Striving for Humanity or Failed Modern Liberal Democratic Imperialism: A Case Study of Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points Speech

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Abstract

This is an examination of Woodrow Wilson's concepts of national self-determination and his Fourteen Points Speech. Wilson's own intellectual, political development, and enthusiastic shaped the framework of his foreign diplomacy to challenge the perspective that not ideas, but interests—material and ideals—directly govern men's conduct. Due to the United States government's cooperative historical relationship between democracy, nationalism, and sovereignty, along with Wilson's strong affiliation within the liberal nationalist ambit, his ideologies are hasty and applied in an unspecific and unqualified way. Consequently, the underdeveloped and ambiguous projection of his ideals as a program presented in the form his Fourteen Points Speech will be held accountable within the case-specific context of the rebirth of an independent Poland and the negativity produced the ignorance of President Wilson and the appropriateness of his failure.

Introduction
World War I was a global conflict that primarily took place in Europe between July 28, 1914 and November 11, 1918. Triggered by the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria, this global conflict is incredibly significant for the history of the nation state and many of the European Nation states. Perhaps the most widely felt characteristic of this war was the massive loss of life, caused by the modern presence of technology and a dated and insufficient balance of powers meant to maintain peace. Mostly, the balancing of these powers centered around the concept of the Empire, thus pulling many other countries bound by treaty to join the conflict. At its largest capacity the conflict called approximately 70 million active troops, 60 million of them European, to arms elevating the global conflict to one of the largest wars in human history. By the end, four of the major Imperial powers involved (Germany, Russia, Austria-Hungary, and the Ottomans) collapsed, and Europe was in dire need for a reassessment of the balancing of powers and the territories of Central Europe.

After World War I the leadership role of Woodrow Wilson and a powerful United States led the reconstruction efforts of war-torn Europe and subsequently of the nation-state as the reflection of what President understood to be the inherent ideals of a successful twentieth century American nation-state, which, as this paper intends to argue, was undoubtedly indoctrinated with characteristics of a liberal-democratic nation to best serve the interests of the United States Government. This paper will examine the 'Wilsonian' language used from the famous Fourteen Points Speech delivered to Congress January 8, 1918 regarding his plan for the restructuring of Central and Eastern Europe. Within the context of prominent secondary sources on the roles and origins of the nation-state and the rebirth of Poland, along with secondary sources that look to examine the angles of intent and implementation of the assertions made

2 Keene, *The United States and the First World War*
throughout President Wilson's speech. More specifically, the meaning of Wilson's ideology such as "national self-determination" about the qualifications of the nation state must first be analyzed. The next step is to understand the goals of the Fourteen Points within Wilson's ideology using his thirteenth point (XIII) concerning the fate of the "independent Polish-state" as a case study. In order to understand the rebirth of Poland as a case-study for the assertions made regarding Wilson's ideology and agenda for the region using primarily Margaret McMillan’s _Peacemakers: The Paris Conference of 1919 and its Attempt to End the War_. McMillan offers a unique perspective on the execution of the reconstruction of Europe as it relates to the agenda of the Supreme Council led by Woodrow Wilson and the United States. Similarly, modern Polish historian Anita Prasmowska 's _Poland: A Modern History_ offers inherently specific details about those who heavily contributed to the erection of the independent Polish state, how the ultimate decisions were received, and how these decisions matured moving forward. The additional presence of the Polish perspective allows us to further identify and examine the effectiveness of President Wilson’s Fourteen Points Speech.

Understanding Woodrow Wilson and his Principles
Unlike World War II, which caused significant devastation to the railway's, ports, and cities, the most significant loses of World War I were very clearly loses of human life among the great battlefields of large-scale trench warfare. Moreover, much of the ultra-high and pervasive self-confidence and wealth that allowed Europe to dominate as the center of modern civilization was lost with the tremendous casualty rate. Despite many objections by both his enemies and supporters, Wilson felt that the situation at the end of the Great War warranted his attention equally as much as winning the war itself, but why? After the experience gained from fighting the his own war and the immediate success of essentially finishing World War I, Wilson felt that the United States had undeniably earned the position of arbiter for constructing peace; that they must live up "to the great traditions of justice and generosity," which he believed the world used as an example too create their own success.

President Wilson was known for his tenacity and desire for successful. Moreover, he was not afraid to let this sense of pride play a large role in his actions as President. In the Mexican American War just before World War I, President Wilson did not hesitate to flex the power of the American military or the industry supporting it. When speaking on the conflict with Mexico, Wilson asserts that the goal of the United States was to "solely and singly [secure] peace and order in Central America by seeing that the processes of self-government there [was] not interrupted or set aside". In this statement President Wilson utilizes the term "self-government", albeit in a vague context without much explanation, as a synonym for his heavily referenced principle of self-determination. He also justifies the actions of the United States through a

5 Macmillan. Peacemakers. 1-20
6 MacMillan. Peacemakers, 19
humanitarian lens by asserting that the country was acting to “secure peace and order”, but what does this mean? Wilson makes parallel assertions during his address to congress on January 8, 1919 about the reconstruction of central Europe:

“We entered this war because violations of right had occurred which touched us to the quick and made life of our people impossible unless they were corrected in the world secure once for all against their recurrence. What we demand in this war, therefore, is nothing peculiar to ourselves. It is that the world be made fit and save to live in; and particularly that it be made safe for every peace loving-nation which, like our own, wishes to live is own life, determine its own institutions, be assured justice and fair dealing by other peoples of the world against force and selfish aggression [...] For our own part we see very clearly that unless justice be done to others it will not be done to us. The programme of the world’s peace, there, is our programme; and that programme, the only possible programme, as we see it, is this”

The origin of the term ‘national self-determination’ became mainstream in the early twentieth century, but it is a concept that derives from the spoils of the French Revolution. The French Revolution itself was the affirmation of an idea beginning to ground itself throughout Western Europe; the idea that the source to all sovereignty essentially resides in the nation state. This respectively led to the development different liberal nationalisms. While there were many nations fighting for independence in the Balkans, the Russians decisively handled the Polish rebellion of 1863 decisively and many of the other European powers saw a dramatic increase in imperialist activities in the late nineteenth century. It is this context, in addition to Wilson’s political

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9 See Lynch for discussion. Nationalism saw a considerable amount of growth and diversification over the course of the early 19th Century that can be loosely broken down into the common eras
development and education that shape the foundation for an idea so important to President Wilson. As Woodrow Wilson expert Stephen A. Schuker asserts, "Wilson derived his bedrock views not from empirical scrutiny of the German war record, but rather the from the predispositions of the nineteenth century humanitarian liberalism and the Presbyterian religion." Moreover, his fundamental worldviews of a successful state drew heavily on the British political and constitutional processes. More specifically, the British highlighted the right to trade freely, a need for "vigorous leadership to guide the people; a reforming administrative machinery, and a restraining hand on lasses-faire economic principles for the sake of economic justice." A cluster of the aforementioned principles combined with the ideals of Christianity, self-governance, democracy, national pride, and the organic state comprise the attributes that define Woodrow Wilson's concepts of "self-determination [...] peace and loving nations like our own."

From the perspective of President Wilson, World War I was not the result of an assassination followed by the obligation of alliance politics, but rather a failure of the ideology behind preserving peace by juxtaposing powers in large alliances. President Wilson takes clear ownership for providing peace, and pre-justifies his actions by aligning a universal definition of peace, with his own definition of peace. Wilson was well known as a tenacious liberal democrat whom stuck to larger humanitarian ideology, but also an inability to communicate how the finer details of his ideologies materialized into a reality. President Wilson's chief advisor and close friend Edward M. House remarked with admiration "that whenever a question [was] presented he keeps an absolutely open mind and welcomes all suggestion or advice which will lead to a

12 Lynch, Woodrow Wilson and the Principle of National Self-Determination, 422
13 Lynch, Woodrow Wilson and the Principle of National Self-Determination, 423
correct decision [...] but is only receptive during the period that he is weighing the question and preparing to make his decision."\textsuperscript{14} In other words once he felt adamant about a particular decision or direction was made, all advice and suggestion went unheard. His methods and thought process teetered on the divide between surreal egotism and admirable confidence. The French Ambassador, for example, commented that he firmly believed President Wilson was "a man who [then], had he lived a couple centuries ago, would have been the greatest tyrant in the world, because he does not seem to have the slightest conception that he can never be wrong."\textsuperscript{15} By the Paris Peace Conference of 1919, Woodrow Wilson maintained the reputation he had made for himself. His ambiguous perspectives and claims had not changed and his methods certainly did not waiver. It is well known that Wilson's primary concern was a method to find a new policy of international relations, but President Wilson's haste led to a major flaw originating in the inherent differences between the development of Anglo-American culture and Eastern and Central European cultures. At this stage, it is embedded in the cultures of the West that the principles of nationality and self-determination need to coexist. There was a clear assumption on behalf of the Allies led by Wilson, "that the attachment to the state and attachment to the nation need must be as coincident in East-Central Europe as they were deemed to be in [Western] political cultures."\textsuperscript{16} As this essay's moves farther into the details of Polish history and the American-Polish relationship during the Paris Peace Conference, the significance of this flaw becomes shockingly clear, meanwhile the intent of President Wilson to liberate Poland is cast under a shadow of failure due to a lack of understanding from the beginning of the Peace talks. Wilson was both ignorant and indifferent, at least in the beginning, to heavy presence of ethnic borders in the European region. In fact, Wilson dealt with lack of correspondence between state borders and ethnic borders "by

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{14} Macmillan, \textit{Peacemakers}, 13}\par
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{15} Macmillan, \textit{Peacemakers}, 13-20}\par
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{16} Lynch, \textit{Woodrow Wilson and the Principle of National Self-Determination}, 424}
pretending that it did not exist."¹⁷ In Anglo-American development, nationalism developed as an agent of democracy and service to the individual. Meanwhile in Eastern and Central Europe, nationalism served a much different purpose and was often used to initiate the transformation of political and social structures rather than the other way around.

The Determination and Homogeneity of the Polish People

In the weeks leading up to the Paris Peace Conference of 1919, perhaps the clearest and most significant communities whose situation need be addressed in central Europe were the Polish people. After several civilian rebellions, a very lively activist culture in all partitioned parts of Poland, and a nearly universal feeling of victimization from World War I by both the Poles and the United States, anticipation for the creation of a Polish state was high. The Poles had done a fantastic job displaying its own vehement desire to be governed by its own Polish government and not be assimilated fully into any Empire. In the years leading up to the Great War, Polish communities firmly established its cultural homogeneity to its invaders and nations watching (such as the United States) over the course of several decades. There are two events, according to modern Polish historian Anita Prazmowska, that most strongly effect the majority of the Polish people leading up to World War I: the German Unification and the policy making of Chancellor Otto Von Bismarck in regions with high concentrations of Poles.¹⁸ Prussian forces supported the Russian Empire in crushing the Polish rebellion during the January Uprising of 1863, thus the German Unification of 1871 became problematic for the Ländtag, the German state-assembly, to handle.¹⁹ The Prussian clear attitude post unification toward Polish people and culture was a negative, thus the Prussian Government found the January Uprising as grounds to attempt to implement a ‘Germanization’ policy. In order to lessen the chance of a repeated January Uprising, the Prussian Government attempted to assimilate the Polish people fully into everyday German life. The poles had the opportunity to participate as full-functioning citizens of the unified German state allowing them to participate in the voting for both the Ländtag and the Reichstag. Furthermore, the polish population was

given a voice in both assemblies via its own chosen delegates to represent the community. This aspect of the Prussian plan for assimilation was a failure as cooperation with German parties dwindled from its already meager state. In Chancellor von Bismarck’s Kulturkampf, he outlined clear goal of destroying the Catholic Church, a religious faith closely intertwined with Polish culture. Beginning in 1872, Otto von Bismarck attempted to halt the development of culture further by restricting the teaching of the Polish language and closing most Polish schools. German became the primary “language of instruction” in all primary schools. By 1876, the restrictive policies on the education of the Poles reached secondary institutions. Finally, in 1886 Bismarck founded the Colonization Commission with the ultimate goal of diluting geographically potent Polish areas in the eastern regions of the empire. Since the Colonization Commission received very generous funding from Bismarck, it was believed that the Polish landlords could be bought so that German colonists had the opportunity to settle in the east via legislation and hefty government subsidies for poorer colonists to buy land.

Rather than resulting in the assimilation of the Polish community, Chancellor Otto von Bismarck’s elaborate plan to grant the rights of the Polish people as German citizens while simultaneously destroying the Polish culture ultimately backfired and led to the consolidation of Polish efforts to remain its own homogenous community. Yes, it is nearly undeniable that the closing of Polish schools hurt the Polish communities and culture, but the German legal system gave the Poles the opportunity to fight for its own independence within the empire. Polish communities came together to raise funds in order to prevent the land buyouts attempted by the Colonization Commission. Despite clear Prussian attempts to economically undermine Polish communities, the formation of peasant cooperatives and associations with landowners along with

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20 Prazmowska, Poland: A Modern History.
21 Prazmowska, Poland: A Modern History. 25-42
establishment of the Land Bank and the Bank of the Association of Workers' Cooperatives. In addition to establishment of stark financial institutions, the Poles utilized and even learned to trust the 'democratic' and legal institutions within the Ländtag and Riechstag to properly address communal concerns and successfully combat apposing discriminatory policies.

22 Davies God's Playground: A History of Poland. 42-50
Pilsudski, Dmowski, and Paderewski

The Polish political institutions of the restored Polish-state were, in theory, to be modeled on democratic principle that assumed the full participations of citizens of the state in the process of governance. The Poles had to adapt to the new situation, in the first place by accepting that they were no longer subjects of foreign states but citizens within their own state. While there were many forces at work within the framework of Polish political reform, two political archrivals held the most significant amount of agency in the direction of the new independent Polish-State, due to their own stark development of different nationalisms, political, and cultural development.

Jozef Pilsudski was born into Russian Poland territory in 1867 as the member of a formerly noble and wealthy family that had fallen from its elevated status. Despite their lack of wealth, polish patriotism did not wane within their family. In fact, Pilsudski attended school in the Russian gymnasium and was directly exposed to the suppression of polish culture. While aforementioned attempts of suppression were significantly less intense than Bismarck’s policies in the German-Polish regions, the Russian government had its own ‘Russification’ policies to attempt to contain any threat from Polish patriotism as a result of the January 1863 Uprising. The Pilsudski family was adamantly opposed to the ‘Russification’ policies, and thus exposed Jozef and his siblings to traditional Polish culture within the home. His father participated in the January 1863 Uprising, thus the environment within the home served as a clear framework for Pilsudski’s nationalist development. Subsequently Pilsudski abandoned his schooling in the region with extreme distaste towards the Russian Tsar and the Russian Empire. In March 1887 the Tsar authorities arrested Jozef Pilsudski and his brother Bronislaw Pilsudski for a plot to assassinate the Tsar. While his brother received a hefty fifteen-year sentence.

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23 Macmillan, *Peacemakers.* 208
exiled in Siberia, Pilsudski only received five. Still, within those five years Pilsudski managed to maintain and project his activist identity and while his distaste for Russians only grew. Moreover Pilsudski connected with other polish political prisoners due to his proficiency of multiple languages. In 1892 Jozef Pilsudski was released from and joined the Polish Socialist Party, also known as the PPS. Three years later he became a leader of the Polish Socialist Party, which placed him in a unique position to combine the socialist ideology he grew into and the nationalist ideology impressed upon him at a young age by his family. In his mind, the combination of these two powerful ideologies in his life had the power, along with appropriate timing, to restore Polish independence. The PPS and social activism as a Polish nationalist became his life as he became chief writer of his new underground socialist paper, Robotnik, and even married a fellow party member in July 15, 1899.

On August 9, 1864 Roman Dmowski was born in Warsaw, Congress Poland under the Russian Empire. More specifically Dmowski was born into the Kamionek district of the city, a region well known for the role it played during the industrial revolution. Under Russian partition, the district was turned into a textile industry center. In other words, the region served as the home for the Polish middle-class and thus held significant agency in the political and cultural development of Dmowski. He was born the son of a road construction worker turned entrepreneur. Unlike his aforementioned political counterpart, Dmowski finished his education within the structures provided by the foreign rulers at the University of Warsaw majoring in biology. He was a man that believed in the academic process, political discourse, and logic. Dmowski began his career during his time as a student by being extremely active in circles opposing the


26 Rothschild, *Pilsudski's Coup D'etat*.

27 Prazmowska, Poland: A Modern History. 78-90
socialist activism. Dmowski both organized and led a peaceful demonstration comprised mostly of students on the hundredth anniversary of the 1791 Polish Constitution. Consequently, Dmowski was sentenced to five months imprisonment in the Warsaw Citadel however he remained about his discontent for the government and moved toward voicing his opinions as legitimate discourse rather than activism. In 1889, Roman Dmowski began to develop his skills as a writer and political commentator under well-established publicist and right-winged National Democrat Jan Ludwick Poplawski ultimately contributing to Dmowski's conservative identity committed to the political struggle. By November 1914, Dmowski became an active member of the Polish National Committee to openly support Russia in the war, one his most significant beliefs of the decade, because he believed that a Russian victory gave the Polish the best chance for independence.

Despite his fervor for Polish reform and socialism, Pilsudski believed very strongly in a multicultural Poland that acknowledged the many different ethnic and religious groups in the region. Pilsudski was born into gentrified nobility and thus, had exposure to extensive indoctrination of traditional Polish patriotism, which frequently manifested itself radically. "Above all, he was a nationalist and a patriot". Moreover, Pilsudski family grew up in contemporary Lithuania otherwise known as the Russian portion of Poland. In other words, his experience growing up in the multi-cultural region under an oppressive Russian government directed Pilsudski to the conclusion that neither the region nor a Polish independent state could be purified into a pure Polish state, but rather a multicultural independent Slavic state. Like many other Poles Pilsudski experienced the true negativity of foreign rule and turned to extreme activism and socialist underground revolutionary activity to fight for Polish

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29 Macmillan, _Peacemakers_. 209
30 Prazmowska, _Poland: A Modern History_
31 Macmillan, _Peacemakers_. 218
independence. Pilsudski felt strongly that the largest obstacle between status of portioned Poland and Polish independence were the Russians. Under Austria-Hungarian control Polish communities and cultures were successful in maintaining its homogeneity and culture, however Pilsudski saw this as a clear result that the Austrian government was much less repressive than the Prussian or Russian Empires. Pilsudski's imprisonment and radical underground activity earned him the reputation as a "lone wolf who found it difficult to trust anyone", in addition to his already established identity as a supporter of the Austria-Hungary and German cause. As his archrival Dmowski was a stark opposite to Pilsudski's gentrified extremist ideologies. Dmowski was born as a poor working-class citizen that favored the political struggle and hopped for a modern, business-like Poland that could work with Russia to create a prosperous future for the two nations. He despised grandiose schemes, futile gestures, music and other forms of traditional Polish nationalist ideologies such as religious tolerance and compromise with its neighboring cultures (Lithuanians, Ukrainians, or Jews etc.).

In essence, the most significant voices in the fight for Polish Independence sat on opposite end of the spectrum with the same goal in mind. Over the course of the one hundred and twenty three year period, the Polish people had grown feverish with the desire to be recognized as an independent state. From 1917-1918 it became very clear to Pilsudski, Dmowski, and the Polish communities that there was a legitimate chance for a free Poland, thus many developed a heightened sense of awareness concerning the possibility of sovereignty. As the Austria-Hungarian Empire begins to collapse and the Russians are pushed back, Dmowski advantage of the situation and took his political talents abroad to Paris in an attempt to sway the Allies his way in creating a polish nation state.

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32 Prazmowska. Poland: A Modern History
33 Macmillan, Peacemakers 220-230
34 Prazmowska. Poland: A Modern History. 82
35 Macmillan, Peacemakers 219-220
At this juncture, the ambiguous language by President Woodrow Wilson centered on self-determination, liberalism, and democracy developed into very opaque and confusing situation to break down within Poland. For Dmowski, the ideology manifested itself 'like a freshly hatched sparrow' interested in establishing firm cultural and political dominance over Poland's 40% minority population in a geographically large Poland, similar to the Polish borders from 1771. Pilsudski, on the other hand, was willing to accept less than his political counterpart. Rather, he felt that the Slavic states would best perform as an equal federation with smaller boarders. One fact that both political factions felt very adamant about was a Polish presence on the Baltic Sea; Poland's return to the European theater as the "great power" that Pilsudski and Dmowski envisioned hinged on peaceful access to the sea (A necessity that Wilson also felt was necessary for becoming a 'great power').

In addition to the dichotomy between Pilsudski and Dmowski as the Polish leadership, other European countries had their own reservations about each of them. While the Allies agreed that the Polish factions deserved their own nation, the British were skeptical about both Pilsudski's and Dmowski's past. As a dangerous radical and former member of the underground socialist movement whom had earned the reputation for not trusting people, Pilsudski openly opposed and fought against the British in the past. Roman Dmowski, on the other hand, was a far right wing nationalist with a strong Darwinian belief clearly driving to advocate for the beginning of most other European countries saw as a potential Chauvinist Government whose object was to ultimately acquire territories inhabited by non-Polish populations. In juxtaposition to the British were the French. The French were both strong supporters of Dmowski, due to his proactive foreign diplomacy, and of a strong independent Poland. The French

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38 Macmillan, *Peacemakers.* 209-220
felt as though, without Russia there was no presence or aid to counterbalance Germany. The United States had many of the same doubts as British. The United States and President Wilson could not, from their own understanding of Polish history, understand a clear definition of what Poland was but identified with the suffering of the Polish people over the course of a century. When President Wilson sat with “M. Dmowski and M. Paderewski in Washington, [...] and asked them to define Poland as they understood it, they claimed a large [unclear] piece of earth.” As a result of the disparity about the definition of Poland by both Polish factions and other countries, it became an absolute necessity that Poland elects a single leader to represent the Poland at the Paris 1919.

Ignace Jan Paderewski was born into a modest family in Austrian Galicia (Austria partitioned Poland), where his father worked as an aristocratic landowner and keeper of estates. He is perhaps the most famous Polish person of the early nineteenth century, and arguably the most famous person in the world on the eve of the First World War. Early in his life before his career as a politician began, Paderewski gained unrivaled popularity in Europe during the 1880's for his musical ability. By the early 1890's, Paderewski repeated his rise to stardom again in the United States making him most world-renowned Pole. Paderewski was loved by almost all demographics of people for his volubility, untidiness, and great learnedness. Thus he was given the task of bringing the drastically different two factions fighting for Polish independence together. Like Pilsudski and Dmowski, Paderewski possessed a stark desire for Polish sovereignty that seemed to become more and more pervasive amongst Polish communities as the war went on. At the beginning of the war, Paderewski publically announced that he would devote himself and his time to Polish Relief. Additionally, Paderewski vowed that he would not play until Poland was free again. The Polish people

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39 Macmillan, Peacemakers. 223
40 Prazmowska. Poland: A Modern History 80-86
41 Macmillan, Peacemakers. 224
42 Macmillan, Peacemakers 230-238
were easily energized Paderewski and the sense of pride he had for his country. Upon his arrival back to Poland on Christmas Day 1918, the streets were covered by demonstrations. Eventually the demonstrations turned violent and developed into a full-scale uprising against the German rulers in Posen.43 The Polish agency for their independence created by Paderewski's involvement is one of the largest contributing factors to the recognition of Polish independence by the larger body of Allied nations. In addition to the aforementioned responses to meeting him, perhaps the most significant is President Woodrow Wilson's. As McMillan asserts, Wilson had nothing but admiration for the man stating: "I wish you could have heard [his] speeches for his country [...] he touched chords more sublime than when he moved thousands as he commanded harmony from the piano."44 This meeting with President Wilson essentially solidified the possibility of Poland's place on Wilson's reconstruction agenda and thus Fourteen Points.

In an effort to utilize a reputation of confidence, homogeneity, and strength that Pilsudski both evoked and represented uncontested from a majority of Polish nationalists still in Poland, Pilsudski remained the head of state and commander-in-chief of the armed forces. Meanwhile Dmowski became head of the Paris peace talks Polish delegation (The National Polish Committee) leaving Paderewski went to Poland to begin his duties in January 1919 as the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs for Poland until December of that year.45

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43 Macmillan, Peacemakers 233-234
44 Macmillan, Peacemakers 233-234
45 Prazmowska, Poland: A Modern History. 90
Conclusion

Woodrow Wilson, Jozef Pilsudski, Roman Dmowski’s, and Ignace Jan Paderewski worked extremely hard to make a potentially sovereign Poland a legitimate reality. Despite being the thirteenth country listed by President Wilson in his fourteen points, the issue of the Polish nation-state took precedent over many others, in part, due to the activism and clear desire of Pilsudski, Dmowski, and Paderewski. Ironically, the history of foreign invaders for one hundred and twenty three years that inspired these men to fight passionately for a free Poland is the same history that evoked many of the problems within the details of drawing establishing a new Poland. Simply put, the tremendous differences between Pilsudski, Dmowski, Padereski and even President Wilson are indicative of the complex relationships between different partitioned polish cultures. Philosopher and historian Hans Kohn pinpoints the inherent historical difference between Wilsons working definition of a ‘self-determined nation’ and the ethnic nation of Poland: “While the new nationalism in western Europe corresponded to changing social, economic, and political realities, it spread to central and eastern Europe, created often out of myths of the past and the drew as of the future, an ideal fatherland closely linked with the past, devoid of any immediate connection with the present, and expected to become sometime a political reality” 46 47. It became very clear, very quickly that President Wilson was ignorant to these distinctions for the region. As he moved forward with his plan of self-determination with Poland, he issued a statement to congress and the World woefully admitting that “when [he] gave utterance to those words

[that all nations had a right to self determination], he said them without a knowledge that nationalities [already] existed."

At first, the Supreme Council sent experts primarily from the United States and Great Britain to Poland on ‘fact finding missions’ to attempt to untangle the ethnic and political confusion from combining all of Poland. As McMillan conveys through Pilsudski’s responsibilities while during the Paris Peace Conference, the logistical process of uniting an independent after over one hundred ad twenty years of separate growth and governments was extremely difficult:

“Pilsudski grew thinner and paler and more intense. He worked frantically, of then through the night. [...] His task was appalling. As much as 10% of Poland’s wealth had been destroyed in the war. The Germans had ransacked the Polish territories during their occupation. Raw Materials, manufactured goods, factories, machinery, and even church bells had been fed into the German war effort. [...] Pilsudski had to weld together different economies, different laws, and different bureaucracies. He had to rationalize nine separate legislative systems into one. He had to reduce five different currencies to one, and he did not even have the means to print banknotes.”

The railways in Poland were a nightmare, with sixty-six kinds of rails, one hundred and sixty five types of loco motives and a patchwork of signaling systems. In addition to all this, Pilsudski and the government were dealing with a people whose ambitions after a century of frustrations, had their hopes raised for the opportunity for sovereignty towards the end of the First World War. Ultimately the Supreme Council established the Polish Commission as the legal entity to communicate with Poland on behalf of the Supreme Council. The goal was to work together with the West so that Poland did not stake too large a claim, nor lose too much land in talks with the Germans, Ukranians, Lathuanians, and Russians. This relationship between the Polish government and the Supreme

49 Macmillan. *Peacemakers*, 222
Council was both tumultuous and strenuous on both sides.\(^50\) Both the Polish Administrative forces and the Allied administrative forces felt justified in their respective requests for land.

Pilsudski did not adjust well to peace or the democratic policies put into place. Administered on the ‘basis of up to date’ encapsulating contemporary concepts of a relationship between the state and its citizens, Pilsudski struggled with the unification of Poland under the civic terms allowed by President Wilson. If it were not for Paderewski, the Polish borders may have been even smaller than the size that already displeased Pilsudski. During the drift time between the end of the First World War and the closing of the Peace Conference, Pilsudski was utilizing his meager military efforts to try and ground his claim on certain borders. Many of the European countries had clear preconceived negative notions about Polish culture and behavior that were simply reaffirmed once the peace conference concluded.\(^51\)

The further President Wilson dove into the details of the complex jumble of nationalities in Poland, the more he understood his own speech reflecting national self-determination, and a desire for self governance was a much more complicated and dangerous endeavor. In the case of Poland, President Wilson and the Supreme Council orchestrated “fact finding missions” that presented facts that did not see a clear outcome. The Teschen dispute, for example, of 1918-1921 is a minor discrepancy caused by Wilson’s intervention that had significant ramifications on the future of Poland. At the end of the war, this small historic Duchy clearly stood in the frontier of the dwindling Austrian Empire. The emerging Czechoslovakia claimed a large portion of the Duchy while lobbying for international support.\(^52\) Poland, on the other hand, assumed that it would be given to them. To this day, this event remains a bitter Polish memory, with a

\(^{50}\) Macmillan, *Peacemakers*. 208

\(^{51}\) Lynch, *Woodrow Wilson and the Principle of 'National Self-Determination’*

considerable legacy. Many Polish frustrations originate from the fact that a large
majority of the local population was Polish. "After much diplomatic wrangling,
some minor bloodshed, and endless ill will, the Paris Peace Conference"
determined an unfavorable division for the Poles.\textsuperscript{53} Both sides were convinced
that of foul play at the others expense resulting in a brutal retaking of the region
by Poland in 1939, and the ultimate loss of the territory by Poland despite its
historic and ethnic claims.\textsuperscript{54} Wilson claims that he "was unaware of the
revolutionary implications of this principle if applied to the Austrian [or
Ottoman Empires][...]] he most certainly had no intention of destroying them."\textsuperscript{55}
While the United States, British, and French representatives at the Paris Peace
Conference are able to convince the Polish administration to have a single voice,
despite a clear internal institutional, infrastructural, economic, and ethnic
struggle, the Supreme Council transfers its responsibility for the intricacies of
reconstruction to "the experts". Rogers Brubaker declares, "the nation-state is
not only, or primarily an ethno-demographic phenomenon, or a set of
institutional arrangements. It is also, crucially, a way of thinking about and
appraising political and social membership."\textsuperscript{56} While Brubaker reflecting on the
internal definition of the nation-state for its citizens, there is an absolute parallel
between the chaos within Poland and the unobtainable coalition between the
ethnic and civic definitions of a nation. Within Poland the government is
responsible welding three regions that have developed separately under three
different Empires; three different types of citizens all searching for membership
under a single political language. At the same time, the political institutions

\textsuperscript{53} Kusielewicz, \textit{Wilson and Poland}. 119-121
\textsuperscript{54} Kusielewicz, \textit{Wilson and Poland}. 119-121
\textsuperscript{55} Smith, Daniel Malloy. \textit{The Great Departure; the United States and World War I,
\textsuperscript{56} Brubaker, Rogers. \textit{Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany.}
themselves are left to morph dilute their own engagements down to a level capable of appeasing both the Allies and future Polish citizens.

As the Allies attempt to implement President Wilson’s ideals into a political reality, there is a divergence in his cultural and political idea of the nation-state for Poland in what Kohn referred as the significance of reverse development in Eastern Europe. It is not Wilson’s decision to implement his plan of national self-determination on the international stage during a time of revision that should be scrutinized, but his clear indifference to his own ignorance regarding the possible effects of the focus of his revisionist liberal democratic goals on Poland and its neighbors. American historian and Wilson supporters, such as Victor Mamatey, assert that the “presidents proposals were not a program but a creed”57 meant to stimulate Americans and soldiers fighting for independence abroad to act as an example for sovereignty or look to the United States, rather than set the framework for the reconstruction. Ultimately the Polish government withstands the test of time and conflict, however the immediate results of the assertions made by President Woodrow Wilson’s in his Fourteen Points Speech indicate a failure to both recognize and act on the regional difference between the cultural and political national identity of the East and the West. The result, unfortunately, are nations like Poland that receive democracy very differently because of its lack of relatedness to the nationalisms in the region. By understanding the vast difference between the factions which Pilsudski and Dmowski represented on a historical and ethnic reflection of the complex and frustrated nature of the cultural and political internal struggle, Woodrow Wilson could have avoided “the anxieties that [he] experienced as the result of many millions of people having their hopes raised by what [he] said.”58

While he did realize, albeit to late, that “in the point of pure logic, this principle which was good in itself [could] lead to the complete independence of various

small nationalities now forming part of various Empire." Ultimately, this assessment cannot exempt the negative ramifications of Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points Speech simply because he made his assertions before familiarizing himself with the region. In fact, he is that much more liable for the chaotic situation surrounding the immediate decade after Polish independence, and the minute failure of democracy in Poland as a result of Pilsudski's coup de tat in May 1926. The significance of this coup is not the event itself, but the desire behind it. Pilsudski did not want the presidency for himself, and while he did remain the most powerful person 'behind the scenes' of the President his clear priority was the breakdown of the democratic form of government. In his opinion, which was a clear force in the development of the broader Polish opinion, the consistent shifts in power were not the right type of government for his people.

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59 Lynch, Woodrow Wilson and the Principle of National Self-Determination. 428
60 See...Rothschild. Pilsudski's Coup D'état. Pilsudski led a coup between May 12-14 during which, he ultimately disagreed with the consistent power shifts necessary to preserve the character of a democracy. He did not throw the coup to seize power for himself, but rather to end the democratic form of government.
Works Cited


