H-Diplo ROUNDTABLE XXIII-24

Larry Wolff. ***Woodrow Wilson and the Reimaging of Eastern Europe.*** Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2020. ISBN: 9781503611184 (hardcover); 9781503611191 (paperback).

7 February 2022 | https://hdiplo.org/to/RT23-24
Editor: Diane Labrosse | Commissioning Editor: Thomas Maddux | Production Editor: George Fujii

Contents

Introduction by Trygve Throntveit, Minnesota Humanities Center

President Woodrow Wilson's reputation among scholars, pundits, and the interested populace has been declining for decades, but it has reached a new low in the past ten years, at least in the United States. The national reckoning over race and the public's steady turn against long-term international commitments are surely factors. But so too, I think, is a growing trend among historians to seek contemporary relevance and social impact (both admirable) at the expense of historical accuracy and narrative complexity (both of which are essential to history's *genuine* relevance and *positive* impact). For this reason, I am very gratified to introduce this symposium on Larry Wolff's most recent book, *Woodrow Wilson and the Reimagining of Eastern Europe*, that includes thoughtful reviews by Dominique Kirchner Reill, E. Kyle Romero, Leonard V. Smith, and Ronald Grigor Suny. Taken together, the book, the reviews, and the author's response demonstrate that some historians, at least, have grown uncomfortable with demonizing Wilson and would prefer instead to understand him, so as to better understand his complicated legacy. At the same time, the contributions suggest that the work of dismantling dated myths and dubious assumptions is not yet complete.

Wolff's book illuminates President Wilson's important role in one of the major geopolitical events of the twentieth century: the creation of new nations in Eastern Europe during the peace settlement following World War I. The book's major argument is that Wilson's policies in the region were the product of his reliance on a 'mental mapping' process in which historical ignorance and an idealistic theory of national self-determination obscured cultural and political realities on the ground, resulting in an inherently unstable settlement. "The map of Eastern Europe today," Wolff writes, "still reflects Wilson's problematic preoccupation with delineating an interlocking complex of national states, and its origins can be traced in the intellectual history of Wilson's writings and thoughts as they emerged from the cultural context of mental mapping during and after World War I" (14).

The reviewers generally deem the book a fine success, if not a perfect one. Reill applauds Wolff not only for recognizing Wilson's "special relationship" with Eastern Europe, but for explaining how it emerged. She concludes that if Wolff had also paid close attention to Wilson's engagement with other regions—or lack thereof—we might have learned even more. Romero, whose review provides the clearest, chapter-by-chapter overview of the book, appreciates Wolff's simultaneous elucidation of the fine political and cultural details of peacemaking in Eastern Europe and his "intimate, detailed" investigation of Wilson's response to them. His main complaint is that Wolff's "consistent focus on Wilson's internal thoughts sometimes downplays the importance of exogenous events and people" on his actions and their outcomes. Smith, wearied by the Wilson demonization industry, welcomes the "all-too-human Wilson" that Wolff reveals: a psychologically complex (but not complexed) person whose emotional attachments to persons and places explains more than his supposed embodiment of every Western liberal sin. Smith would perhaps have liked Wolff to explore more deeply the alternative between a settlement marred by personal bias or liberal sin on the one hand and one deformed by Bolshevik terror on the other. Suny is particularly persuaded by Wolff's arguments that the ideal of "racial homogeneity" within polities and the influence of academic experts were as critical to Wilson's thinking and decision making as the "sense of personal friendship" he felt toward specific leaders and peoples. More directly than Smith, however, he argues that Wilson's was not the only "utopian scheme" being imposed on the region, and that its main rival, bolshevism, deserves more attention than Wolff give it.

As noted, I too admire Wolff's book and applaud his effort to reconsider and historically complicate Wilson's peacemaking in Eastern Europe, and (at least by suggestion) elsewhere. As several of the reviewers note, Wolff's focus on Wilson's evolving mental mapping process helps him avoid caricaturing the man as either a hopelessly naïve dilettante or an egotistical, bigoted cynic (or both at once, as some would have him). In Wolff's words, "No American president has ever been as interested in Eastern Europe as Woodrow Wilson, [and] no president has ever immersed himself so fully in the political, social, and religious factors that shaped the region" (228). Time and again, Wilson comes off as genuinely—if imperfectly—struggling to understand and do well by the peoples of the region. As Dominique Kirchner Reill puts it, "Slavic Europe did not just have a friend in Woodrow Wilson, it had a preferential friendship."

Still, I would like to see this work of reconsidering and complicating Wilson's peacemaking and its legacies go further. First, it is past time to dispense with the notion that Wilson's 'mental mapping,' in Eastern Europe or anywhere else, was guided above all by the principle of national—that is, *ethnic*—self-determination. Wilson never stated that national self-determination was his overarching principle, and more than once denied it. Indeed, he rarely used the term at all. More important—and as Wolff himself ably demonstrates—many if not most of Wilson's favored outcomes had nothing to do with carving Eastern Europe into "interlocking, ethnically homogeneous nation-states." Rather, Wilson's aim was *peace and stability*, which, in his view, were simultaneously necessary to *and* ensured by governments enjoying *popular support*—in other words, government by 'consent of the governed' (a phrase he used consistently). The 'governed,' in Wilson's view, certainly included oppressed ethnic minorities that he sometimes described as 'small nations.' But it also included the populations of historic regions, like Poland, whose territories had been repeatedly invaded and partitioned among empires, and whose governments were ultimately required by treaty to protect the rights of the ethnic minorities who would end up living there, as Wilson knew many would.[1]

Of course, Wilson recognized that ethnic nationalism was a force to be reckoned with. That recognition explains his only public use of the term 'national self-determination,' in February 1918, where he describes it as a *fact* that cannot be ignored, not an ideal to realize.[2] As the dissolution of the Hapsburg Empire soon demonstrated, he was right. Ethnic political movements could not be ignored by statesmen—including Wilson himself, who previously envisioned a federalization of the empire. Still, as his support for the multiethnic Yugoslav and Czechoslovak projects shows, he hardly thought ethnicity to have been the sole or even primary basis of statehood. Though I resist the current trend of reducing Wilson's entire presidency to a racial project, I share Romero's wish that Wolff had dug more deeply into Wilson's racial thinking: The record simply does not support the claim that Wilson thought any multiethnic polity—including the United States—destined to become a "hornet's nest" (23).

Second, it is time to revisit the assumption that the postwar settlement—understood as *Wilson's* settlement—was a failure in Eastern Europe. It certainly did not solve all the centuries-old conflicts dividing the peoples of the region or preserve them from all future grief. But what was the alternative to Wilson's map? Maintaining the Hapsburg empire? That was not in anyone's power, as became clear in October 1918. Permitting German or Soviet domination of Hapsburg and Ottoman imperial fragments? That is what happened in the 1930s and after World War II, to the region's and the world's grief. The reviews by Smith and Ronald Suny recognize that Wilson's vision for the region was better than what the British, French, and Soviets had planned.

For the most part, *Woodrow Wilson and the Reimagining of Eastern Europe* tells a wonderful, complex story of the twenty-eighth president tackling the problems of postwar eastern Europe by cobbling together a wide range of solutions that varied from context. I hope it will encourage future scholars to abandon entirely the urge to portray Wilson's political realism, and the messy give-and-take that must necessarily characterize an international settlement, as misapplied or frustrated idealism.

Participants:

Larry Wolff is Julius Silver Professor of History at NYU, executive director of the NYU Remarque Institute, and co-director of NYU Florence. His most recent book is *Woodrow Wilson and the Reimagining of Eastern Europe* (2020). He is also the author of *The Singing Turk: Ottoman Power and Operatic Emotions on the European Stage from the Siege of Vienna to*

[1] See Trygve Throntveit, *Power without Victory: Woodrow Wilson and the American Internationalist Experiment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), esp. chapter 8; Trygve Throntveit, "The Fable of the Fourteen Points: Woodrow Wilson and National Self-Determination," *Diplomatic History* 35.3 (2011): 445-481; Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), esp. chapter 1.

[2] Woodrow Wilson, address to Congress, February 11, 1918, in Arthur S. Link et al., eds, *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 69 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966-1994), 46:321; see also Throntveit, *Power without Victory*, 257-258.

the Age of Napoleon (2016), *Paolina's Innocence: Child Abuse in Casanova's Venice* (2012), *The Idea of Galicia: History and Fantasy in Habsburg Political Culture* (2010), *Venice and the Slavs: The Discovery of Dalmatia in the Age of Enlightenment* (2001), *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (1994), *The Vatican and Poland in the Age of the Partitions* (1988), and *Postcards from the End of the World: Child Abuse in Freud's Vienna* (1988). He is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Trygve Throntveit is Director of Strategic Partnership at the Minnesota Humanities Center, Global Fellow for History and Public Policy at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, and Co-Founder and Director of the Institute for Public Life and Work. Trained as a historian of American thought and politics, his work has since expanded to include democratic theory and civic organizing. He is the author of several articles, chapters, and essays on the history and civic renewal of American culture and institutions, as well as two books: *William James and the Quest for an Ethical Republic* (2014) and *Power without Victory: Woodrow Wilson and the American International Experiment* (2017). Throntveit's current projects include a co-edited collection of Woodrow Wilson's essential writings, a multi-site undergraduate civic learning project, and ongoing editorship of *The Good Society: A Journal of Civic Studies*.

Dominique Kirchner Reill received her Ph.D. from Columbia University and is currently Associate Professor of Modern European History at the University of Miami. Her first book, *Nationalists Who Feared the Nation: Adriatic Multinationalism in Habsburg Dalmatia, Trieste, and Venice*, was published by Stanford University Press in 2012 and received the 2014 Book Prize from the Center for Austrian Studies, as well as Honorable Mention from the 2012 Smith Award. Her new book, *The Fiume Crisis: Life in the Wake of the Habsburg Empire*, came out December 2020 with Harvard University's Belknap Press. She is an Associate Review Editor for the *American Historical Review*, editor for the Purdue University Press book series *Central European Studies*, member of the editorial board for the Cambridge University Press journal *Contemporary European History*, and on the steering committee of the *Modern European History Collective*. Currently, she is a Visiting Scholar at the European University Institute, Fiesole, where she is working on her next book tentatively titled *The Habsburg Mayor of New York: Fiorello LaGuardia*.

E. Kyle Romero is a postdoctoral fellow at the Dickey Center for International Understanding at Dartmouth College. He received his Ph.D. in History from Vanderbilt University in June, 2020, and is currently completing a manuscript that studies how the U.S. state and American humanitarian organizations managed and manipulated refugee flows in Europe and the Middle East in the first half of the twentieth century.

Leonard V. Smith is Frederick B. Artz Professor of History at Oberlin College. His most recent book is *Sovereignty at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018). He is presently beginning a project on republicanism and racial exclusion in Texas and French Algeria in the 19th century.

Ronald Grigor Suny is the William H. Sewell Jr. Distinguished University Professor of History and Professor of Political Science at the University of Michigan and Emeritus Professor of Political Science and History at the University of Chicago. He is the author of *The Baku Commune, 1917-1918: Class and Nationality in the Russian Revolution* (Princeton University Press, 1972); *Armenia in the Twentieth Century* (Scholars Press, 1983); *The Making of the Georgian Nation* (Indiana University Press, 1988, 1994); *Looking Toward Ararat: Armenia in Modern History* (Indiana University Press, 1993); *The Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution, and the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (Stanford University Press, 1993); *The Soviet Experiment: Russia, the USSR, and the Successor States* (Oxford University Press, 1998, 2011*);"They Can Live in the Desert But Nowhere Else": A History of the Armenian Genocide* (Princeton University Press, 2015) [Winner of the Wayne S. Vucinich Book Prize from the Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies for the most important contribution to Russian, Eurasian, and East European studies in any discipline of the humanities or social sciences]; co-author with Valerie Kivelson of *Russia's Empires* (Oxford University Press, 2017); and author of *Red Flag Unfurled: Historians, the Russian Revolution, and the Soviet Experiment* (Verso Books, 2017); *Red Flag Wounded: Stalinism and the Fate of the Soviet Experiment* (Verso Books, 2020); and *Stalin: Passage to Revolution* (Princeton University Press, 2020).

Review by Dominique Kirchner Reill, University of Miami

Wolff's Wilson: An Agent of Fevered Mental Gymnastics, Racism, or Both?

For almost a decade I researched, wrote, and talked about one of the hotspot areas in East Central Europe during the 1919 Paris Peace conference.[3] When discussing my work with 'outsiders' to the field, one thing that always struck me was the almost universal assumption that in the border disputes between Italy and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes President Woodrow Wilson sided with Italy. Why would someone assume such a thing? Were Woodrow Wilson's by now infamous racist attitudes against African Americans the cause, attitudes that somehow people automatically transposed onto how Wilson must have thought of Europe's 'less civilized Orientals'? Was it because of still existent tropes and prejudices against Balkan peoples and states, where somehow Italian claims were automatically considered 'more serious' and so Wilson would have obviously sided with 'the West' against 'the Rest'? Whatever the cause, the idea that Woodrow Wilson was not recognized as the self-professed 'champion of the Slavs' in 1919 Paris disturbed me. And for that reason alone Larry Wolff's newest book *Woodrow Wilson and the Reimagining of Eastern Europe* is a treasure. If it is read as widely as it should be, this common false assumption among non-specialists will be definitively put to rest. As Wolff shows, when arguing about where borders should have been made and what states should have been given special treatment, one thing is for sure: Slavic Europe did not just have a friend in Woodrow Wilson, it also had a preferential friendship compared to that of other Italian, German, or Hungarian Wilsonian 'friends.'

Woodrow Wilson's 'special relationship' with Eastern Europe is no secret to those who study the region, of course.[4] But what Wolff's book does so well is explain how it happened, why it happened, and how this process created a particularly "roiling" experience for all involved (pages 127 and 236). Wolff's base claim is undeniable: the way in which Wilson's reimagining of Eastern Europe played out changed Wilson, altered the stakes of the Paris negotiations, and directly affected how the circa 50 million people in post-Habsburg Europe would live the consequences that his peculiar championship helped wrought. On the whole, the influences Wolff identifies in this story are not new. The group of intel men known as "The Inquiry" team who provided Wilson with all the maps, data, and diplomatic opinions; Wilson's primary advisor and close friend, Colonel Edward House; personal affiliations with Central European statesmen; fear of Bolshevism; and Jewish American activists predominate.[5] Also not new, though definitely enjoyable, are all the glimpses into how Wilson's priggishness could be triggered adversely by tardiness, ill manners, emotionalism, or the questioning of his motives. Without a doubt, my favorite anecdote in this book (among the many gems to choose from) is the comment of Mrs. Edith Wilson's social secretary that for every moment the Queen of Romania was late to her lunch with Wilson she "could see from the cut of the P.'S [Wilson's] jaw that a slice of the Dobrudja, or Roumania, was being lopped off" (142). We know this about Wilson, but Wolff paints the known in unforgettable and humorous ways.

[3] Dominique Kirchner Reill, *The Fiume Crisis: Life in the Wake of the Habsburg Empire* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2020).

[4] No book has so thoroughly excavated Wilson's relationship with Eastern Europe than the book currently under review, but other authors who have underscored the "special" position of Eastern Europe in US peace treaty negotiations include (but are not limited to): Nicole Phelps, *U.S.-Habsburg Relations from 1815 to the Paris Peace Conference* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Leonard V. Smith, *Sovereignty at the Paris Peace Conference* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019); Victor Mamatey, *The United States and East Central Europe, 1914-1918: A Study in Wilsonian Diplomacy and Propaganda* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957).

[5] For a discussion of the Inquiry, see: Lawrence Gelfand, *The Inquiry: American Preparations for Peace, 1917-1919* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963); Steven Seegel, *Map Men: Transnational Lives and Deaths of Geographers in the Making of East Central Europe* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2018); For a discussion of House and his relationship to Wilson during the Paris Peace conference, see: Charles Neu, *Colonel House: A Biography of Woodrow Wilson's Silent Partner* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

New to the story is Wolff's emphasis on how Wilson's experience of being a student of Europe as a young man predisposed many of his earliest judgements of how to unmake empire.[6] Here, Wolff's discussion of how young Wilson's adherence to Gladstonian anti-Ottomanism provides a fascinating explanation of why Wilson approached separating subject peoples from subjecting structures the way he did (Chapter One). Wolff's argument that abolishing the Habsburg Monarchy only became a working plan once Wilson had decided how he wanted the Ottoman Empire dissolved will undoubtedly serve the ever-increasing work in post-imperial comparative studies. With the forthcoming books by scholars such as Natasha Wheatley for the Habsburg Empire and Aimee Genell for the Ottoman Empire, these notions of how lawyers and diplomats used ideas of national legal timelessness covered up by empire or autonomy as a function to uphold empire before and after 1918 fit nicely with how Wolff sets up the post-Habsburg story as an extension of the Ottoman debacle.[7]

Also particularly thought-provoking is Wolff's attention to thinking about what Wilson's earlier experiences of relearning European geography with every modern Balkan war had on his willingness to remake Europe's maps again (228). All in all, Wolff extricates Wilson from the isolationist, exceptionalist American mindset and places him as a longtime if passive, world observer that any avid newspaper reader and student of political science must have been at the turn of the twentieth century. Wilson might have believed America was the model to which all nations should aspire, but he also had learned his truth through watching and pondering what was happening in Europe throughout his lifetime before arriving in Paris. One of the best quotations in the book involves Wilson explaining to the tardy Queen of Romania "I feel sometimes now that in helping to determine the boundary lines of the states of Europe, I am getting my revenge for the difficulty which attended my study of geography while I was a boy" (140). I doubt many would coin Wilson's mapmaking a 'revenge' plot against Eastern Europe, but once one thinks about what it means for statesmen to learn the making and unmaking of boundary lines as boys, that image of infantile geographical authorship will not go away.

In essence, Wolff's book is not a collection of arguments; it is a process story, ever attentive to changes in tone, changes in disposition, and changes in mental and emotional capacities. Wilson under Wolff's gaze is a caterpillar of a statesman where the reader watches all the different intellectual and contextual foliage that is gobbled up or rejected, all to see the whys and wherefores things emerge either as a moth or a butterfly. Undoubtedly, in terms of how Wolff characterizes Wilson and the warring, ethnic cleansing Eastern European states he helped make, the consequences are many moths and few butterflies. But the attention to detail, to phrasings, and to metaphors renders the diplomatic history of Paris a deeply dialogical minefield with consequential explosions. A case in point is the excruciating back and forth between British Prime Minister Lloyd George and Wilson about plebiscites and intimations that Wilson's concerns were a "loading of the dice" (221). If Lloyd George had piqued Wilson less, would things have gone differently around Silesia? Or would Wilson's behavior on minority rights been less stalwart if he had not felt duped by his 'friends' Tomáš Masaryk and Ignacy Jan Paderewski? "Three million Germans in Bohemia! That's curious! Masaryk never told me that!" becomes a haunting refrain in Wolff's portrait of Wilson as a man who was absurdly ill-informed, convinced in his righteous abilities to tell the world what to do, and yet ever more cynical about how much the world deserved his efforts (169).

Using the immense paper trail around Wilson and the Paris Peace treaties as an opportunity to study how minds learn and act is the best contribution Wolff's new history provides to this already densely populated field. But upon closing the book I wondered what this story would look like if we studied everything Wilson did not work so hard to learn about or reimagine. What would this story feel like if we watched the caterpillar grow (or not) in the discussions on the Middle East, Africa, and Asia? We know that Wilson's interventions in Eastern Europe were much more decisive than in these other post-imperial

[6] There is a plethora of Wilson biographies, almost all of which emphasize the future president's long-standing admiration for British institutions when he was young. None, however, have emphasized a Gladstonian anti-Ottomanism before. For the best recent biographies, see: A. Scott Berg, *Wilson* (New York: Putnam, 2013); John Milton Cooper, Jr., *Woodrow Wilson: A Biography* (New York: Vintage, 2011).

[7] Natasha Wheatley, *The Temporal Life of States: Central Europe and the Transformation of Modern Sovereignty* (forthcoming); Aimee Genell, *Empire by Law: The Ottoman Origins of the Mandates System in the Middle East* (New York: Columbia University Press, forthcoming).

spaces. Was that because he did not try to learn, did not put in the same herculean effort of reimagining that he did for Poland, Czechoslovakia, or Yugoslavia? And if that is the case, why? Was it because deep down he really was as racist as we know he was in U.S. domestic policy? Did the 'non-white' worlds just matter less to Wilson and therefore Eastern Europe's 'liberation' and 'emancipation' mattered more? Or is it because of something that a member of Wilson's Inquiry team said while in Paris, that "after having fornicated with England and France for four months" around territorial spoils in Germany, Africa, and the Middle East, Wilson "re-established his virtue" in dealing with Eastern Europe? [8] Or put another way, did Wilson work so hard to reimagine Eastern Europe instead of other places because the other two Great Power 'fornicators' in Paris did not care as much what he did there and so his savior spirit could go to work on overdrive with fewer encumberments?

Many scholars have many different answers to that question; Wolff's book does answer one part of it that I have been asked several times by colleagues who specialize in the post-Ottoman world: "Why did Eastern Europe get states while the Middle East got stuck with mandates?" My usual answer is "um, racism." After a close reading of Wolff's book, the answer still remains the same but with the addendum of "racism, fear of Bolshevism, and a whole lot of fevered presidential mental gymnastics.

8 Quoted in Jeremy W. Crampton, "The Cartographic Calculation of Space: Race Mapping and the Balkans at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919," Social and Cultural Geography 7:5 (2006): 747.

Review by E. Kyle Romero, Dartmouth College

Woodrow Wilson often employed the same aphorisms in his speeches, whether as a professor or as president of the United States. As president of Princeton he famously said, on leadership, "The ear of the leader must ring with the voices of the people."[9] He would continue to use this line in speeches throughout his rise to the presidency and even as he journeyed to Europe to partake in radical geopolitical reconstruction at the Paris Peace Conference. Wilson's clever phrase on the power of representative democracy, however, neatly obscures a key detail: which people? In this engaging new book, Larry Wolff attempts to answer this question, following which voices occupied Wilson's mind as he became nearly messianic in parts of Europe in the wake of World War I and gained access to the redrawing of Eastern Europe in the wake of imperial collapse.

This book brings a unique perspective to this task; as a European historian and one of the foremost experts on the creation of the concept of 'Eastern Europe,' Wolff offers the reader immense, in-depth detail about the breakdown of populations and ethnicities in Eastern Europe as well as an intimate, detailed biography of how Wilson imagined those same peoples.[10] Wolff's focus on Eastern Europe is particularly salient; as he states in his conclusion, "No American president has ever been as interested in Eastern Europe as Woodrow Wilson, no president has ever immersed himself so fully in the political, social, and religious factors that shaped the region, and no president has ever had such a profound personal impact on its geopolitical character" (228). Crucially, Wolff details how Wilson's strident belief in nation-states as the 'solution' to ethnic tensions and internecine conflicts in Europe created the conditions for the re-mapping of Eastern Europe. Central to Wolff's analysis is the concept of "mental mapping," described as an, "approach to geography that considers the subjective, psychological, and cultural aspects of how individuals and communities understand the places and spaces on that map" (4). In the case of Wilson, who entered the Paris Peace Conference with immense authority to redraw the cartographies of the fallen empires in Europe and the Middle East, mental mapping led to dramatic geopolitical ramifications.

In the wake of the fall of the Austro-Hungarian empire, Wilson connected his ideological support of national self-determination with a shifting mental map of Eastern Europe, and was influenced by a wide range of sources, advisors, and friends. Despite Wilson's limitations in Paris in articulating his vision of self-determination in Asia or the Middle East, his vision of interlocking, ethnically homogeneous nation-states largely succeeded in the redrawing of Eastern Europe, setting the boundaries of those nations for decades. While those mental maps never quite mapped onto the political or populational realities, Wilson's ardent desire for the creation of ethnically homogenous nation states shaped the politics of the rest of the twentieth century.

Wilson's mental map of Eastern Europe did not rely on personal experience; indeed, Wilson never even visited the lands on which he would have such long-lasting effects. Instead, the president relied on three layers of assumed and acquired knowledge that Wolff details in the first three chapters of his book: cultural preconceptions, a coterie of academic advisors, and personal relationships with Eastern European revolutionaries. Structurally, Wolff's book is divided into four thematic chapters which move back and forth through Wilson's life, although the majority of the work focuses on the crucial few years between then the United States entered World War I in 1917 and when Wilson finally left the Paris Peace Conference in 1919.

Wolff's first chapter provides the intellectual backstory for how Wilson formulated his eventual support for breaking up Austro-Hungary into composite nation-states. Interestingly, Wolff traces this stance back not to Wilson's perceptions of the Hapsburg empire, but to his cultural preconceptions of the Ottoman Empire. Wolff traces Wilson's ideological understanding of multi-ethnic empires all the way back to the future president's time in graduate school. While studying at Johns Hopkins, Wilson understood the Ottoman Empire through the lens of one of his favorite statesmen: the British

[9] Woodrow Wilson Papers: Series 7: Speeches, Writings, and Academic Material, 1873-1923; Subseries A: Speeches, 1882-1923; 1882, Sept. 22-1903, June 30. Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

[10] Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994).

politician William Gladstone. In the 1870s, Gladstone fiercely decried Ottoman violence against Christian Slav minorities in the empire, and Wilson imported that criticism into his own conception of the empire. Wolff draws this through line to Wilson's presidency, claiming that although Wilson kept a publicly neutral face, privately he believed that the Ottoman Empire's rule over large groups of ethnic minorities constituted a fundamental problem. Wilson argued that "Turkey, that mass of different races, is a veritable hornet's nest…" (23). This concept of multi-ethnic empires as a hornet's nest, Wolff argues, originated with Wilson's opposition to the Ottoman Empire but became central to how Wilson understood all multi-ethnic empires (24).

In his second chapter, Wolff turns to the Austro-Hungarian empire, following how Wilson transposed his predispositions towards the Ottomans over time to the Hapsburg empire. However, whereas Wilson claimed a sort of expertise on the Ottoman Empire from his long study of Gladstone, the president relied on an informal group of experts and social scientists termed "The Inquiry" for information about Eastern Europe. Led by his aide Colonel House and Harvard professor Archibald Cary Coolidge, The Inquiry both provided resources and information to Wilson as well as developing political strategies during the war and for the Paris Peace Conference. During the war, Wilson relied on The Inquiry for geopolitical advice on how to deal with the Austro-Hungarian Empire. After the armistice, the group functioned as Wilson's eyes and ears in Eastern Europe, actually visiting the lands of Eastern Europe to garner, in their minds, objective facts about the character of the peoples there. The Inquiry settled on a path of supporting "Austrian federalism" or encouraging ethnic minorities to gain separatism and "social revolutionary sentiment" (67). They also published pieces and encouraged Wilson to describe Austria as subjugated by Germany, using "an almost taunting spirit in the citing of Austria's 'vassalage' to Germany…and an almost smug satisfaction in Austria's indebtedness and consequence impoverishment" (68). The Inquiry's advice would have huge consequences, eventually working its way into Point Ten of Wilson's Fourteen Points and emphasizing the importance of destabilizing the Austro-Hungarian Empire as a means to break down its relationship with Germany.

Chapter 3 covers the final piece of Wilson's mental map as he prepared for his trip to Paris. After the armistice in 1918 and the subsequent collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Wilson viewed the former imperial lands as existing in a political vacuum. With thousands of maps provided by The Inquiry supporting his own mental mapping, Wilson began to confront the enormity of the task in front of him. Conflicting maps and messages from The Inquiry led Wilson to increasingly base his understanding of Eastern Europe on his own personal connections in the region. Wolff moves between several personal relationships Wilson established in the months leading up to and during his time in Paris, highlighting two in particular: Polish pianist Ignacy Jan Paderewski and Czech revolutionary Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, both of whom went on to lead their newly created nations in 1918. Masaryk, in particular, came to occupy a unique place in Wilson's mind, Wolff argues, eventually becoming a stand-in for all Slavic peoples. During and after Paris, people like Paderewski and Masaryk were part of a "programmatic exchange of reciprocal sympathies within the emotional crucible that also produced and propagated [Wilson's] international principles" (167). This chapter highlights the particular value of Wolff's concept of mental mapping, as Wilson's personal relationships played key roles in shifting the contours of his cartographical aspirations.

Wolff's final chapter engages with the moments when Wilson's high-minded ideas and ideals finally collided with political realities, when his mental maps finally confronted the real world. Wolff paints this confrontation in Paris in thorough, tragic detail as Wilson's neatly imagined ethnically homogeneous, harmonious nation-states in Eastern Europe collided with the messiness of the real world. Wolff writes, "the application of his principles to the blank slate of the map was a barely sustainable fantasy that depended upon pure intentions, national restraint, and neatly interlocking claims" (175). The strain of this fantasy breaking down fractured Wilson's friendships with nascent leaders like Paderewski and led to considerable internal turmoil as Wilson confronted the gritty reality of redrawing the maps of Eastern Europe. Wolff continues, "[Wilson] arrived in Paris with his sentiments of personal friendship and principles of international politics in neat alignment, only to have the principles prove conflicting, the friendships start to fray, and the alignment become seriously disrupted" (236). When Wilson realized that the lines on the map would never be able to convert the reality of intermixed populations, he and his advisors theorized a new concept of the 'national minority' as a means to sustain harmony in the region, as long as the League of Nations could maintain order. As a final blow, the Senate's refusal to join the League of Nations put the final stake in Wilson's plans for managing the fallout and signaled the end of his ability to reshape the maps of the world.

Throughout the book, Wolff paints a deeply intimate and thoughtful portrait of Wilson, following his evolving ideology on Eastern Europe and his cartographical aspirations for producing a long-lasting peace. Aside from the fourth chapter, however, this consistent focus on Wilson's internal thoughts sometimes downplays the importance of exogenous events and people who influenced the practicalities of Wilson's foreign policy before and during the Paris Peace Conference. For example, Wolff comments that Wilson seemed "surprisingly open to the possibility of exercising an American mandate over Constantinople and the Bosphorus straits…" (17) since an imperial extension of this matter seemed out of step with Wilson's initial dedication to national self-determination. Wolff concludes that Wilson eventually came around to supporting the concept of a U.S. mandate based on his changing views on aggrandizement, eventually justifying a mandate as a way to preserve peace. However, the push for more American involvement and imperial power in the Eastern Mediterranean has a long history, especially among the U.S. missionary community in Ottoman lands, rooted in claims of civilizational superiority.[11] After the armistice in 1918, James Barton, the head of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, the largest missionary organization in the United States, and executive chairman of relief group Near East Relief, one of the largest aid organizations in the world, came out forcefully for an American mandate, writing that failure to create a U.S. mandate over Armenia would represent "a grave abdication of our moral duty."[12] Intimately involved in this, of course, were racial politics. Like many of his fellows, Barton assumed that Armenians, as well as most peoples of the region, required firm guidance from an outward force to promote "civilizational growth."[13] In this way, the push for an American imperial presence in the Eastern Mediterranean went hand in hand with the ethnocentric claims of civilizational superiority that undergirded much of America's relationship with the peoples of the Middle East. While Wolff does reflect on Wilson's particular racialized thinking, particularly in terms of Black Americans in the U.S. South, Wilson's racialized preconceptions of Turks or Armenians, as informed by men like Barton, could use lengthier treatment. Barton's words certainly reached Wilson's ear. The main funder of Barton's aid group Near East Relief, the industrialist Cleveland Dodge, had funded Wilson's presidential campaigns and served as an unofficial adviser to Wilson on matters in the Eastern Mediterranean. As with people like Masaryk and Paderewski, Wilson's relationships with missionary funders like Cleveland Dodge also clearly shaped his politics concerning the Eastern Mediterranean and, consequently, his view on multi-ethnic empires.

Woodrow Wilson and the Reimaging of Eastern Europe is a welcome addition to a growing historiography of works revisiting Wilson's legacy. Wolff situates his book within this recent canon of Wilson-focused historiography, including the work of Lloyd Ambrosius, Trygve Throntveit, and Manfred Berg, all of whom offer a new critical lens on a president previously held up as a model of progressive liberalism.[14] He astutely identifies Eastern Europe as a missing piece of this scholarship, particularly in how the mental mapping of the region ultimately led to Wilson's disillusionment with some of his more aspirational and less grounded principles of self-determination.

---

[11] For a recent review of this scholarship, Henry Gorman, "American Ottomans: Protestant Missionaries in an Islamic Empire's Service, 1820-1919, *Diplomatic History* 43:3 (June 2019), 544-568. See also Karine V. Walther, *Sacred Interests: The United States and the Islamic World, 1821-1921* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015); Thomas S. Kidd, *American Christians and Islam: Evangelical Culture and Muslims from the Colonial Period to the Age of Terrorism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009); and Ussama Makdisi, *Artillery of Heaven: American Missionaries and the Failed Conversion of the Middle East* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008).

[12] James L. Barton, "Has America Responsibility for Protecting Armenia," Box 7, Folder 1. Near East Relief Committee Records. Union Theological Seminary Archives, New York City, NY. Accessed at: https://www.loc.gov/resource/mss46029.mss46029-473_0310_1139/?sp=73&r=-0.31,0.157,1.628,0.818,0

[13] Barton, "Has America Responsibility for Protecting Armenia."

[14]Manfred Berg, *Woodrow Wilson: America und die Neuordnung der Welt* (Munich: Beck C.H, 2017); Trygve Throntveit, *Power without Victory: Woodrow Wilson and the American Internationalist Experiment* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2017); Lloyd Ambrosius, *Woodrow Wilson and the American Diplomatic Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

This ambitious work, especially its rigorous employment of the concept of mental mapping, also augments the scholarship on post-imperial transition in Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean and the rise of international law and governance institutions in the wake of World War I. Scholars like Eric Weitz and Mark Mazower have traced how post-WWI international institutions and actors embedded violence and ethnocentrism into the structures of international governance.[15] As a concept, 'mental mapping' offers rich potential for application, particularly in understanding imperial spaces and moments of geopolitical realignment. In this, *Woodrow Wilson and the Reimagining of Eastern Europe* offers one more tool for understanding how the imaginaries of the diplomats at the Paris Peace Conference institutionalized ethnocentric and racialized ideas within the nation-states drawn out on the map. Wilson's unique status at the Paris Peace Conference offered a table for his shifting mental cartography, even as his mental maps proved woefully insufficient for the task at hand. And ultimately Wolff shows that Wilson's ear was indeed attuned to the few people he deemed fit, and his subsequent mental mapping reshaped a continent.

[15] Eric Weitz, *A World Divided: The Global Struggle for Human Rights in the Age of Nation-States* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019); Weitz, "From the Vienna to the Paris System: International Politics and the Entangled Histories of Human Rights, Deportations, and Civilizing Missions," *The American Historical Review* 113:5 (Dec., 2008): 1313-1343; and Mark Mazower, *No Enchanted Place: The End of Empire and the Ideological Origins of the United Nations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013).

Review by Leonard V. Smith, Oberlin College

Having written a book on the Paris Peace Conference of 1919,[16] I have spent much too much time with President Woodrow Wilson to be very fond of him. If choosing among his contemporaries with whom to have a beer, I would certainly choose President Theodore Roosevelt over Wilson, and African-American activist and author W.E.B. Dubois over either them. Yet the venom directed toward Wilson nowadays in the academy, from undergraduates to senior scholars, surprises and sometimes even saddens me. At one stage of the long controversy over what used to be known as the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, I still remember one Princeton student quoted as saying that she could not imagine naming a school after a gravely flawed individual. I wish anyone luck in finding individuals likely to have a school named after them who nature spared grave flaws of one sort or another. It has come to seem almost as though if we simply put Wilson before enough commemorative and historiographical firing squads, all the sins of liberalism itself would be purged. Larry Wolff's book is particularly helpful in suggesting an alternative.

Wolff has given us a human, all-too-human Wilson. Neither saint nor demon, his Wilson understood the world in certain limited ways. He carried a good deal of intellectual and emotional baggage with him to the presidency, some of it quite ugly. His background and prior experience led him to map an understanding of Eastern Europe, and for that matter the world, according to what posterity can see as some strange and capricious ways.

Looming over Wolff's conceptual framework is an odd book by, of all people, Sigmund Freud and William C. Bullit written about 1930 but not published until 1966.[17] The authors argue that Wilson could resolve his Oedipal complex only by thinking of his father as God and himself as Jesus Christ. Freud, of course, never met Wilson. Bullit suffered from what we might today call Post-Wilsonian Stress Disorder. Bullit, born to privilege that made him a natural fit for the State Department and nearly as smart as he thought he was, earlier attributed to Wilson the quasi-divine qualities he believed Wilson attributed to himself. When Wilson rejected Bullit's approach to Bolshevik Russia, he turned on his former hero and did everything he could to sink the Treaty of Versailles in the Senate. Hell hath no fury like a Wilsonian scorned. Wisely, Wolff mentions Bullit at a couple of points and leaves his psycho-biography *avant la lettre* on the shelf. But how, then, lacking an alternative psychological profile, to humanize his subject?

Wolff spares us Wilson's Oedipal complex. Rather, he emphasizes emotions, affective relationships to the lands and peoples at hand, and to the individuals who sought to speak for them. In Wolff's analysis, the heart does not so much rule the head as direct the head toward what information to process in understanding some very complicated parts of the world. In this sense, emotions could map the world. Wilson processed the Ottoman Empire through a Gladstonian disdain for Oriental despots, and empathy for their victims. The war against Austria-Hungary became a war for the emancipation of oppressed peoples. What Wolff refers to as "friendship," (title of Chapter 3) often personal in nature, could solve problems as difficult as Italian irredentism and what lands a South Slav state ought to comprise. Friendship could also inform just where to locate an independent Poland that had not existed since 1795, as well as what to do about the non-Polish peoples who lived there.

In peacemaking in Eastern Europe and Anatolia, the United States would need all the non-material help it could get, because it no military forces there. Indeed, American military and financial power might have been necessary to the allied victory of 1918, but they were never sufficient. Given what even contemporaries recognized as the limits of American power, it was hard to see how the president's friendly feelings toward to King Nicholas of Montenegro were going to matter much one way or another. Further, Wilson faced a public back home that had pointedly rejected his general vision in the

[16] Leonard V. Smith, *Sovereignty at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

[17] Sigmund Freud and William C. Bullit, *Thomas Woodrow Wilson, Twenty-eighth President of the United States: A Psychological Study* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1967).

congressional elections of November 1918. That public seemed to grow more skeptical by the day of foreign entanglements of potentially unlimited duration.

Letting the heart inform the head made it difficult for Wilson to process some basic, knowable, and today obvious facts. Almost none the Ottoman Empire was actually in Eastern Europe, the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913 having expelled the Sublime Porte from the Balkans except for the small triangle that remains Turkish today. The irredentist threats in Southeastern Europe came from Italy, Greece, Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania, and even Bolshevik Russia, not post-Ottoman Turkey. As Wolff notes, so firm a believer in Jim Crow as Wilson was going to have to tread lightly in any post-Habsburg policy that claimed as its goal 'emancipation.' No one could be ethnic friends to everyone in the former Dual Monarchy. This meant playing favorites, and in disappointing someone, indeed many someones, all of whom wanted to match ethnic and historic boundaries. Oppressors and oppressed even became blurred. Poles and South Slavs had fought the Great War on both sides.

Polish nationalists themselves did not agree on what a restored Poland should look like. Nationalist leader Roman Damowski had ethnic issues beyond his well-known anti-Semitism. He advocated a relatively compact, ethnically "Polish" Poland, which he considered to have been guaranteed by Point XIII of Wilson's Fourteen Points. However, Point XIII also guaranteed Poland free and secure access to the sea, which it could not have without including a substantial minority of Germans. This helped open the door of recognition to a more maximalist, but more multicultural, Poland envisaged by Chief of State Józef Piłsudski. Wilson's friend Prime Minister Ignacy Paderewski had the unenviable jobs of mediating between the two nationalists, and capitalizing on his worldwide fame as a pianist, representing "Poland" to the outside world. Surely Paderewski must have wondered at times whether he would have been happier just staying at his piano.

The most glaring fact was largely ignored at the time, perhaps inevitably. The peacemakers who sought to remake Eastern Europe as ethno-national successor states simply did not have a very good idea of who lived where. In today's terminology, they had only "faith-based" data to work with, either from nationalists or from the defeated Habsburg, Ottoman, and German Imperial regimes. Census data were often many years old and could take no account of wartime mortality or movements of populations. Nationalists spent a good deal of time in Paris discrediting one another's data.

The Inquiry constituted the ad hoc think tank established by Wilson adviser Edward House to make recommendations on peacemaking, though its real purpose was to sideline the State Department. In either function, it did not represent the finest hour of Ivy League cronyism. Many of its brightest lights from academia, including Charles Homer Haskins (Harvard), Charles Seymour (Yale), and Frederick Jackson Turner (Harvard) had made academic careers in fields that had little to do with the troubles of Eastern Europe in 1919. Isaiah Bowman, then director of the American Geographical Society and a Latin Americanist, imposed a kind of order on the diffuse Inquiry, and compressed its main conclusions into a précis known as the Black Book. Along the way, however, Bowman also commissioned a remarkably large number of reports on Latin America, which was not exactly at the center of peacemaking after the Great War. To be sure, as Wolff shows, Archibald Cary Coolidge, another Harvard don, did have actual expertise in Central Europe. But he was never as influential as Bowman, not least because the local knowledge he generated often just confused the certainty required by The Inquiry.

Only Czechoslovakia got most of what it sought in Paris in terms of historic boundaries—Bohemia, Moravia, and Slovakia. But was it simply a coincidence that the future first president of Czechoslovakia, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, had married an American, spoke excellent English, and also had important backers in Britain such as journalist and historian R.W. Seton-Watson? Or that prominent nationalists in exile Evard Beneš and Milan Štefánik spoke excellent French and had equally influential supporters in France? Coolidge himself had recommended against boundaries for Czechoslovakia that included a substantial German minority, in what would become known as the Sudatenland. But nothing could overcome the emotive bonds of friendship forged among the allied peacemakers and the charismatic Czech and Slovak nationalists. Wolff reminds us how much who-knew-whom mattered in Paris. In the end, in drawing the borders of Czechoslovakia, or for that matter any of the successor states, there were only two choices. The peacemakers could draw boundaries to suit peoples or alter peoples to suit boundaries. Wolff shows the emotional underpinnings of how they did both.

Where, then, does Wolff's book leave us in reflecting on today's unloved Wilson? We do not get a three-dimensional portrait of Wilson as an individual. Perhaps this is as it should be. Maybe the person of Woodrow Wilson just is not that interesting, or even that important. If the personal is political, the political can be profoundly personal. Wolff's Wilson had emotions, likes, and dislikes that guided his choices, as well as what he could understand as well as what he could not. In Eastern Europe and Anatolia, the 'facts' he had to work with were so infused with the politics they sought to adjudicate, perhaps Wilson had little *but* emotional filters to work with anyway. Wilson scholars since Arno Mayer have shown us how Wilson was backed into accepting the morphing of a nineteenth-century liberal notion of 'self-determination' into "national self-determination."[18] For this Wilson could thank, among other people, V.I. Lenin, leader of the Bolshevik Revolution, who today seems to attract much less scorn than Wilson. The American president and his colleagues in Paris made a good-faith effort to build a liberal Eastern Europe with the misshapen tools and the fissile materials at hand.

Further, I do not believe that Wilson was a bad liberal. Indeed, I am not even convinced that his friend and supporter South African Prime Minister Jan Smuts was a bad liberal. The issue is liberalism itself, or rather just why liberalism has been so comfortable historically with capricious inclusion and exclusion. "We need to cut off the king's head," wrote Michel Foucault, "in political theory this still has to be done."[19] Foucault's point as I understand it is that we need to understand discourse more at micro-levels and less at the levels of great statesmen and canonical political theorists. Wolff has shown us a path toward getting there.

[18] Arno J. Mayer, Political Origins of the New Diplomacy, 1917-1918 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959). See also Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), and Niels Aage Thorsen, *The Political Thought of Woodrow Wilson* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).

[19] See Andrew Neal, "Cutting Off the King's Head: Foucault's *Society Must Be Defended* and the Problem of Sovereignty," *Alternatives* 29 (2004): 373-98.

Review by Ronald Grigor Suny, The University of Michigan

Woodrow Wilson, a president whom we hailed when I was a boy as an idealist and internationalist, is certainly having a hard time nowadays. During the Second World War he was played in an Oscar-winning biopic, *Wilson* (1944), by the character actor Alexander Knox as a noble if tragic figure. In the Cold War years Wilson was seen as a statesman whose moral instincts inspired a foreign policy promoting democracy and peace, the League of Nations, and American engagement in international affairs. He was a precursor of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and, along with Michigan Senator Arthur Vandenberg, an opponent of the traditional isolationism that had prevailed since President George Washington warned Americans against 'foreign entanglements.' His reputation as a foreign policy visionary began to suffer with the revisionist scholarship of the New Left that undermined the Cold War orthodoxy of the liberal establishment under Harry Truman and his successors who led the crusade to contain Communism into the hot wars in Southeast Asia. Instead of making the world safe for democracy, the Left proclaimed, Wilsonianism was designed to make the world safe for capitalism and its global hegemon, the United States. Altruism and ethics were veils for a powerful pragmatism rooted in advancing American interests, which policy makers in Washington were convinced corresponded magically to the interests of every other God-fearing free people.[20] Whatever his intentions, Wilson was American first and foremost – and a Southern racist to boot.

Larry Wolff is a unique historian, who has brought novel perspectives and lucid insights to the study of Eastern Europe. His discursive study of Enlightenment views on the 'other Europe,' *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford University Press, 1994) was followed by works on child abuse in Casanova's Venice, and Freud's Vienna, and *The Singing Turk: Ottoman Power and Operatic Emotions on the European Stage from the Siege of Vienna to the Age of Napoleon* (Stanford University Press, 2016), where he explored the exotic depictions of singing pashas and sultans.[21] He begins his study of Wilson and his extraordinary effect on Eastern Europe with the demise of the Ottoman Empire, which the Big Four in Paris in 1919 did much to achieve. The victorious European powers were willing to surrender Constantinople (Istanbul) to the Americans as a mandate, something desired by Wilson emotionally, as an heir of the British liberal politician and Prime Minister William Gladstone's *Bulgarian Horrors*, but which his pragmatic understanding of what was possible in Republican Washington precluded. His futile fight to achieve a mandate for Armenia also was rejected by the Congress, "a final insult to the Wilsonian vision of peace" (55).

Integral to that vision was a preference for 'solidarity of race,' which meant homogeneity of nationality that would strengthen a state. Multinational empires, therefore, were doomed once Wilson experienced the Great War, after which he emerged deeply committed to national self-determination (62). He believed that nation-states naturally bound peoples to governments, while imperial domains "could be kept together only by force" (62). This perspective marked the present and future discourse that doomed empires to decline and eventual oblivion and promoted a future where the preferred architecture of states would conform to the dominant ethnicity. Yet it took time for Wilson to come to the full implications of his support of the national principle. He took different positions on different empires. The Ottoman Empire was to be dismantled; the Austro-Hungarian could survive but with autonomy for the various subject peoples; and the Russian

[20] See, for examples, Christopher Lasch, *The American Liberals and the Russian Revolution* (New York and London: Cambridge University Press, 1962); Lloyd E. Ambrosius, "The Orthodoxy of Revisionism: Woodrow Wilson and the New Left," *Diplomatic History* 1 (Summer 1977): 199-214; Patricia O'Toole, *The Moralist: Woodrow Wilson and the World He Made* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2019).

[21] LarryWolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994); Woolf, *Child Abuse In Freud's Vienna: Postcards from the End of the World* (New York: NYU Press, 1995); Woolf, *Paolina's Innocence: Child Abuse in Casanova's Venice* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012); Woolf, *The Singing Turk: Ottoman Power and Operatic Emotions on the European Stage from the Siege of Vienna to the Age of Napoleon* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016).

Empire, still a potential bulwark against Germany at the time of the Fourteen Points (January 1918), would remain a unitary state with "independent determination of her own political and national policy" (66).

Striking to the present reader is the foundation of this vision: ethnonations are seen as whole and homogeneous, harmonious within and bounded and distinct at their borders, with nationalist spokesmen articulating the democratic aspirations of their peoples. There is no room here for the idea of nations as blurry at their boundaries, fields of intense debate internally, and constructed, even invented, by ethnic entrepreneurs. Getting the architecture right would in fact initiate a century to come of forced assimilation, ethnic cleansing, population 'exchanges,' and genocide. Soviet leader Vladimir Lenin preceded Wilson in his advocacy of political self-determination to the point of separation from the mother state, but Marxists were much more ambivalent about the primordialism and fixity of nationality than were liberals. For Wilson the goal was international peace and the preservation of liberal democracy and the capitalist order; for Lenin it was the end of imperialism and colonialism and an international socialist revolution.

A fascinating subtext through this lively and insightful book is the role of academic experts. At a time when there was little serious scholarly study of Eastern Europe, the Ottoman lands, and Russia in the West, governments engaged 'experts' like Harvard's Archibald Cary Coolidge, Britain's R. W. Seton-Watson, Austrian legal scholar Heinrich Lammasch, and historians Robert Howard Lord and Robert Kerner to inform them about the 'small peoples' of that other Europe and the Near East. Several of them were personal friends, like the Czech Thomas Masaryk, and fierce advocates for national independence. Academic expertise commingled with personal prejudice and political prejudices among Wilson's advisers. Wolff details their influence on Wilson and his ultimate acceptance of an agenda that came to mean support for revolution, national rather than socialist, as stated boldly by Secretary of State Robert Lansing in his powerful memo that was accepted by the president on June 26, 1918. The background to the national moment for 'the small peoples' and the demise of empires was the looming menace of Bolshevism in the minds of many.

Wolff frames his intricate story with the concept of mental mapping, the way Wilson and others reimagined the world and the sources of future political harmonies. "The 'cultivation of friendship'," he writes, "was part of Wilson's strategic and sentimental approach to the creation of a new international order, and his own sense of personal friendship – for national leaders, and even for whole nations – shaped the vision for the remapping of Eastern Europe" (116). The president wavered between claiming that the peoples of Eastern Europe were themselves creating their own new states and recognizing the generative role of American and Entente power. The fragile fledging states would have to be protected and guaranteed by the "structural iron" of the League of Nations (116).

Wilsonianism was in essence a form of Christian liberalism, inspired by ideals of friendship, some personal, notably with Balkan royalty and with national statesmen like the academic Masaryk and the pianist Ignacy Jan Paderewski, others expressed as friendship between the American people and the peoples of former empire. Frustrated by trying to adjudicate the frontiers between Slavic and Italian territories, Wilson clung to his principles of ethnic self-determination, but once he was incapacitated by a stroke, other Great Powers set the eventual borders. Although Montenegro would be swallowed by Serbia, and Galicia absorbed into Poland, the new Poland, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia nevertheless owned their existence both to the visions of Woodrow Wilson as well as to their own efforts at popular and political mobilization. Forming ethnonational states in a part of the world where multinational imperial states had left mixed populations, and cities and towns dominated by one people surrounded by countryside inhabited by other peoples, meant that the new Wilsonian order would have to make provisions for the protection of ethnic and religious minorities left in the new states.

The result of what Wolff calls "the odorous reality of Eastern Europe" (187) was that rather than homogeneous nation-states, Poland, Rumania, and Czechoslovakia in particular would end up like little empires with a dominant *Herrenvolk* and the resident German, Hungarian, Lithuanian, Jewish, and Ukrainian populations who did not share the same rights or sense of belonging of the titular nations (187). Wolff's journey into Wilson's mind and actions is marked by his nuanced appreciation of the affective as well as strategic sides of the president. Yet it ends up with a great irony: anti-imperialist aspirations and intentions in the age of nation-states had created new kinds of imperial arrangements and disastrous incentives to commit crimes against humanity rather than solve the problem of human harmony. Wilson certainly engaged

in a "rhetorical style of utopian fantasy," (242) but he faced two other utopian schemes when mapping Eastern Europe. The national fantasy of harmonious, homogeneous nations was countered by a newcomer to international politics that is not discussed in this volume as much as it deserves: the visions of the Bolsheviks, who certainly stirred deep emotions in Wilson, shared his notion of national self-determination, but were even more prepared to overthrow the old order and move into an uncharted future.

Response by Larry Wolff, New York University

I am immensely grateful to the four reviewers Dominique Reill, Kyle Romero, Leonard Smith, and Ronald Suny for their stimulating perspectives on my book and for insights which have made some aspects of my book clearer even to me. I am further grateful to Tom Maddux for organizing this roundtable for H-Diplo.

In 2016 Mikhail Baryshnikov was performing in Brooklyn a one-man show as Vaslav Nijinsky; Baryshnikov was acting out the diary of 1919 that recorded the course of Nijinsky's mental illness. I saw the show and then read the diary and was fascinated to discover that Nijinsky like everyone else in 1919, and even from within his madness, was obsessed with President Woodrow Wilson: "I want Wilson to achieve his aims, because his aims are nearer to truth. I feel Wilson's death. I am afraid he might get a bullet through the head."[22] As I worked through the Wilson papers, I kept thinking about the intensity of Nijinsky's identification with Wilson, his apprehension for Wilson, his endorsement of Wilson, as a reminder of the strength of the feelings that the American president provoked in Eastern Europe— with Nijinsky as a sort of quintessentially synthetic East European, a Russian artist, born in Ukraine, from a Polish family. Reviewer Dominique Reill wonders that anyone could ever have doubted that Wilson was the champion of the Slavs; Nijinsky seemed quite certain of that fact, and his case implicitly suggests the reciprocal proposition that the Slavs were the champions of Wilson.

Leonard Smith rightly notes that Sigmund Freud and William Bullitt's book 'looms' over my study of Wilson, and, indeed, I was more and more convinced as I worked my way through the materials that the history of Wilson and Eastern Europe could not be told as a story of rational principles of statecraft rationally applied to diplomatic problems.[23] While Freud was convinced that Wilson's messianic ambitions could only be explained by an Oedipally traumatic childhood, in fact it was Freud whose entire Habsburg existence— he was born a subject of the emperor, created psychoanalysis in the imperial capital, even dreamed about Habsburg politics— was traumatized by the Wilsonian statesmanship which undermined his own political foundations. Actually, Freud and Wilson were exact contemporaries, both born in 1856 and fiercely bringing their respective intellectual principles to bear upon the societies of the twentieth century.

Wilson made a quick trip back to America in the middle of the peace conference in mid-February 1919 and on March 4 he gave a speech about the imminent treaty at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York. This was the old Metropolitan House at 39th Street and Broadway (I can remember it from my childhood) that was demolished when the new opera house opened at Lincoln Center in the 1960s. Speaking from the stage, Wilson declared, "The liberated peoples of the Austro-Hungarian Empire of the Turkish Empire call out to us," and he rhetorically invoked the nations that have "called out to the world, generation after generation, for justice, and for liberation, and for succor" (32). While this was surely an inaccurate conception of imperial history, what is striking is Wilson's emotional sense that he could identify so closely with the peoples of Eastern Europe as to "call out" on their behalf from the stage of the opera house, in effect to ventriloquize their sufferings in an aria of political suffering and longing. Nineteenth-century opera did in fact feature such arias— one thinks of Verdi's chorus of the Hebrews in *Nabucco*, "Va pensiero"— and later in March 1919 Enrico Caruso would replace Wilson on the stage of the Met and sing the role of Samson in the opera by Camille Saint-Saëns. In the final act Samson, the champion of the Hebrews, calls out for the strength to destroy the Philistine temple,

In his review Kyle Romero stresses the context of American missionary efforts in the Ottoman Empire, and, in this regard, I think it's also important to note Wilson's missionary fervor in relation to the region, the missionary, messianic, religious intensity of his commitment to the peace settlement in Eastern Europe. I was also much struck by the fiercely religious sentiments about politics that shaped the views of former churchman George Herron, Wilson's correspondent in Switzerland, who believed, in phrases that might have emerged from Nijinsky's delusions, that "the world has never looked to a man as it now looks to President Wilson" (78). There was perhaps some truth to Herron's conviction, especially among

[22] *The Diary of Vaslav Nijinsky*, ed. Joan Acocella, trans. Kyril FitzLyon (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 62.

[23] Sigmund Freud and William Bullitt, *Thomas Woodrow Wilson: A Psychological Study* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1966).

the peoples of Eastern Europe, who looked to Wilson for the realization of their national programs, and Wilson responded to their reported fervor. I was, as I worked on this project, increasingly persuaded that Wilson's own mental map of Eastern Europe was vividly colored by his own emotions, and that the intersection of emotional and diplomatic history would offer some insight into Wilsonian statesmanship.

Nijinsky believed that Wilson was "nearer to truth" than other statesmen, and it is interesting to reflect, when looking back at the peace conference, about what Wilson's "truth" might have been. Certainly, it was not the truth about establishing stable peace, for the Wilsonian settlement in Eastern Europe was catastrophically overturned by dictators Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s. Yet, Wilson was mesmerized by what he understood to be the truth of the map. Ronald Suny notes that Wilson believed in "homogeneity of nationality," that nations were "whole and homogeneous, harmonious within and bounded as distinct at their borders." Romero stresses the same point, writing, "Wilson's neatly imagined ethnically homogeneous nation states in Eastern Europe" which "collided with the messiness of the real world." Indeed Wilson wanted the shapes on the new map to constitute neatly bounded national entities.

There was an odd moment at the peace conference when Wilson commented that the Ottoman empire was in dissolution "as though it were made of quicksilver," while the Habsburg empire "has been broken into pieces" (34). The idea that the diverse Ottoman peoples were dissolved into one another, like liquid mercury, was more disturbing to Wilson than the notion of distinct and separate pieces. These were precisely the fantasized ethnically homogeneous and bounded fragments of empire that could become the basis of mappable nation states, the ideal fragments that corresponded to the principle of national self-determination.

On the SS George Washington, traveling to Europe in December 1918, Wilson is reported to have exclaimed "Three million Germans in Bohemia! That's curious! Masaryk never told me that!"[24] Actually Freud and Bullitt reported that exclamation, as if it were the traumatizing return of the repressed— for, after all, how could Wilson really have remained absolutely ignorant of the mixed population of old Bohemia and new Czechoslovakia? In fact, Wilson fervently wanted his Habsburg fragments to be homogeneous, and only reluctantly came to understand, at the peace conference, that while the principle of national self-determination functioned on the implicit basis of national majorities, in the absence of ideal homogeneity the establishment of national majorities almost inevitably led to the troubling creation of national minorities. The flip side of national self-determination was minority rights, and Wilson gradually came to appreciate this as part of "the messiness of the real world." Reill notes Wilson's almost flippant comment that in the peace settlement he was getting his "revenge" for the geography he had to study as a boy. It had been a messy geography, and his revenge was to seek to impose upon it his own principles of clarification.

So the truth that Wilson appreciated— "nearer to truth," as Nijinsky averred— was the nationalist's truth, the fantasized truth of a homogeneous and bounded national state in which the presence of minorities was either invisible or ignored; the state was a pure and solid metal, not elusively liquid mercury. Wilson saw the national territories of the former empires in the way that a nationalist would have imagined them, and it was this dubious "truth" that made the settlement of nation states conceptually Wilsonian. He would not have cared to puzzle over the ambiguities of whether Nijinsky should be considered Polish, Ukrainian, or Russian.

The problem of liquid quicksilver in the Ottoman Empire, Wilson supposed, was that it could never be stable. In an even odder metaphor, he wrote that "Turkey, that mass of different races, is a veritable hornet's nest, which keeps Europe always in alarm" (23). It was the mingling of different races— or nations or peoples, for Wilson used the terms somewhat interchangeably— that made the Ottoman Empire unstable and explosive and disturbing to the Wilsonian geopolitical imagination. In 1917 he accepted that Turkey "must become autonomous in its several parts according to racial lines" (24), though by 1919 he had come to believe that all the parts were liquid and flowed into one another. When we recall that Wilson in the context of American domestic politics was a racial segregationist, and that his administration resegregated the

[24] Freud and Bullit, 154.

federal service, it is worth noting that his principles of foreign policy also turned upon the premise of separation "according to racial lines." The domestic policies that appear most censurable today, and that in 2020 led to the removal of Wilson's name from the Princeton School of Public Policy, were also curiously related to the principles of foreign policy for which Wilson was long celebrated. National self-determination rested upon the assumption of homogeneous national (or racial) fragments, bounded and separated (or segregated) from one another in order to create a system of supposedly stable national states.

It was the scholarly Inquiry team which pushed back against Wilson's assumptions of national homogeneity, and though Leonard Smith observes that geographer Isaiah Bowman was more influential with his many maps than historian Archibald Cary Coolidge, there is also no doubt that Coolidge had an influence and impact that went beyond Wilson and the peace conference. Wilson in Paris liked to hold a map in his hands—one provided by Bowman—almost as if it gave him confidence that he possessed the requisite knowledge to adjudicate borders, while Coolidge's memoranda provided troubling complications, as in his "Memorandum on the Rights of National Minorities," dated April 1, 1919. Coolidge was the professor who introduced Russia and Eastern Europe to the history curriculum at Harvard, and he had done the things that Wilson never did: he actually visited the region, and observed and encountered the lands and peoples of Eastern Europe. He had been in St. Petersburg and Constantinople before the war, and he resided in Vienna during the peace conference, sending his memoranda from there to Wilson in Paris. The whole issue of national minorities militated against the assumption of national homogeneities, and Wilson came to accept the complications that Coolidge presented.

Coolidge received assistance from two of his Harvard Ph.D. students, Robert Howard Lord, who studied Poland, and Robert Kerner, who studied the Czechs and the South Slavs. While Coolidge and his team had an impact on Wilson during the peace conference—the president cited them frequently—their long-term impact was the establishment of the whole field of the history of Eastern Europe in the United States. Coolidge returned to Harvard after the peace conference, more than ever committed to teaching in that field, and as director of Harvard's Widener Library he worked to build the Slavic collection. Kerner went out to California where he became Berkeley's professor of East European history, and in the 1930s trained a Ph.D. student of his own, Wayne Vucinich, who worked with the Office of Strategic Services in wartime intelligence during World War II, and became a professor of East European history at Stanford after the war. I myself was a Ph.D. student of Vucinich's, which means that in four academic generations— from Coolidge to Kerner to Vucinich to me— Wilson's Inquiry team essentially fathered this whole field of American academia as we now know it. Thus, Wilson's crash course of personal education concerning Eastern Europe between 1917 and 1919 had the lasting consequence of establishing an important new field of academic knowledge with genealogical implications for myself and a great many historians working today.

If the study of Eastern Europe as an academic field remains one of the submerged monuments to Woodrow Wilson in the United States—to Wilson, the champion of the Slavs— the reciprocal Slavic championship of Wilson has also been sustained over the last century. It was not just Nijinsky who celebrated Wilson. Prague renamed its train station in his honor and erected a statue in the 1920s, and in Poznan a statue by Danish-American artist Gutzon Borglum, who also designed Mount Rushmore, was unveiled in the 1930s. The main theater square in Zagreb was named for Wilson—Wilsonov Trg, "Wilson Square"— while in Bratislava the whole town was briefly re-designated as Wilsonovo Mesto, "Wilson City." The statues of Wilson all came down when Hitler conquered Eastern Europe, and stayed down after World War II when the region was dominated by Stalin. Following the end of the Cold War, however, it turned out that Wilson had not been forgotten: a new statue was erected in Poznan in 1994, and, even as Wilson's political legacy was being harshly criticized in the United States, a new statue was unveiled in Prague in 2011. The political significance of Wilson's name, image, and legacy thus remains a complex and ongoing issue not just in America, but also in Eastern Europe where he so powerfully applied his influence and imagination.