Young Turk leaders of the 1908 Constitutional Revolution became heroes in the Islamic world, and received countless numbers of petitions from Muslims in Africa, India or Southeast Asia, demanding their support against Western colonial rule.⁷

In different parts of the book, Manela gives various arguments about the uniqueness of the Wilsonian Moment in terms of anti-colonial internationalism: different than the earlier version of disillusionment with European imperialism's betrayal of Enlightenment promises, 1919 was a moment of mass media, with higher level of simultaneity. After all, all eyes were focused on the Paris Peace Conference. Moreover, pre-1919 instances of anti-colonial solidarity still assumed the existence of empires as basic units of world order, while post-Wilsonian Moment anti-colonial thought is more nation-state focused. Manela also notes how the Wilsonian Moment took the already existing anti-colonial imagination and merged it with the expectations of the United States as a new global power and with a promise of an international institutional setting, the League of Nations. Yet, it will be useful to consider whether the disappointments with the Paris Peace Conference somehow built on and reflected a dominant anti-colonial discourse about new imperialism's betrayal of the ideals associated with the French Revolution, Enlightenment or civilization.

2. Does the book's focus on Woodrow Wilson's impact reinforce the already existing Euro-American centered narratives about the international history of decolonization? Manela's main argument may initially seem paradoxical. He successfully offers a non-Eurocentric view of international history, focusing on visions and actions of peoples in non-Western lands, often considered peripheral to world affairs by the great powers gathered in Paris. Yet, he does this with a focus on the global influence of Wilsonian principles. While he is emphasizing how Wilsonian rhetoric empowered the legal language of anti-colonial demands and emboldened the nationalist imagination, Manela emphasizes that it is those in India, China, Egypt or Korea, who were an "unintended" audience for Wilson, who acted on the moment, and utilized it in a way beyond the material conditions of their power relationship with their colonizers.

I would like to pursue Manela's methodological suggestion of overcoming Eurocentric views of international history and ask how we can incorporate aspects of international history primarily about interactions among non-Western nationalist actors. From the 1880s onwards, there has been an increasing level of interaction and communication between the various political actors in the Muslim world and Asia. Pilgrimage to Mecca facilitated more political dialogue and the Ottoman caliphate gained more international prestige. Similarly, intra-Buddhist networks or student and nationalist gatherings in Tokyo symbolized alternatives to the Eurocentric imperial world order. Gandhi's activities in South Africa and his later support for the caliphate movement, Javanese emissaries in Istanbul, the increasing role of the Arabic language press of Cairo for Islamic reformism

⁶ Marius Jansen, *The Japanese and Sun Yat-sen* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954).

⁷ M. Şükrü Hanioğlu, *Preparation for a Revolution: The Young Turks, 1902–1908* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

from Central Asia to Malaysia or the intellectual dialogue in the Chinese cultural zone of East Asia all serve as illustrative examples of non-Eurocentric agency in the history of decolonization.⁸ In 1905, the global moment of the Russo-Japanese War help shake off the Darwinist notions of race inferiority and empower the civilizational claims of Asian-Eastern awakening from Turkey and Iran to India and China.⁹ Manela's methodology is very sensitive to south-south interaction in understanding modern international history. In this story of the Wilsonian Moment, is Manela suggesting that we should recognize the insufficiency of Eurocentric narratives but also must be aware of the fact that developments at the heart of the empires are still indispensable for writing a truly global history of decolonization? Or is the methodology of new international history that Manela has executed, with great attention the interconnectedness of actors in global public sphere, already eliminating the concerns with Eurocentrism as it could talk about Wilson, Sa'd Zaglul, Lajpat Rai and Ho Chi Minh as actors of history with equal significance, sharing the same universe of legitimacy?

3. How does the Wilsonian Moment compare and relate to other global, or sub-global, moments in a period from 1917 to 1924? Manela discusses the issue of the "Bolshevik Moment" when he compares the reception of Wilson and Lenin. As he underlines, anti-colonial nationalism of this era made more of Wilson's rhetoric and ideals than Lenin's, at least in the early stages.¹⁰

Another important development after the Wilsonian Moment was the revival of Pan-Islamic activism, in the form of the Caliphate Movement, from the moment of the Paris Peace Conference's harsh decision to divide the Ottoman Empire to the successful conclusion of the Turkish War for independence. This new India-centered Pan-Islamism was different from the pre-WWI era notions of Islamic solidarity, as it combined ideas of Islamic solidarity with the Wilsonian claim that Muslims in Ottoman Turkey deserved the right to self-determination.¹¹ When the Turkish national movement succeeded in defeating the Sevres Treaty and reached an agreement with the British Empire at Lausanne in 1923, it seemed as if the new Pan-Islamic solidarity had triumphed. Then came the crucial decision of the Turkish national assembly in March 1924 to abolish the caliphate, a fatal

⁸ Kahawatte Siri Sumedha Theor. *Anagarika Dharmapala: A Glorious Life Dedicated to the Cause of Buddhism*. (Sarnath, Varanasi: Maha Bodhi Society of India, 1999). For a good exposition of intra-Buddhist networks, see Richard Jaffe, "Seeking Sakyamuni: Travel and the Reconstruction of Japanese Buddhism," *Journal of Japanese Studies* 30:1 (Winter 2004): 65–96.

⁹ Cemil Aydin, "A Global Anti-Western Moment? The Russo-Japanese War, Decolonization and Asian Modernity" in *Conceptions of World Order, ca. 1880-1935. Global Moments and Movements*, Sebastian Conrad, Dominic Sachsenmaier, eds., (New York City: Palgrave Transnational History Series, 2007), 213-236.

¹⁰ The Baku Congress of the Peoples of the East in 1920 was partly an attempt by the Bolsheviks to utilize the disillusionment of Eastern nationalist by the failure of the Wilsonian Principles. John Riddell, ed., *To See the Dawn: Baku, 1920—First Congress of the Peoples of the East*, (New York: Pathfinder, 1993).

¹¹ Lothrop Stoddard, for example, perceived Pan-Islamism as one of the instances of a "rising tide of color against the West" in the post-WWI period. See Lothrop Stoddard, *The New World of Islam* (New York: Scribner, 1921). For English language books representing the Wilsonian elements in post-WWI Pan-Islamic thought, see Mushir Hosain Kidwai. *The Future of the Muslim Empire: Turkey* (London: Central Islamic Society, 1919); and Mushir Hosain Kidwai, *The Sword Against Islam; or, A Defence of Islam's Standard-Bearers* (London: Central Islamic Society, 1919).

blow to the Pan-Islamic Caliphate Movement, paradoxically at the peak of its popularity. The decision to establish a republic after ending the centuries-long rule of the Ottoman dynasty and later abolishing the Ottoman caliphate meant that Turkey withdrew its claim to leadership in the decolonizing Islamic world. This was a highly influential decision for the later history of nationalist movements in the Muslim world, making nationalist struggles the only realist option available.¹² One can see a kind of “Mustafa Kemalian Moment” in the Muslim world, extending from 1923 to 1924. This Mustafa Kemalian Moment was partly inspired by the Wilsonian Moment, but also reinforced the long-term impact of the Wilsonian Principles. It would be a counterfactual conjecture to think what would have happened if Turkey had kept the institution of Caliphate, and an associated claim of leadership in the Muslim world. Should we not think of the Wilsonian Moment in relation to not only Lenin, but also Mustafa Kemal and Gandhi, when we think of its long-term impact on interwar era nationalism in Asia? What other global moments can Manela think of in terms of helping us to understand the evolution of the 20th century international order?

These aforementioned three questions, which emerged from my own experience of teaching Manela’s book and articles in international history classes, illustrate the impact and appeal of the main argument of the Wilsonian Moment. Manela’s book is becoming classic reading for both graduate students who are pursuing new ways to understand the origins of global world order, and for undergraduate students, who are always inspired by the implications of the book’s argument in re-thinking America’s relationship to third world nationalism.

¹² Mohammad Sadiq. *The Turkish Revolution and the Indian Freedom Movement* (Delhi: Macmillan India, 1983).

Errez Manela is a rising star among a small but growing cohort of historians who strive to work outside national and regional historiographical traditions. Together they are grappling with problems that, by their very nature, call for an international or even transnational approach – that is, one that does not presume the nation-state is the natural unit of analysis, or that historians have to stick to one part of the world even when the movements they study do not. He brings considerable strengths to this pursuit, above all an amazing facility with languages and a willingness to work in very different contexts. But he does not limit his subject only to what he can study through primary sources. Instead, he has made judicious use of the scholarly literature to support a truly ambitious analysis.

This is the kind of work that leading historians have been demanding for almost forty years. And now, at last, we are beginning to have a body of work that can show not just the promise, or the potential, but the real accomplishments of international history. The time is coming when, as I've heard Manela say, no department will consider itself complete without at least one such historian. But to convince the rest of the profession the best work in the field will have to meet three critical tests.

First, it must be demonstrated that the subject at hand is international in scope and does not appear as such only because of surface similarities or mere simultaneity. In this case, was the response to Wilsonianism a significant factor in shaping political developments in widely dispersed places? It could be argued that it merely provided slogans and tactical advantages to elites who might have pursued much the same program without Wilson's influence. International history, in other words, must identify the proper subjects for study.

If the subject can be shown to be truly international in nature and extent, and we want more than mere description, the best history must help us understand why it assumed this character – whether because of structural similarity in initial conditions, or interaction among the leading protagonists, or some other factor that can only be identified through the broadest possible approach. Some might argue that this book puts Wilson at the center of what is supposed to be a more de-centered world, in which mere words weave together disparate peoples who have little else in common. International history should teach us how world politics can shape people's lives, in this case both inspiring and provoking broad social movements, rather than merely providing them with a new language to repackage the local and particular.

This is also why international history must at the same time be sufficiently grounded in local contexts to convince area specialists that they have to look at them in a new way, one that would not be apparent if they were only studied in isolation. In this case, does *The Wilsonian Moment* teach us something both new and true about the history of Egypt, China, India, and Korea? To me, Manela's readings of the first two cases seem particularly strong. But scholars who have devoted their careers to studying these countries have yet to weigh in. Some may bridle at the central importance Manela assigns to Wilson. Imagine, for instance, a study of protest movements in 1960s America, which – based on the banners

people carried and the texts they quoted – concluded it was Mao Zedong who gave the Black Power movement its meaning and cohesion, or that Che Guevara did the same for anti-Vietnam protesters.

But I am convinced that Manela has amply demonstrated that the reception of Wilson's ideas was an international phenomenon, quite an achievement in itself. In doing so, he also challenges Arno Mayer's famous argument that this period witnessed a titanic clash between Wilson and Lenin. Manela shows that initially, outside Europe, there was no competition, and it was only disappointment in Wilson and America that led many to turn elsewhere.

Manela offers a nuanced reading of Wilson's ideas about self-determination and, like other scholars, stresses how they were informed by his understanding of race relations. But he is careful to note that it was not merely the force of his ideas, but the perception of America's real and imagined power to determine the peace that elicited a response. Moreover, he explains how communication networks and, in some cases, more or less savvy publicity strategies facilitated the spread of Wilson's message further than Wilson himself had intended. Where some would have been satisfied to show that Wilson's ideas really did resonate, Manela goes the extra mile – quite literally – to explain how, specifically, they spread.

Those inclined to see broader political-economic trends as driving change might have dwelled more on whether and how social conditions made people in dispersed places receptive to the message of self-determination. Manela is skeptical that the war can, by itself, explain the upheaval that followed, but does not offer a political-economic analysis of his own. Instead, the strength of *The Wilsonian Moment* is in describing how ideas are received and become operational in different political contexts, including the diplomatic realm of great power relations. He makes the case by examining sets of actors each in their turn, describing how they responded to Wilson in remarkably similar ways.

Here again, this is quite an accomplishment, but it prompts new questions. For instance, Manela shows that nationalism needs to be understood as an international phenomenon, in which diplomacy does not merely settle borders, but can inspire or provoke bottom-up movements. But I would have liked to read more about the *transnational* context, such as the way Wilsonianism encouraged activism among minorities within the colonial metropolises and influenced state formation – or disintegration – as in the case of China. Moreover, we do not hear much about those who did not identify their interests and aspirations in national terms, such as the Khalifate movement, or the Pan-Africanists. This was their moment too, and the long-range importance of religious or race-based political formations may prove no less significant than the proliferation of national states. Osama bin Laden seems to think so, declaring that he aims to reverse the overthrow of the Ottoman Caliph.

Even in terms of international history, I was left wondering about how the different sets of actors interacted or at least learned from one another's example. As protests unfolded in Seoul, Beijing, etc., could they have acquired a mutually reinforcing dynamic? There are

some signs of this, such as in the close connections between Indian and Irish nationalists, and the way Mao interpreted these events as part of a larger movement. But the study is international largely from the perspective of Washington and Paris. When it comes to the different “cases,” it becomes merely comparative. This strikes me as a lost opportunity, but perhaps Manela’s example will prompt other historians to track down these leads.

Moreover, as a work of comparative history, *The Wilsonian Moment* falls short in failing to explain why it examines these particular cases. Would the Wilsonian moment have appeared differently if he had examined it from other perspectives? One of the principles of a comparative study is that, aside from explaining case selection, one should also consider cases where the outcome was different. By “holding constant” both a visible Wilsonian influence as well as major political protest movements, the comparison cannot actually prove that one caused the other. Why were so many other colonial capitals comparatively quiet from 1917-1920? Did people in North and West Africa, for instance, fail to hear the message of self-determination, or fail to appreciate American power, or was it some other factor altogether? If Manela had looked at some or at least one of these places, the causal connections he draws could have been more convincing.

I suspect *The Wilsonian Moment* will inspire a lot more criticism, if only because it will be so widely read and discussed. The argument is provocative, but the author has done the hard work of supporting it in ways that will make it impossible to dismiss. In reviewing this important book, we should recognize that this is Manela’s moment.

Rez Manela's book well exemplifies diplomatic historians' growing interest in international history. Unlike many such histories, which try to explain how ideas and events abroad have helped to shape the American experience, Manela focuses on the impact of American ideals in infusing and nourishing indigenous anticolonial movements in four societies – Egypt, India, Korea, and China. As he shows in the course of his engaging narrative, these four were obviously important examples of anticolonial nationalism and represented a range of self-determining aspirations.

Manela's account is microhistory. He does not use the word, perhaps because his geographical range is wide-ranging, and in a temporal sense he provides some historical background on his case studies going back well before the Great War. But it is nonetheless microhistory in its intensive and sustained focus on the "Wilsonian moment" – approximately a six-month period from the fall of 1918 when Allied military victory seemed increasingly imminent until the spring of 1919 when the contours of the peace settlement were being set in place – for the single issue of national self-determination.

A close look at one important issue has real advantages for historical understanding. It is a challenging task for historians writing international history to try to cover multiple subjects for a short period or, alternatively, just one or a few over a longer time frame. Such histories, if successful, can provide airy generalizations that may capture the essence of a subject or era and advance a roughly acceptable interpretation. But they will also inevitably slight or overlook many of the contradictions and confusions of the principal actors or inadequately capture their real thoughts and motivations in dealing with specific issues and pressures on a day-to-day basis. A short time frame is a more manageable research universe, however, and allows the historian to look at a wide array of primary sources in a number of targeted countries. Manela has exploited the opportunity, and a special strength of this book is his thorough research in government repositories and manuscript collections in Europe, China, India, and the United States, and he has also perused many foreign newspapers, pamphlets, and ephemera.

Manela's book shines as microhistory in this international context. It is a good story, which the author develops with skill. He presents extensive evidence to confirm the anticolonial reformers' idealistic hopes, extensive lobbying, and political maneuvering in all four cases, and the narrative unfolds in impressive detail. In his account, some figures well-known to American diplomatic historians – for example, Syngman Rhee (Korea), who knew Wilson from their Princeton days, and Wellington Koo (China) – are featured for their societies, and Mohandas K. Gandhi is introduced as one of the Indian anticolonial reformers. Still others like Ho Chi Minh (only in the introduction), Sun Yat-sen, and the 25-year old Mao Zedong also receive some attention and provide additional depth to the anticolonial perspective. But the central figures – in particular, Sa'd Zaghlul and other Wafd political party leaders in Egypt, Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Lala Lajpat Rai in India, and Kim Kyusik in Korea – are not high profile personalities to most European and American specialists. In tracing their ideas, extensive travels, organizational efforts, and strategies, he brings these

people and the Wilsonian moment to life. And because of Manela's careful elaboration of their efforts during the moment, his subsequent treatments of the May Fourth protests in China, the 1919 anticolonial rebellion in Egypt, and the March First movement in Korea are readily intelligible. His account of Wilson's and several of his East Asian advisers' strong sympathies for the self-determination of China and their anguish in acquiescing in England's and France's wartime promises to Japan, which had its own imperial designs on China, is particularly poignant.

I do have a few comments and questions, which are mostly in the form of reservations. One is that Manela's relentless focus on national self-determination and equality in the international arena necessarily slights their relationship to the larger political and social context in which that struggle was waged. In other words, his microhistory ideally could have been integrated a bit more with macrohistorical elements. Although the World War would foster political reaction, it would also further unleash elements of democratic reform that were already cresting in the Western world. As Wilson said, "The world must be made safe for democracy." Liberal democracy was a transnational phenomenon, which also had direct impacts domestically. With all its implications for class, race, and gender relationships, it was the hot button issue in that era, and sometimes it would also generate violent social and political upheaval, as in Russia. It is easy to overlook, for instance, that millions of adult British males were still disfranchised during the war years, and women could not vote in almost all western European countries and in the United States. By the end of the war, however, men over 21 and women over 30 were enfranchised in England, and between 1918 and 1920 women would also receive the vote in Germany and the United States and in neutral Holland.

The anticolonial reformers were surely beneficiaries of this democratic upsurge. Self-determination to them meant national self-government, or consent of the governed. Wilson's genius was his ability to articulate the programs of international reformers, including self-determination, in idealistic language. One can value Manela's significant contribution but also recognize that anti-imperialist ideas were already well argued before the Great War in Western societies and were vigorously endorsed in Britain by the Union of Democratic Control (which is mentioned once) and transatlantic women's peace networks well before Wilson began to champion them. The anticolonial reformers' continuation of their movement for self-determination long after their discrediting of Wilson is further evidence of its enduring character.

There is a sense, moreover, that the author's closeness to the central actors comes at the expense of some critical detachment. He obviously sympathizes with the anticolonial reformers and their strenuous efforts to popularize and extend the implications of Wilson's notions of self-determination to their own societies. Early on, he writes that they were "savvy political actors who . . . moved with dispatch and energy to seize the opportunities that the Wilsonian moment seemed to offer to reformulate, escalate, and broaden their campaigns against empire, and worked to mobilize publics both at home and abroad behind their movements." (13) Much of the rest of the book follows in the same adulatory vein. He emphasizes, for instance, that when their efforts to meet personally with Wilson or to move him to endorse their anti-imperial agenda largely failed, they harnessed their

supporters behind nationalists' revolts against their European and Asian masters in the spring of 1919.

It was of course prudent for these reformers to turn to Wilson as their best hope for self-determination and to cheer on their enthusiastic supporters even in the face of colonial powers' resistance. But what is remarkable, and not really explained by Manela, is that, convinced of the justice of their cause, they remained unwaveringly confident that they would succeed. They were educated and intelligent leaders, yet they uncritically idolized Wilson and fervently believed that their appeals for his support would internationalize the nationalist movement and coerce the imperial powers, especially France, Great Britain, and Japan, to acquiesce in their independence. Their optimism seemed undimmed even when Wilson refused to meet with them at the Paris Peace Conference and tried not to encourage them. Yet to this reader at least, their belief that the American president, the lone principal sympathizing with their aspirations, could somehow bamboozle several victorious imperial powers to endorse self-determination when he had his own evolving though still somewhat ambivalent views on self-government for colored races, represented a power geographically removed from their societies, and faced his own conflicting pressures at home, was very unrealistic. For all of his idealism, Wilson better understood than these reform leaders the limits of his influence over the other great powers, and he accurately predicted their bitter disappointment and disillusionment.

Because none of the reformers, at least as presented in this account, expressed any doubts, even private ones, about their near-term success, some self-deception was likely involved. I also suspect that their myopia, such as it was, contributed to the inevitable anger and disillusionment of many of their followers when their attempted exploitation of the Wilsonian moment failed entirely. Given the rejection of their liberal internationalist program, it is also no wonder that other, more radical anti-imperial programs were much better received in the postwar world.

The spring of 1919 was a heady time for aspiring provincial intellectuals in Changsha, the somewhat sleepy capital of China's Hunan province. Mao Zedong, a favorite son who had travelled to Beijing to be closer to the center of events, wrote back to his former classmates in the south about the great struggles in the world, about Wilson and Lenin, about revolution and oppression, and about hopes unfulfilled at Versailles. After 2 May, when the devastating news about Wilson's betrayal of Chinese national aspirations reached Beijing, Mao's stories focused on Russia and social change as the only hope for China: "many countries ... have followed Russia's example and have undertaken all sorts of social reforms. Although this victory is not complete.... it may certainly become so, and one can also imagine that it will spread throughout the whole world." Five years later, in one of his best poems, Mao remembered his time in Changsha,

I was here with all my friends,
bright still those teeming months and years.
we were young, schoolkids,
at life's full flowering;
filled with student passion
fearlessly we cast all fetters aside.
pointing to our mountains and rivers,
setting the world aflame with our words,
we counted the mighty no more than muck.
remember still how, venturing midstream, we struck the waters
and waves stayed the speeding boats?

By 1925, when the poem was first published, Mao had discovered why speeding ships of state were not held back by idealistic waves. His Marxism, his materialism, and – in the end – his cynicism, told him that exploitation of others was the rule of the game. While Mao's first favorite American had been Woodrow Wilson, his last was to be Henry Kissinger, who – to Mao – symbolized perfectly what America really, really stood for.

Erez Manela has written an outstanding account of that original Wilsonian moment in which the young Mao partook, those few months in 1918 and 1919 when anti-colonialists and nationalists all over the world hoped that the United States was on their side, and that they therefore would achieve the self-determination that they sought. The book is superb international history; it is immensely well-researched in many languages and archives, it reads well, and – first and foremost – it is well constructed, with the author's keen eye seeing new connections, transfers, and receptions on a global scale in what has become quite a crowded field of study. It is one of my favorite books of the year.

Manela's text is divided into three parts, with the first covering the liberal debates over self-determination, the second the spread of various forms of nationalisms in the colonial world, and the third how these clashed (not least in Wilson's mind) in Paris. One of the great strengths of the text is how the author is able to tell the stories of the various

movements and trends that he presents at the 'national' level (in China, Korea, India, Egypt and elsewhere) while always linking ideas and concepts transnationally, with transmissions in form of texts and encounters, but also through the striking similarities in how intellectuals saw their position all over the colonial world. The second part, which is really the heart of the book, is particularly strong in its presentation of the contradictory – or possibly hybrid -- nature of many Third World nationalisms; on the one hand inspired by liberal thinking in the metropolises, on the other shaped by the very negation of everything the metropolises represented. Manela's alertness to contemporary concerns about authenticity and religion in this part of the book links directly to the cutting edge of international history literature on the end of colonial empires (not least in South Asia and North Africa) for the generation after 1919.

Instead of doing a thorough summing up of the book (not needed; it has been widely reviewed already), I will concentrate briefly on five issues that emerge here, but which need further discussion. The first is whether a general Third World perception of the United States as a "more benign version of Western modernity" actually existed at the time. The second is the sneaking suspicion (which parts of the book stimulate) that Wilson's rhetoric from the beginning was never intended for use outside Europe. The third is Manela's contention that Wilson's original principles, although betrayed, helped set off an upsurge of nationalism in the colonial world. The fourth is the possibility that the Great War itself played more of a role in emancipatory thought than Manela admits. And the fifth – and by far most important issue, at least for me – is the lack of an exploration of the alternative that so many anti-colonialists saw from 1917 on: Lenin and the Soviets. Let us deal with these one by one.

In a very brief part of *The Global Cold War* I explore the genesis of non-European views of the United States through the era of high colonialism up to World War I. What I found was a much more mixed image than Manela presents here. On the one hand, the United States was an inspiration, through its modernity, its technology, and through its democracy (for white men). On the other, the racism built into its national practices – exemplified not just through the treatment of Africans, but also through exclusion laws and labor regulations – limited the appeal of America. The US colonial war in the Philippines was well known through the transnational anti-colonial networks that Manela outlines. In late 19th century China (which I am working on at the moment), American rhetoric about freedom and democracy and the rule of law was seen in a light not much different from that of the early 21st century: These American concepts were commodities to be sold or lures to catch the innocent. The reception of Wilson's specific rhetoric was therefore grounded in it being a break with the past, and a link to a future promise of America, but one that should be approached with caution and used for what it was worth.

Were these skeptics and hedgers wrong about Wilson? Manela is very good on the President's southern background and on his racism, and he leaves room for doubt about Wilson's intentions. But in the end he comes down on the side that sees Wilson's ideals defeated primarily by circumstance and by his allies. There is much that is true in this interpretation; Wilson grew as a president in these matters as well, at least up to the spring of 1919. But I am still unsure about whether or not Wilson mainly got caught in his own

rhetoric with regard to non-Europeans (as even Arthur Link seems to indicate). Self-determination for Bulgarians and Albanians? Yes. Self-determination for Vietnamese or Egyptians? Only when they were ready to be inducted into a Western-led system of states, sometime in the far future as seen from 1919.

There is a tendency in the book to see Wilsonian rhetoric (or principles, if one so wishes) as more of a constituent force in the rise of anti-colonial mobilization than was actually the case, at least in those corners of the world that I know something about. In China, urban mass rallies against foreign oppression had started in the 1890s, as had the first modern nationalist organizations. In the region that became Indonesia, *Sarekat Islam* (out of which the Communist, the nationalist, and some islamist groups grew) peaked early in World War I, as did the South African ANC. Manela knows all of this, of course, and in no way makes his argument dependent on Wilson's role alone, but it would have been useful (possibly in the introduction) to have asked the question of what would have happened in the global South *without* Wilson's Fourteen Points.

How important was the Wilsonian moment in Third World mobilization for the anti-colonial cause as the World War came to an end? Could the frenzied call-up that took place not rather be called a Somme moment, or a Chemin des Dames moment? Was the meaningless slaughter of (mostly) white men on the Western Front not a much stronger argument for breaking free from Western domination than Wilson's fine phrases? I have a sense that the West's descent from modernity to barbarism had more of a role to play in this than Manela admits in his conclusion, not least if you look at nationalists like M.N. Roy (mentioned briefly in the book), Subhas Chandra Bose or Sukarno (neither of whom are mentioned).

Then, finally, the issue that I do have some trouble with in this extremely stimulating work: What about the competition? What about the Petrograd moment? Or better: The Bolshevik, or Leninist, moment? There are two sides to this. First, there was, throughout 1918 and 1919, already an alternative modernity that promised at least as much as Wilson was able to offer, and which – different from Wilson – seemed to live up to its obligations. Their propaganda drew Third World nationalists to them even before the debacles at Paris. The Bolsheviks wanted to be seen as an alternative to the United States, and to an astonishing degree that is the way they were seen, already from the 1917 October Revolution on. Second, after the summer of 1919, some of those who had been in the forefront of lauding Wilsonianism defected, at least intellectually, to the Communists. They became the staffers of the Comintern or those who sacrificed themselves for the cause on execution grounds from Shanghai to Casablanca. In the end, they were inspired by the *negative* example of Wilson: The Wilsonian moment proved that the United States was the most pernicious of imperialist enemies and one against whom extra vigilance was needed.

I am not asking Manela to repeat Gordon Levin's *Woodrow Wilson and World Politics* – the Wilson/Lenin dichotomy has already been worn to pieces by others since that book appeared forty years ago. But it would have been useful to know more about how a great historian, as Erez Manela already is, would have seen the interchangeability of the key moment in which the Bolsheviks could use US tergiversation to their advantage. It is

important not least because of what comes later: Quite a few Cold War era Third World nationalists had their image of the United States first formed by the aftermath of World War I and by the Communist movement they had joined in 1919 or immediately thereafter. And obversely, as Glenda Gilmore has pointed out in her masterful *Defying Dixie: The Radical Roots of Civil Rights*, quite a few southern opponents of Jim Crow joined in the pilgrimage to Moscow, thereby signalling one of the core weaknesses that Wilson and Wilsonianism had shown in the competition with global revolution.

If re-elected in 2012, Barack Obama – a black man, the son of an African nationalist—will be president of the United States one hundred years after the election of Woodrow Wilson. The first black president is in many ways also America's first transnational president, with a Kenyan father, an Indonesian step-father, and an upbringing in Hawaii (where he graduated from the same high school as Sun Yat-sen had attended one hundred years before him). America's Obama moment is a perfect counterpoint to its Wilsonian one, in time, space, and symbolism. It may even be a marked contrast to the story of betrayal and disappointment that Manela tells so well. Or at least it has the potential for being so.

Author's Response by Erez Manela, Harvard University

I would like to thank Thomas Maddux for organizing the roundtable and Cemil Aydin, Matthew Connelly, David Patterson, and Arne Westad for participating. Few things are more satisfying than having your colleagues in the field offer deep, insightful reviews of your work. At the same time, crafting a reply to such a roundtable review presents a special challenge, since each reader raises new questions and focuses on different aspects of the work. Inevitably, then, my reply will be a partial and selective one. It will not, I hope, be the last word in the debate.

As the reviewers note, each in a somewhat different manner, one of the central difficulties of writing the sort of international history that *The Wilsonian Moment* attempts is the question of framing the subject spatially, temporally, and thematically. One cannot simply adopt existing frames, not least because the enterprise is premised on the assumption that the very act of reframing yields important historiographical dividends. This is so, I think, not necessarily because the new frame is inherently more conducive to historical understanding than previous ones, but rather because its very novelty allows us to explore questions and see relationships and connections that the more conventional frames had obscured. Such reframing, among other things, can produce histories whose temporal and spatial scopes relate to each other in unusual ways. It is perhaps this aspect of *The Wilsonian Moment*, combining as it does an expansive spatial scope with a relatively narrow temporal one, which led David Patterson to identify the book as a work of "microhistory." The book does not, in my view, fit the usual definition of the term, and in fact its temporal scope is not much different than that of, say, Barbara Tuchman's *Guns of August* or Margaret Macmillan's *Paris 1919*, neither of which is commonly seen as a microhistory.

Still, Patterson's description serves to remind us that the very act of working outside accepted frames requires historians to explain and justify choices that may, in more conventional framings, be simply taken for granted. Why choose a new spatial frame, and why this specific one and not another? To put things more concretely: if we read a history of 1919 that focused solely on, say, Egypt, we are unlikely to ask why the author had not also looked at China during this period. We simply accept "Egypt" as a self-justifying spatial frame in the scheme of modern history, as we do most national and a number of common regional enclosures. But should the author choose to write about Egypt and China both, then immediately the question arises, as it did for several of the reviewers: if we go beyond the conventional boundaries, why in this particular way and not another? Why focus on Egyptians and Chinese and not also talk about North Africans or Indonesians? And why focus on movements that made claims based on national identity rather on ones that cohered around religious (pan-Islamic) or racial (pan-African) identity claims?

These are compelling questions, and it is perhaps not entirely satisfying that the answers to such questions of framing must to some extent be contingent, partly on the particular historical patterns that suggest certain connections (for example, the simultaneity of the anticolonial upheavals in Egypt, India, China, and Korea between March and May of 1919)

and partly on the peculiar skills and interests of the individual historian. But if we stop to think about it, all historical framings, including those that we have grown used to accepting without question, are similarly contingent. In fact, one of the unintended benefits of adopting non-traditional frames such as that of *The Wilsonian Moment* may be that they remind us of the constructed nature of all historical narratives, including those that conform to the usual national or regional delineations that define many historical fields. Of course, any new frames must leave a lot out, thematically and temporally as well as spatially. But they also allow us to see that the old frames, too, left out some significant connections and relationships, and to go about figuring out what they are and why they may matter.

Both Aydin and Connelly identify the apparent paradox embedded in a work that seeks to go beyond the conventional Eurocentric narrative of the international history of 1919 and ends up with the figure of Woodrow Wilson at its center. But this project did not begin from a specific desire to “provincialize Europe.” It began in the archives, with the discovery of the avalanche of petitions that Egyptians, Indians, Chinese, Koreans and others addressed to Wilson and the peace conference, and the sense that all this needed to be a part of the story of the peace conference, on the one hand, and the anticolonial mobilizations of 1919, on the other. I make no claim that this story should replace other narratives of 1919; that the March First movement, for example, is a more important aspect of the story than, say, the reconstitution of Poland. But I do try to make the case that seeing March First and other such movements as part of the international history of 1919 enriches our understanding of both in some important ways. And, as Aydin suggests in his review, I think that the way to transcend Eurocentric international history is not to replace it with an approach that is US-centric or Asia-centric or one that has any fixed center at all. The task, in my view, is rather to reach for a globalized framework in which narrative centers can be multiple, shifting, and contingent on the specific historical questions and patterns being examined. This is not an ideal easy to achieve, especially if one thinks, as I do, that it is important to foster and maintain a sense of shared endeavor among international historians. But it seems to me a direction that is worth pursuing for the insights it can yield.

My concern in *The Wilsonian Moment* was not to write a history of ideas as such, to focus on ideological production of circulation for their own sake, though these are important and interesting aspects of the story on which I spent considerable space in the book. Rather, I wanted to try to understand how certain ideas—in this case the notion of self-determination as a universal right—shifted at particular historical junctures from the realm of ethereal political theory to the center of political practice, how they transformed from fodder for intellectual discourse to the stuff of mass mobilization. This problem is at the core of what I see as the historical importance of the Wilsonian moment, a question which several of the reviews touch on. Wilson’s ideas were not particularly new—both Aydin and Westad remind us that by 1919 anticolonial ideas and movements had been around for a while. Nor was the U.S. president singularly responsible for the emergence of self-determination as an organizing idea for the postwar world order. The Russian Revolution and the wartime collapse of old empires were crucial, of course, and, as Westad suggests, the devastation of the war itself played a central role in destabilizing the legitimating logic that underlay the old order. Yet in the book I argue that Wilson came to

serve as a compelling symbol of the new ideas and, more importantly, of the possibilities for broad change in international order, in the eyes of millions across the world. Much of the book aims to show how that happened and why it mattered.

The question of temporal boundaries, Cemil Aydin reminds us, is no less crucial in international history than that of spatial ones. In his review, he makes a compelling case for locating the story of the Wilsonian moment, with its relatively narrow temporal frame, within the longer-term history of international order as it unfolded outside the West, where a central theme was the tension between the universal claims of the Enlightenment ideas that Western powers purported to uphold, on the one hand, and the practices of imperial power predicated on racial hierarchies, on the other. Aydin himself has explored important aspects of this story in his own path-breaking book, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia*, which was published more-or-less simultaneously with *The Wilsonian Moment*.¹ The two books, in fact, are in some ways complementary and can be profitably read in tandem, not least because of the way they reflect the diversity of approaches to questions of temporal as well as spatial and thematic scope that can be adopted in writing the history of international society. As Matthew Connelly has noted elsewhere, the question of how we craft a coherent narrative around events that are not contained within clearly defined boundaries and do not emanate from a single center or historical actor is one that no international historian can afford to ignore. This challenge will remain central as we pursue new projects and train graduate students, and Connelly's own books serve as important models in this regard.²

David Patterson also places the story of the Wilsonian Moment in a broader context, that of the rise of liberal democratic ideas and practices in the Atlantic world in the decades the surrounded the war. The connections and continuities he suggests are important, and in that sense the book fits into the story of trans-Atlantic liberalism that has been explored in works such as Daniel Rodgers' *Atlantic Crossings* and, more specifically with regard to Wilson, in Thomas Knock's *To End All Wars*.³ But this context reminds us that there was nothing unique about the excitement and anticipation with which colonial nationalists viewed Wilson. Such views were widely shared among liberals and others in the United States and Europe, too, where the eventual disillusion with Wilson and the peace treaties was at least as broad and deep as it was in Egypt or China. It is easy in retrospect to see all this as the result of so much self-delusion, but to my mind that is hardly a sufficient or even necessary interpretation of the broad mobilizations that occurred in 1919. One of my goals in this book was to contest the common assumption that these anticolonial movements could be dismissed as reflections of simple naiveté, and provide the sort of detailed account

¹ Cemil Aydin, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia: Visions of World Order in Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian Thought* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).

² Matthew Connelly, *A Diplomatic Revolution: Algeria's Fight for Independence and the Origins of the Post-Cold War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002) and idem., *Fatal Misconception: The Fight to Control World Population* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008).

³ Daniel T. Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge, Mass. Belknap, 1998); Thomas J. Knock, *To End All Wars: Woodrow Wilson and the Quest for a New World Order* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992)

of their development and logic within the contemporary international context that would make the assumption of self-delusion superfluous.

I found myself in agreement with the points that Arne Westad raises in his review, and think that my treatment of these issues in the book runs more or less along the lines he suggests. He is right of course that Lenin and the Bolsheviks were crucial to the story, and Wilson would have never even taken up the term “self-determination” had they not first introduced it into the international discussion of the postwar settlement. Moreover, the question of how precisely the Wilsonian and Leninist discourses intersected in colonial contexts was a central concern of my research. What I concluded, based on my readings in contemporary newspapers and other writings of nationalist figures, is that while socialist ideas in general were widely known and discussed among colonial intellectuals, the Bolshevik Revolution itself did not become widely viewed as a model for emulation, and the newly emergent Soviet Union was not widely seen as a potential source of support, until after the Bolsheviks consolidated their hold on power in Russia and the Wilsonian competition had collapsed. It is no accident, in my view, that communist parties began to proliferate in the colonial world only in the early 1920s, even though communism as a system of ideas had been around for decades. And what’s more, the Bolsheviks themselves did not develop much of an interest in the revolutionary potential of the colonial world until it became clear that events in Russia would not immediately spark revolution across Europe, as they had initially hoped. I have found this interpretation compelling based my reading of the sources, though surely it could be contested. If *The Wilsonian Moment* continues to provoke spirited debate on this question and others, no one would be more pleased than I.

Copyright © 2009 H-Net: Humanities and Social Sciences Online. H-Net permits the redistribution and reprinting of this work for nonprofit, educational purposes, with full and accurate attribution to the author, web location, date of publication, H-Diplo, and H-Net: Humanities & Social Sciences Online. For any other proposed use, contact the H-Diplo Editors at h-diplo@h-net.msu.edu.
