Shining Examples: Dutch-American relations regarding the First World War

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Dutch-American relations regarding the First World War

MA thesis on American internationalism at the dawn of the 20th century, revisited through a comparison with the Netherlands, showing a pattern of moral-legalistic means to pursue economic goals in international politics.

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Introduction

In *America's Mission: The United States and the Worldwide Struggle for Democracy* historian Tony Smith seems to idolize American President Woodrow Wilson for his brave and tireless effort to 'make the world safe for democracy'.[1] Smith's book starts in 1898 with the Spanish-American war and claims that one of the various reasons for that war was the American urge to protect human rights in Cuba.[2] Woodrow Wilson's orders to occupy Veracruz in Mexico in 1914 and intervene in Haiti and the Dominican Republic in 1915 and 1916 are said to be born from the same enthusiasm and commitment for the spreading of democracy.[3] Smith even goes as far as to state that "Wilsonianism is a term synonymous with liberal democratic internationalism."[4]

When it came out, a decade ago, Smith's book was received fairly well, despite some flaws being pointed out.[5] Amongst the critics of the book was Arman Grigoryan. In his article 'Selective Wilsonianism' Grigoryan points out that Smith's theory that the United States tasked itself with spreading liberal democracy around the world doesn't explain why certain democratic movements received more support than others. To illustrate his point, Grigoryan compares the democratic movement in Ukraine in 2014, which gained massive support from the West, to the Armenian democratic movement in 2008, which received very little support. The difference being that the democratic movement in Ukraine was hostile towards Russia, while the Armenian movement was not.[6] He then derives at the conclusion that liberal democracy had an instrumental use

[1] Tony Smith, *America's mission the United States and the worldwide struggle for democracy* (Princeton, 2012) 3.
[2] Ibidem, 5.
[3] Ibidem, 5.
[4] Ibidem, 7.
[5] Michael Dunne, 'America's mission: the United States and the worldwide struggle for democracy' 92 (Hoboken, 2016) 435–452; Robert J. McMahon, 'America's Mission: The United States and the Worldwide Struggle for Democracy in the Twentieth Century' 83, *The Journal of American History* (1996) 653–653; Linda B. Miller, 'America's Mission: The United States and the Worldwide Struggle for Democracy in the Twentieth Century' 71, *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)* (1995) 434–434.
[6] Arman Grigoryan, 'Selective Wilsonianism: Material Interests and the West's Support for Democracy', *International security* 44 (2020) 158–200, 159-160.

for the US in pursuit of material interests and was thus a means to an end and not an end in itself.[7]

Grigoryan's article is even more fascinating given the circumstances in Ukraine today, but in this thesis it serves as an invitation to further explore the limits of Wilsonian design, of that American democratic internationalism that is so central in Smith's analysis. This thesis, indeed, will try to problematize Wilsonianinsm through an analysis of bilateral Dutch-American relations, in the attempt to overcome the use of the term as a simplistic synonymous with liberal democratic internationalism and better historicize its relevance and scopes.[8] This thesis thus seeks to answer the question whether the American global position, goals and reasons in the first quarter of the 20th century were truly based on the liberal ideals that have so often been associated with the term 'Wilsonianism', or that both American internationalism and Wilsonianism have been gravely misunderstood in the historiography on this subject.

Dutch-American relations surrounding the Great War can provide a better understanding of American internationalism at the start of the 20th century because through a comparison of both nation's actions, interests and relationships it is possible to clarify why and how the United States advanced their liberalism internationally so to reinstate itself as the hegemon power from the dawn of the 20th century onward. A comparison with the Dutch will actually unveil a major economic drive in the American Wilsonianism and liberal internationalism. For the Netherlands, economic interests were more in the foreground and, through comparison, it becomes clear that similar motives were evident with the US.

This thesis will be divided into three chapters, looking at different time periods, in which the United States took very different roles. First, I will look at the neutral time, investigating how both the United States and the Netherlands worked together when they tried to maintain and advocate for peace while global tensions were on the rise. This chapter aims to clarify what position both nation held at the dawn of the 20th century and what their major interests were on the global scene. This chapter ends when the United States enters the war in April, 1917. The second chapter looks at the remainder of the Great War. It investigates for what reasons the US went to war and what its new position in global politics meant for the Netherlands and its global interests. In the final chapter, the peace negotiations are discussed, with an emphasis

[7] Arman Grigoryan, 'Selective Wilsonianism' 158–200.
[8] Tony Smith, *America's mission* 7.

on President Wilson's plan to form the League of Nations and how the supranational organization was perceived by the US and the Netherlands. It's goal is to show how and why Wilson tried to change global politics after the war, and why he failed. Ultimately, a clear pattern will be derived throughout these times, which shows that the alignment between the US and the Netherlands during and in the immediate aftermath of the Great War testifies to a process of alliance formation, of realpolitik, that goes well beyond the idealism usually attached to the Wilsonian design.

In this thesis, the methodology employed involves utilizing newspaper articles and archival materials from the Roosevelt Institute for American Studies and the Dutch National Archive to examine the dynamics of Dutch-American relations before, during, and after the Great War. The primary focus is on understanding the evolving diplomatic, economic, and cultural connections between the Netherlands and the United States during this transformative period of global history. By analyzing a range of newspaper articles, provided by the *Delpher* database, I aim to gain insights into the public discourse, perceptions, and reactions of the time. Additionally, the extensive archival materials available at the Roosevelt Institute, as well as in the Dutch National Archive and J. Woltring's collection of documents relating to the foreign policy of the Netherlands, provide valuable firsthand accounts, diplomatic correspondence, and policy documents, allowing for a comprehensive exploration of the multifaceted dimensions of Dutch-American relations during the studied period.[9] This interdisciplinary approach, incorporating both contemporary media coverage and archival evidence, aims to shed light on the complexities and nuances of the historical interactions between the two nations, providing a deeper understanding of their shared experiences and the lasting impact on their bilateral relationship. These sources support the literature produced over the past hundred years on the Netherlands, the US and the First World War, which have laid the ground work for this research.

Walter Russel Mead identified four American schools of thought about the conduct of foreign policy in his book *Special Providence*.[10] First, the *Hamiltonians*, who see the first task of the American government as promoting the health of American enterprise at home and abroad. Second, the *Jeffersonians*, who believe the American

[9] J. Woltring, *Documenten betreffende de buitenlandse politiek van Nederland, 1919-1945. 1919-1930. Periode A : Dl. I: 1 juli 1919 - 1 juli 1920* (Den Haag, 1976).
[10] Walter Russel Mead, *Special Providence: American Foreign Policy and How It Changed the World* (New York, 2002).

government mostly responsible to preserve American democracy and protect it against the dangers of the world. Third, the Jacksonians, who deeply believe in the importance of honor, courage, independence and military pride of the American people. And finally, the *Wilsonians*, who believe the US has a moral and practical duty to spread its values across the world.[11]

But Wilsonianism isn't as easily defined as Walter Russel Mead makes it out to be. There are some concepts that are strongly connected to the idea of Wilsonianism and are crucial to the development of this thesis. The ideas of 'collective security', 'self-determination' and 'making the world safe for democracy', are among these key concepts. Erez Manela has sought to clarify the term 'Wilsonianism' by defining what it is not: "It is not isolationism, since it implies a robust American engagement with the world, and it is not realism, since it both draws on American ideals in articulating its vision for world order and calls, as a matter of policy, for spreading those ideals as broadly as possible to diverse societies across the globe."[12]

Frank Ninkovich admires President Wilson, though not for his mission to make the world safe for democracy, and he is arguably the most influential historian in the rendering of Wilsonian idealism and its long term consequences on US foreign policy. To Ninkovich, Wilson had an 'imaginative understanding of the utter historical novelty of the war.'[13] He contends that Wilson was by no means the father of American internationalism,[14] as his predecessors William McKinley, Theodore Roosevelt and Howard Taft had already long established that isolation was no longer possible or desirable due to improvements in communication and transportation.[15] Roosevelt consolidated US power in the Caribbean through violence, though opening the possibility for Taft to pursue peaceful cooperation and commercial expansion. Taft's cooperative global approach would become the recurring theme in American foreign policy. [16]

Wilson, however, did not share his predecessor's optimism for global civilization. Ninkovich argues that Wilson was not a mere idealist, but rather a man fearing the

[11] Mark Weston Janis, *America and the Law of Nations 1776-1939* (Oxford, 2010) 158-159.
[12] Erez Manela, 'A man ahead of his time?: Wilsonian globalism and the doctrine of pre-emption', *International journal (Toronto)* 60 (2005) 1115-1124, 1117.
[13] Frank A. Ninkovich, *The Wilsonian century : U.S. foreign policy since 1900* (Chicago, 1999) 49.
[14] Frank A. Ninkovich, *Global dawn the cultural foundation of American internationalism, 1865-1890* (Cambridge, 2009) 324-328.
[15] Frank A. Ninkovich, *The Wilsonian century* 25-26.
[16] Ibidem, 26-27.

possibilities of modern warfare. It was far more destructive than anything seen before and therefore far too costly a means for achieving any ends that might conceivably be gained. [17] In addition, Wilson feared that a German victory could permanently disrupt the liberal international order, which was why a League of Nations was necessary to preserve this order.[18]

There are also historians who argue that Wilsonianism, in fact, had very little to do with Woodrow Wilson and that the Wilsionian tradition of American foreign relations goes back much further than his presidency between 1913 and 1921.[19] Among them is David Clinton, who argues that the Wilsonian tradition rested mostly on two beliefs: First, that the republican regime was the best regime, as it gave the most freedom to individual people and peoples to express their rights and determine their own future. Second, That international cooperation on the basis of international laws should reflect the domestic liberal democratic framework and should help the common interests prevail over selfish interests.[20] These beliefs, according to Clinton, were visible as early as 1787 with the writing of the Constitution.[21] The Constitution, after all, vested the supreme power of decision-making to the will of the people and offered no possible appeal to its terms except by the will of the people, thus being the embodiment of the first principle of Wilsonianism.[22]

However, the second principle would be harder to adhere, as the free will of the people also meant the domestic choice to enter and refrain from any international quarrel. This made it much harder to promise any form of collective security, as the US could not, and would not, commit itself to become involved in foreign affairs, let alone be open to the transfer or partial cession of sovereignty to any supranational organization. It made clear a vast belief that a popular regime was a best regime, but the strife for international institutions that could bring states to adapt to this higher standard of conduct toward other states was less obvious.[23]

This stalemate does well to portray the problems with the Wilsonian school, which thus believes that American foreign affairs at the start of the 20th century rested

[17] Frank A. Ninkovich, *The Wilsonian century*, 12-13.
[18] Ibidem, 13-14.
[19] David Clinton, 'Wilsonianism and the sweep of American foreign policy history', *Journal of transatlantic studies* 16 (2018) 362–376, 362.
[20] Ibidem, 362.
[21] Ibidem, 364.
[22] David Clinton, 'Wilsonianism and the sweep of American foreign policy history', 364-366.
[23] Ibidem, 366-370

upon certain political ideals for liberal democracy. These ideals were near impossible to pursue, as Wilson's objectives were of themselves contradictory. All Americans shared the belief in popular government, but most also contended that allowing any supranational body to exercise authority over the United States would take control out of the hand of the American people and thus do harm to their right to choose for themselves. Joining the League of Nations would be in direct conflict with the reason America went to war in the first place. Wilson tried to argue, to no effect, that the US was not legally obligating itself to act when called upon by article 10 of the League, but had a moral obligation to do so.[24] But his ideals remained logically impossible. One could advocate the right of all peoples to determine their own political future, or one could advocate an international body that could impose its will on any particular government, but one could not have both.[25]

Might other historical frameworks provide a clearer understanding of American Internationalism? The realist school views the nation-state as a pivotal political unit and argues that foreign affairs are related to the international balance of power and the pursuit one nation's own national interest as opposed to ideals, which was the case for the Wilsonian school. Realists emphasize the importance of measurable military and economic power and believe that the means of power must be adequate for realizing the ends of diplomacy.[26] George Kennan, one of the most influential realists,[27] has argued in 1951's *American Diplomacy, 1900-1950* that foreign relations and diplomacy rest upon the power realities and aspirations from inalterable human forces that were neither good nor bad. He proposed that the best the world could do was to aim for the point of maximum equilibrium. But first, he writes, the world needed to accept that the process of foreign relations couldn't be inhibited by imposing a legal straight jacket on it. With this claim, he attacked the Wilsonian school's legalistic-moralistic approach to international problems.[28]

The Wisconsin School, created by William Appleman Williams, provided an alternative, revisionist account of Wilsonianism. The Wisconsin school, or more

[24] David Clinton, 'Wilsonianism and the sweep of American foreign policy history', 372.
[25] Ibidem, 371-372.
[26] Walter LaFeber, 'The World and the United States', *The American historical review* 100 (1995) 1015–1033, 1026.
[27] Ibidem, 1026.
[28] George F. Kennan, *American diplomacy 1900-1950* (Chicago, 1951); Erich Hula, 'Review of KENNAN, GEORGE F., "American Diplomacy, 1900-1950"' *Social Research*, *18*:1 (1951) 515–518; Richard W. Leopold, 'Kennan, American Diplomacy, 1900-1950', *Pacific Historical Review* 21 (1952) 306-308.

specifically, the historical theory tied to it, argues that American foreign affairs work in pursuit of economic benefits and are based on the desire for increased markets abroad.[29] For, after its civil war, the US had reached a point in world trade in which it could not import enough raw materials to keep up with its rising export.[30] In his book, *The Shaping of American Diplomacy*, Williams describes foreign affairs as follows:

> "In the narrow diplomatic sense, peace is characterized by military armistices, conferences, treaties and, in the minds of some people, by international organizations. On another level, peace is discussed as the result of a balance of power between various combinations of nations or a standoff between two rival countries. Relative economic and military strength play an important part, of course, in any decision to get along with another country or group of nations. But power of this nature is a product of many factors, among them the opportunity to proceed with development of natural and human resources and the effectiveness with which those resources are used.
>
> Considered in this way, wars and revolutions can be understood as the use of force to create or preserve opportunities for developing the capabilities of a group or nation. Such definition leaves room for the important subject of ideology, which can be thought of as the system of explanations and ideals with which a group or a nation understands, judges or tries to turn to its advantage the existing state of affairs. In this wider meaning, then, peace is more aptly described as a situation in which groups or nations, having secured or maintained the initiative, proceed with the work of actually developing their opportunities in accordance with what they hold possible and desirable."[31]

In his earlier and most influential work *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*, Williams argued that American foreign policy was guided by three conceptions. The first being the humanitarian impulse to help other people solve their problems. The second, complementing the first, was the conviction that every society has the right to establish its own goals and objectives and pursue them through the means they deemed appropriate, based on the principles of self-determination. The third, rather contradictory, idea was that these people could not really solve their own problems if

[29] J. A. Thompson, 'William Appleman Williams and the 'American Empire'', *Journal of American Studies* 7:1 (1973) 91-104, 92.
[30] Frank Costigliola, *Awkward dominion : American political, economic, and cultural relations with Europe, 1919-1933* (New York, 1984) 60-61.
[31] William Appleman Williams, *The shaping of American diplomacy* (Chicago, 1970) 47-48.

they would not follow the United States' example, as forcing people to copy America directly goes against the idea that they have the right to choose themselves.[32]

Following on from this, Williams believed America's economic interests abroad suffered from the same contradictory ideals. As the United States sought to expand its markets abroad and needed raw materials and other goods from foreign countries to boost production, economic isolationism was never really an option. International free trade supplied an answer for this American mission, but herein lied a problem. As the US expanded its economic system throughout the world, it elevated its own position in relation to its trading partners, thereby making it harder for them to negotiate prices in an equal and meaningful way and maintaining economic independence.[33]

This phenomenon was accompanied by an even bigger problem, Williams said, namely the US conviction that domestic well-being depended on ever expanding economic power abroad.[34] This didn't only lead to indifference towards internal economic developments, but also to the rhetoric that if good life depended on economic expansion abroad, then the reason for the lack of good life was found abroad as well. This rhetoric intensified the United States' urge to bend foreign nations to their will or push them out of the way. All in all these tendencies countered the first American conception of foreign policy. The humanitarian urge to help foreign people solve their problems came second to America's own interests.[35]

Williams went on to state that America's Open Door Policy from the 1890's onward was a great success at first as it provided the US with an empire of its own when the colonial empires of France, Britain and the Netherlands were wavering due to revolutions and anti-colonial nationalism. The United States did away with territorial and administrative colonialism, but was an empire nonetheless. Foreign countries welcomed the anticolonial character of the US. Yet, its assistance and friendship soon took hold of these countries. The success of the American foreign policy enabled them to exercise varying degrees of economic, political and military influence and authority in countries that had just freed themselves from Europe's domination. It guarded the status quo of western supremacy with the ultimate goal of institutionalizing American expansion.[36]

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[32] William Appleman Williams, *The tragedy of American diplomacy* (New York, 1962) 9-10.
[33] Ibidem, 10-11.
[34] J. A. Thompson, 'William Appleman Williams and the 'American Empire'' 94-96.
[35] William Appleman Williams, *The tragedy of American diplomacy* 10-13.
[36] Ibidem, 299-300.

Carl Parrini, a former student of Williams, agreed in his study of American economic diplomacy between 1916-1923, *Heir to empire,* that the Open Door Policy existed to expand US economic influence abroad.[37] Yet, he disagreed that this strife contradicted the American humanitarian urge to help other nations. According to Parrini, the US believed that economic freedom for all would put an end to war, as commercial discrimination would lead any nation to resort to massive armament to acquire what was its right.[38]

Remaining faithful to the idea that the US was aiming for economic gains, but flipping Parrini's argument was Mark Weston Janis, who more recently argued that Wilsonianism promotes democracy and tries to prevent war. But only because democracies make better and more reliable partners than monarchies and tyrannies and war disrupts trade. These objectives were first sought after with bilateral arbitration treaties and later with the founding of the League of Nations, Janis argued in his book *America and the Law of Nations 1776-1939*.[39]

Though appearing as fairly plausible, a problem that one may encounter in the Wisconsin school's argument is that its claim, that American foreign policy has operated within limits set by a continuous commitment to the establishment of an open-door empire, does not encompass the entirety of American foreign relations.[40] Open-door imperialism at its fullest refers to a process by which a nation aims to extend and maintain the principle of the Open Door and does so by the political domination of other countries,[41] though it needs to be said that in cases outside of Europe, the United States more often relied on violence to secure its markets.[42] Many agree that the US made use of this new form of imperialism, less agree that this pattern describes the entirety of American relations abroad.[43]

In his book, *Safeguarding Democratic Capitalism*, Melvyn Leffler studies the US foreign policy by looking at the interplay between capitalism and democracy. In doing so, he derives at the conclusion that to the US, economics and politics are inextricably intertwined. Leffler states that for the US' ideological desire to promote free trade

[37] Carl P. Parrini, *Heir to empire : United States economic diplomacy, 1916-1923* (Pittsburgh, 1969) 1-9.
[38] Ibidem*,* 12.
[39] Mark Weston Janis, *America and the Law of Nations 1776-1939* 159.
[40] J. A. Thompson, 'William Appleman Williams and the 'American Empire'' 102-103.
[41] Ibidem, 102-103.
[42] Harry S. Stout, 'Review Essay: Religion, War, and the Meaning of America', *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* 19:2 (2009) 275-289, 276-277.
[43] J. A. Thompson, 'William Appleman Williams and the 'American Empire'' 102-103.

across the world international economics were just as important as politics. Though similar to the Wisconsin school, the key difference in Leffler's argument is that the United States was not motivated by immediate profit to widen its foreign intervention, but rather sought to protect its own economy against chaos and conflict abroad.[44]

Tony Smith did agree, for a part, that Wilson's 14 points were supposed to create a liberal international economic order, with the League of Nations serving as its guarantor, but denied that it was economic order was his main objective. "The problem with this interpretation of Wilsonianism is that it takes an aspect of Wilson's agenda and mistakes it for his whole program. Certainly Wilson was an international economic liberal; that point is not in doubt. But Wilson's primary concerns were political", he stated.[45]

We thus have three schools of thought which focus on ideals, strategic interest and economic expansion respectively. To put them to the test, we will now go through several different stages of Dutch-American relations surrounding the Great War and show how new problems, shifting responsibilities and alternating goals affected the attitude of both countries toward the global political scene.

[44] Melvyn Leffler, *Safeguarding Democratic Capitalism: U.S. Foreign Policy and National Security, 1920-2015* (2017).
[45] Tony Smith, *America's mission* 93.

For the Advancement of General Peace

This thesis will begin by exploring the Dutch-American relations between the election of Woodrow Wilson on November 5, 1912 and America's entry into the First World War on April 6th, 1917. This chapter will describe the Dutch unique position in global politics at the beginning of the 20th century and their relationship with the United States of America during the time of both countries' neutrality in the war. In doing so, it will illustrate the importance of this relationship for both economic matters in Asia as moral-legalistic matters in Europe, focusing on shared standpoints and shifting responsibilities.

At the end of the 19th century, the Dutch viewed the British as their biggest rival in Southeast-Asia. Although most disputes on border demarcation had already been settled, some grievances still existed. Great Britain was therefor considered the biggest military threat, despite having a longer standing tradition of dealing with the Dutch-Angelo disagreements in a political way. The Netherlands could not afford a conflict with their neighbors across the North Sea, as the British were superior in both military and economic standings. The price that had to be paid for British mercy was a colonial free trade policy that wouldn't impede foreign economic activities. The Dutch assumed that their free trade policy would convince the British to protect them against threats from other major powers, as they would want to prevent one of their rivals from acquiring the Dutch colonies.[46]

This assumption began to falter at the dawn of the 20th century, when other major powers like Japan became increasingly competitive in the far east. The British-Japanese rapprochement and alliance of 1902 aroused further suspicion. The Dutch feared that the Dutch East Indies were a prime target for the Japanese expansionism and that the British, whose power had relatively decreased since the turn of the century, would not be willing to go against their new ally to protect the Dutch colony.[47] Even the British colonies in East Asia doubted whether the motherland would come to aid if the Japanese were to attack. Japan had become not just 'a', but 'the' leading naval power in the area and colonies and commonwealth like Australia could thus no

[46] Duco Hellema, *Neutraliteit & vrijhandel : de geschiedenis van de Nederlandse buitenlandse betrekkingen* (Utrecht, 2001) 62-63.
[47] Ibidem, 63-64.

longer depend on their isolation for security.[48] British sea power was still substantial, but since 1905 it had no prospect of being able to challenge that of the Japanese in East Asia. The alliance with Japan was the only way to protect its colonies in the Pacific.[49]

The Japanese held significant influential power in Asia. Even if the Dutch East Indies were to be left alone, their neutrality would not be assured. Japanese threatened countries with severe punishments if they would harbor ships of nations fighting the Japanese expansion like Russia in the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-1905, in which the Japanese pressured the Sumatra government to refuse fuel to Russian ships.[50] Furthermore, the success of the Japanese was met with great joy by colonial subjects. Japan's victories in Asia were cheered on by colonial nationalists, who imagined that Japan would lead Asia to banish the Western imperialists and their white supremacy. Those who hadn't aligned themselves with Japan feared that Japan's rise could be an existential danger to the colonial order in Asia. The Dutch thus did not only have to fear Japanese acts of aggression, but also what they might inspire.[51]

Meanwhile, the United States were also debating – in imperial ways and terms - issues pertinent to Asia, and became a reason for the Dutch to keep abreast of political developments in the United States because of their dominion over the Philippines, neighbouring the Dutch East Indies.[52] When the US granted its 'colonial subjects' more freedom, the Netherlands feared that their own Indonesian subjects would expect similar freedoms to be implemented.[53] The US had no special interest in the Dutch control of the East Indies, but American anti-imperialists did not like the idea that the Dutch made use of American-held islands for their telegraph net to circumvent the British-controlled networks.[54] Another reason for their relations regarding Asia was their shared concern about the Japanese expansion. Both countries kept a watchful eye on the developments of Japan in Asia after the rising nation gave Germany an

[48] Cees Heere, *Empire Ascendant. The British World, Race and the Rise of Japan, 1894-1914* (Oxford, 2020) 73.
[49] Ibidem, 151-152.
[50] Duco Hellema, *Neutraliteit & vrijhandel : de geschiedenis van de Nederlandse buitenlandse betrekkingen* (Utrecht, 2001) 63-64.
[51] Cees Heere, *Empire Ascendant.* 76.
[52] Hubert P. van Tuyll, 'Dutch-American relations during World War I' 420-430, in: Hans Krabbendam, Cornelis A. van Minnen and Giles Scott-Smith (eds.), *Four centuries of Dutch-American Relations 1609-2009* (Middelburg, 2009) 420-421.
[53] Doeko Bosscher,'American Studies in the Netherlands', *European journal of American studies* 1 (2006) 1-19, 2.
[54] Hubert P. van Tuyll, 'Dutch-American relations during World War I' 420-421.

ultimatum to hand over its colony in China on August 15th 1914, endangering the situation in the Dutch East Indies.[55]

The Japanese foreign minister, Kato Takaaki, had a realist's view on foreign policy. He believed that international relations were fundamentally a clash of national interests. An international balance of power would be the best guarantee for national security. His principal object when negotiating in international dilemma's was then to maintain such balance. Alliances with states sharing similar interests, such as Great Britain, were essential tools towards that end.[56] Kato preferred diplomatic negotiation and economic gain over military action and territorial expansion. However, Japan was enthusiastic to join the Great War. Their victory over the Russians had proven the success of the grand-enterprise, but serious questions about the trajectory of the Japanese empire still remained. The war offered an opportunity to advance Japanese standing in China and consolidate the Japanese place in the world order.[57] Kato's greatest rivals in Japan, the military-bureaucratic elite, sought a bold new foreign policy departure as the European powers in Asia shifted their attention back home. They saw a chance of Japanese hegemony in Asia and wanted to align with China to check the advance of the new power, the US. They would rather take on the US before its rising power in Asia consolidated, as the outbreak of the Great War wasn't just an opportunity for Japan. The diverting attention of European powers was also a stepping stone for the US to expand its influence in Asia.[58]

By 1915, the Japanese alliance with Britain had outlived its usefulness for the Japanese. Britain would not let Japan pierce its established sphere of influence in China, and London and Tokyo's relationship had become increasingly antagonistic.[59] But not only did Britain hinder Japanese expansion, they also were of little use in dealing with the growing influence of the United States in Asia. Britain had provided valuable financial support during the Russo-Japanese War and had guarded a third-party challenge to Japan's ambitions in Asia, but they had not given any sign of willingness to challenge the US.[60]

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[55] Hubert P. van Tuyll, 'Dutch-American relations during World War I' 421-423.
[56] Frederick R. Dickinson, *War and National Reinvention. Japan in the Great War, 1914-1919* (London 1999) 36-38.
[57] Ibidem, 33-36.
[58] Ibidem, 80-81 & 142-143.
[59] Ibidem, 141-142.
[60] Ibidem, 141-142.

Japanese distrust of the United States was understandable. Robert Lansing, the American diplomat who served as counselor to the State Department at the outbreak of World War I, and later as United States Secretary of State under President Woodrow Wilson from 1915 to 1920, had made it clear that the preservation of the status quo was of the greatest value to the American interest.[61] The United States worried what might happen to the existing state of affairs in East Asia if Japan were to join the war. When they received reports stating that the Japanese soon would, Robert Lansing, was quick to write to the secretary of state, Bryan: "If we should endeavor to secure the neutralization of the treaty ports, the observance of Chinese neutrality and the preservation of the status quo before Japan declares war, it would seem to be our duty to approach that government first in accordance with the exchange of notes to which reference is made in the draft of the Aide Memoire to you."[62] Lansing also advised the State Department to not undertake immediate action to preserve the status quo, but instead wait until it could address all belligerents at once to achieve a diplomatic advantage by knowing the exact intentions of Japan: "If we wait before acting in regard to the questions of neutralization and the status quo in China, until war between Japan and Germany has been declared, I do not think we would be bound to present the matter in the first instance to the Japanese government, but with perfect propriety might approach all the belligerents upon the subject simultaneously."[63]

In 1917, before joining the war, the US had appealed to all belligerents to declare their war aims in hope of negotiating peace. The Allied response contained appeals for German withdrawal from Belgium, the Balkans and the Dardanelles, but no mention was made of territories in Asia. If a peace were to be signed, Japan was to hand over to Germany all the territories it had gained during the war. Japan feared that the European powers, when the war would come to an end, would take Japan's contribution to the war lightly and disregard their rights and demands at the peace conference.[64] They also did not want the US to join the war, as it would make the fate of the Japanese gains during the war even more insecure.[65]

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[61] Roosevelt Institute for American Studies (RIAS), U.S. Department of State. Papers relating to foreign relations, Lansing Papers 1914-1920, August 7th 1914, 3.
[62] RIAS, U.S. Department of State. Papers relating to foreign relations, Lansing Papers 1914-1920, August 14th 1914, 3.
[63] RIAS, U.S. Department of State. Papers relating to foreign relations, Lansing Papers 1914-1920, August 14th 1914, 4.
[64] Frederick R. Dickinson, *War and National Reinvention.* 176.
[65] Ibidem, 176-177.

When the US severed its diplomatic ties with Germany on February 3rd and President Wilson invited all neutral parties to follow their example, a major shift in global political power seemed to take place. Both the Netherlands and Japan kept a watchful eye.[66] If China was to follow the US' example, it would consolidate American influence in Asia. Therefore, a Japanese envoy was rushed to China to ensure that China entered the war under Japanese auspices. Additionally, British, French, Italian and Russian recognition of Japanese rights to former German possession in Shandong were attained.[67]

Shifting relations

Meanwhile, as a result of the Boer War of 1899-1902, a powerful anti-British sentiment had also started to develop in the Netherlands and within the Dutch-American community in the US. Between the end of the Civil War and the start of the First World War about 175.000 Dutch people emigrated to the US, in search of a better life. At the dawn of the 19th century over twenty Dutch-language newspapers were printed throughout the US and by 1910 there were 120.053 Netherlands-born people living across the Atlantic.[68] Most of the Dutch immigrants moved to the US in search of a better life, despite a steady economic growth in the Netherlands. Due to a lack of industrialization in the Netherlands, wages were low and unemployment was high. Dutchmen in the US frequently wrote letters to their families across the Atlantic, telling them of the rich opportunities in the US. The US also advertised such opportunities in campaigns, trying to lure European workers to come work in the American industry and on their land.[69]

Dutch immigrants in America were not normally involved in foreign affairs, but during the wars at the turn of the century they suddenly made themselves heard. When the Spanish-American War broke out in 1898, support from Dutch Americans was enthusiastic. They compared the war with the Dutch Eighty Years War and saw the modern conflict as a continuation of the defense of their freedom against the Spanish oppression.[70] The Boer War in South America brought about even more excitement

[66] Nationaal Archief (NA), Archive Inventory Number: 2.05.18, Inventory number: 612, 1914-1918.
[67] Frederick R. Dickinson, *War and National Reinvention.* 176-177.
[68] Gerald F. de Jong, *The Dutch in America 1609-1974* (Boston, 1975) 149-152.
[69] Ibidem, 149-150.
[70] Gerrit Tenzythoff, *The Dutch in America* (Minneapolis, 1969) 80-81.

and stirred up a nationalistic sentiment.[71] Opponents of the war demanded freedom for all people. For instance, during demonstrations in collaboration with American Germans and Poles, all parties cheered when the Poles also pleaded for Polish freedom.[72] Dutch Americans displayed strong pro-Boer sympathies. All newspapers, regardless of political preference, supported the Boers. Dutch Americans wrote petitions, raised funds and held rallies. All in all, the war led to the rejuvenation of Dutch nationalism in the US, but it also reinforced the traditional Dutch enmity with England.[73]

While relations with Great Britain were declining, Germany had become an increasingly powerful and important neighbor to the Netherlands. The Germans were fundamental for the Dutch agriculture and industry. They formed the extensive hinterland for the transit trade, especially through Rotterdam, and provided the Dutch with coal and industrial machinery. The Dutch policy of neutrality steadily changed to avoid getting in the way of the political leaders in Berlin. The British remained important to Dutch trade and were to be reckoned with in political-military perspective, but slowly drifted away from their earlier dominion over the Netherlands.[74] But that is not to say that the Netherlands then placed its confidence fully into the hands of their eastern neighbor. A note from queen Wilhelmina dating from 1905 serves well to indicate the difficult position of the Netherlands. The note, most likely written to tamper Dutch pro-German sentiments,[75] argued that the Netherlands should refrain from entering an alliance with England, who, as a naval power, could not defend the motherland, nor should they align with Germany, who could not defend the Dutch colonies. Instead, the Dutch ought to wait until war broke out and then choose the lesser evil.[76]

The Dutch were thus not looking for allies at the beginning of the 20th century, but maintained a close relationship with the United States. As peace and maintaining the status quo were the highest priorities, though they were not looking for allies, the Netherlands and the United States had entered a treaty 'for the Advancement of General Peace' in 1913. It was signed by American secretary of State, William

[71] Gerrit Tenzythoff, *The Dutch in America* 81.
[72] Ibidem, 81.
[73] Michael Douma, 'Dutch-American identity during the Civil War and the Boer War' 375-385, in: Hans Krabbendam, Cornelis A. van Minnen and Giles Scott-Smith (eds.), *Four centuries of Dutch-American Relations 1609-2009* (Middelburg, 2009) 380-381.
[74] Duco Hellema, *Neutraliteit & vrijhandel : de geschiedenis van de Nederlandse buitenlandse betrekkingen* (Utrecht, 2001) 62-67.
[75] Ibidem, 68.
[76] Ibidem, 68.

Jennings Bryan and Dutch minister to the United Sates, Chevalier W.L.F.C. van Rappard. The treaty stated that disputes between both parties that could not be settled by previous arbitration treaties or agreements, and if all diplomatic methods of adjustments had failed, would be referred for investigation and report to an international committee. The nations agreed not to declare war or initiate hostilities until a report had been submitted. The committee would be composed of five members, two from each country and one foreigner, agreed upon by both parties.[77]

The Netherlands wasn't unique in having such a treaty with the United States. As part of Williams Jennings Bryan's peace plan over twenty different countries agreed to 'the Advancement of General Peace', altering in provisions but invariably the same in principle. However, the Netherlands is highlighted in the binding of these treaties, in which is stated that the United States has been a leader, as well as a pioneer in the peaceful settlement of international disputes since the ratification of the Jay Treaty of 1794, which introduced arbitration into the modern practice of nations. The Netherlands then is named the center of international development since the First Peace Conference at The Hague in 1899. The Hague is even called the 'unofficial capital of the society of nations'.[78] The American lawyer Frederic R. Coudert is subsequently quoted stating: "There is in Europe one country – I was going to say little country, but that is not the word, because if bigness consists of high principles, if it consists of altruism, if it consists of spiritual power, if it consists of standing for the right and for fairness among men, then Holland is a great country, and always has been."[79]

The Dutch-American treaty served as an example. The first article of the treaty was believed to define the clearest the relation of the International Commission for arbitration, as it expressly stated that all diplomatic methods must first have been used and that arbitration was not rejected in favor of a committee, because the disputes covered by the committee could only be those that were not covered by arbitration or previous treaties. And even though war between the United States and the Netherlands was deemed 'unthinkable', the mere presence of the agreement that both countries would hold out on hostilities until after any report was published was seen as

[77] William Jennings Bryan and James Brown Scott, *Treaties for the advancement of peace between the United States and other powers negotiated by the honorable William J. Bryan, secretary of state of the United States* (New York, 1920) 117-119.
[78] Ibidem, liii-lv.
[79] Ibidem, lv.

an invitation to all other nations with whom war was more likely to investigate instead of fight.[80]

Mutual concerns

In Europe, both the Netherlands and the United States tried to avert the threatening war. Neither had wished for war in Europe. The Netherlands had organized peace conferences in the Hague in 1899 and 1907, which were encouraged by the American statesmen who were also committed to neutrality and peace. In a speech to the House of Representatives on December 10, 1913, the Minister of the Interior, Pieter Cort van der Linden, called the constant fear of war 'one of the saddest phenomena of the present time.'[81] Construction of fortifications at Vlissingen were a small kink in the relationship between the Netherlands and the U.S. as American journalists joined their French and British colleagues in their accusations that the construction was done by German instigation to hold back any possible naval advancement on the Scheldt River.[82]

But, despite this minor incident, ties between the Dutch and the Americans seemed strong at the start of the war. Their countries worked together to move relief supplies to Belgium after the German invasion.[83] The Dutch foreign minister John Loudon also had a good personal relationship with the American envoy in the Hague, Henry van Dyke, who was notoriously anti-German.[84] Loudon was a stellar diplomat, who knew when to be pragmatic.[85] As such, the Dutchman was one of the few political figures who had earned van Dyke's unqualified admiration and their relationship was of even greater importance due to the American's close ties to president Woodrow Wilson, whom he had served under at Princeton University.[86]

Meanwhile, domestically, the Dutch were trying hard to avert a political crisis. On January 10th, 1914, the left held the majority in the house of representatives in the

[80] William Jennings Bryan and James Brown Scott, *Treaties for the advancement of peace* lvi.
[81] RIAS, political affairs, December 10th 1913, 92.
[82] Hubert P. van Tuyll, 'Dutch-American relations during World War I' 420-421; Duco Hellema, *Neutraliteit & vrijhandel* 69; RIAS, political affairs, Belgium and Flushing, 22-28, 1-7; RIAS, political affairs, Germany and the Dutch Defence Bill, January 20th 1911, 29-30.
[83] Sophie de Schaepdrijver, 'A less-than-total total war: Neutrality, invasion and the stakes of war, 1914-1918', in: Felicity Rash and Christophe Declercq (eds.), *The Great War in Belgium and the Netherlands: Beyond Flanders Fields* (London, 2018) 13-34, 22.
[84] Hubert P. van Tuyll, 'Dutch-American relations during World War I' 423; NA, Archive Inventory Number: 2.05.18, Inventory number: 612, 1914-1918.
[85] Hubert P. van Tuyll, *The Netherlands and World War I. Espionage, diplomacy and survival* (Brill, 2001) 5-6.
[86] Hubert P. van Tuyll, 'Dutch-American relations during World War I' 423.

Netherlands. Out of 100 seats, 55 were in the hands of left-wing parties, mainly the liberals who held 30 seats.[87] Cort van der Linden was tasked with forming a new extra-parliamentary liberal cabinet after the elections of 1913 when a previous attempt by liberal democrat Dirk Bos had failed.[88] The Americans knew little admiration for the political system of the Netherlands. The many different parties led to fragmentation and the postponement of decisions on political oppositions. In a letter to the Secretary of State, Henry van Dyke said that all factions in the Dutch Second Chamber were convinced that their own theory or formula was the only right one to save the nation. [89] But Cort van der Linden was able to use the threat of war to unite the Dutch political parties. In a speech he addressed his coming Cabinet's stance on the war, he stated: "Now we live in suspense all over the world and when this Cabinet comes with the gun on its shoulder, it does not give in to militarism. It does not do anything else but its duty of every individual and of every nation to see to its self-preservation."[90]

Maybe because of their own troubles at home, the Dutch weren't to be troubled with Wilson's election as the 28th president of the United States in 1912. The election results barely made it to the front page of any major newspaper in the Netherlands, though its implications were definitely discussed. The *Algemeen Handelsblad* mentioned for instance that "concerning foreign affairs, the United States will continue to follow its peace-loving policy and seek, in a broad spirit of fairness, solutions to any problems that may arise."[91] Their colleagues at *De Telegraaf* shared the optimism for the continuation of American foreign policy of peace, writing that same day: "With respect to foreign affairs, the United States will continue its peaceable policy and resolve, with a broad conception of equity and justice, the questions submitted to it."[92]

Naturally, changes were still to be expected, particularly in financial sphere. After Wilson's inauguration, the *Algemeen Handelsblad* wrote on his international financial policy: "President Wilson will leave the path of 'dollar diplomacy' (...) 'The responsibility which would be imposed upon the government if it encouraged a loan so secured and so administered would be contrary to the principles upon which our Government rests,' said President Wilson, concluding by pointing out that America's

[87] RIAS, political affairs, January 10th 1914, 77-79.
[88] RIAS, political affairs, December 10th 1913, 92.
[89] RIAS, political affairs, January 10th 1914, 77-79.
[90] RIAS, political affairs, December 10th 1913, 92.
[91] *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 'Dr. Woodrow Wilson is gekozen tot president van de Vereenigde Staten', 6-11-1912.
[92] *De Telegraaf*, 'Een opzienbarend interview met Woodrow Wilson', 6-11-1912.

only interest is in preserving the open door which leads to friendship and mutual benefit. Everything must be done to facilitate American trade with China, but not in such a way as would be the case with this loan. The American government thus apparently no longer wants to put its diplomacy at the service of financial operations."[93] This change was already foreshadowed by Howard Taft in his acceptance speech after his defeat in November the previous year. "President Taft accepted his defeat with dignity", *Algemeen Handelsblad* wrote. "He issued a statement saying that Dr. Wilson's victory will mean an early change in the government's economic policy toward the tariff, and he expressed the hope that this change could be made without damage to national prosperity."[94]

The tariff was also a tricky issue in the Netherlands. In 1911, M.J.C.M. Kolkman of the Roman Catholic People's Party (RKSP) had submitted a draft tariff law to restrict free trade. The bill could count on fierce obstruction by the opposition, as a result of which it was never dealt with further.[95] Opponents feared that the tariff law would make primary necessities more expensive and campaigned heavily against it. The fact that it was never properly dealt with, was one of the few points of critique on the Heemskerk-cabinet, the longest sitting cabinet in the history of the Netherlands.[96] Cort van der Linden himself was a staunch supporter of the free trade policy, believing that denying others an equal chance on the market, would lead to hostilities, stating: "Abroad, the situation is so tense that people fear the peaceful competition between peoples could turn into war at any moment."[97]

Wilson's victory in the election did inspire hope for the prospect of peace, when tensions were starting to rise in Europe. The Dutch newspapers seemed joyful that Wilson's new government would devote itself to the preservation of peace. "Bryan, who is likely to become Secretary of State in Wilson's Cabinet, stated in a speech on peace that it was the imperative duty of the United States, not only to cooperate in every way possible with the world powers to promote peace, but also to set a shining example in disarmament. America, said Bryan, because of its location and its position among the nations, was particularly suited to take the courageous initiative in this direction"[98], *Het*

[93] *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 'Vereenigde Staten. Verandering van politiek', 20-03-1913.
[94] *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 'Vereenigde Staten. Dr. Wilson's overwinning', 7-11-1912.
[95] Mr. M.J.C.M. Kolkman - Parlement.com (21-6-2022)
[96] RIAS, political affairs, December 10th 1913, 83.
[97] RIAS, political affairs, December 11th 1913, 102.
[98] *Het Vaderland*, 'De V.S. en de ontwapening', 3-03-1913; *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 'Bryan en de ontwapening', 3-03-1913.

Vaderland and *Algemeen Handelsblad* reported after a speech by William J. Bryan given in North-Carolina. The Dutch parliament believed it wise to deescalate the arms race, but sceptics among them thought it near impossible to do so, as even the democratic governments couldn't put a stop to the public's fear for war and constant demand of military strengthening.[99]

The Netherlands and the US had spoken up many times in favor of free trade and diplomatic resolutions to international disputes. When Dutch and American attempts to keep the peace turned out to be futile, the aforementioned sceptics were proven right. However, opportunities remained, as the war strengthened the ties between both countries. When the war broke out in the late summer of 1914, the transatlantic tourist season was in full swing. As borders closed and naval travel became dangerous, an estimated 120.00 to 200.000 US citizens ended up stranded in Europe at the time.[100] As German, Austrian-Hungarian, French and British tourist shipping companies suspended their services, the stranded tourists sought the safety of neutral ports such as in the Netherlands to find their way home.[101] The Holland America Line was especially popular. German lines had a profit-sharing agreement with the Dutch company and referred as many of their passengers as possible to Rotterdam where the American passengers were welcomed with open arms, as they guaranteed their ships to set out at full capacity for weeks.[102] The Holland America Line also offered anxious or broke American first- and second-class ticket holders to travel in third class and stressed its neutral status in communication and advertisements, using the Americans' desperation and Dutch policy to maximize their profits.[103] The needs of stranded Americans in the Netherlands such as information, clothing and money to extend their booking at the hotel, intensified contact between the US and the Hague. The US envoy, Henry van Dyke, made sure that the Bank of the Netherlands would honor all US travelers' cheques and drafts of credit, offering American gold as collateral.[104] He also praised the Holland America Line for its efforts

[99] RIAS, political affairs, December 3rd, 1913, 109.
[100] Torsten Feys and Per Kristian Sebak, 'America's first 'refugee' crisis': the repatriation of stranded Americans from Europe at the outbreak of the First World War', *Journal of Tourism History* 10:3 (2018) 225-246, 225.
[101] Ibidem, 230-231.
[102] Ibidem, 230-231.
[103] Torsten Feys, 'The Business of Relocating Stranded Americans and Belgian Refugees during the First World War', *Journal of migration history* 5:2 (2019) 248–276, 263-264.
[104] Torsten Feys, 'America's first 'refugee' crisis' 230-232.

to increase accommodations for Americans without raising ticket prices and for adapting their own hotel to accommodate stranded US tourists.[105]

Strained neutrality

The two countries seemed very united at the beginning of the war, but a great difference remained, which was that the US decision to declare neutrality came from a position of strength. The US was economically strong enough to sit out the war even if foreign trade or investments were to be disrupted. The Netherlands on the other hand, was a commercial nation with its finances strictly woven into the international web. In 1914 its stocks of outward foreign direct investment were set at 85% of its G.D.P.[106] And although the Dutch army grew bigger than ever during the time of the Great War, reaching 200.000 – 250.000 soldiers, the Netherlands had no offensive warfare as an instrument of policy, but was set for an armed protection of their neutrality.[107] Instead, Dutch military officers became military art specialists, who primarily made plans for defense against outside attacks. For the Dutch government, the most important military aim in the period leading up to the First World War was to keep the Netherlands out of the new global conflagration and protecting their colonies in the East Indies.[108]

Naturally, American neutrality was then seen as comforting by the Dutch, as the US was a great power with whom all combatants wanted to get a leg up. This would also mean that they could provide legal protection for all neutral nations. *Het Vaderland* rejoiced at an 'event of great significance', when they reported that the twenty-one American republics, forming the Pan-American Union, had formed a commission composed of the diplomatic representatives of those republics to the United States, with Bryan, the United States Secretary of State, as Chairman. The purpose of this commission was to seek the means of protecting the rights and interests of the unilateralists in the war.[109] The commission had made several suggestions, like the creation of war-free zones across the Atlantic to not hinder trade and organizing a

[105] Torsten Feys, 'America's first 'refugee' crisis' 241; NA, Archive Inventory Number: 2.05.18, Inventory number: 612, 1914-1918.
[106] Hubert P. van Tuyll, 'Dutch-American relations during World War I' 421.
[107] Ron Blom, 'Neutral Netherlands: A Small Imperialist Power in the Epoch of War and Revolution. Left-wing Soldiers' and Sailors' Organisations, 1914-1919' *Critique (Glasgow)*, *42*:3 (2014) 377–394, 378-379; W. Klinkert and G. Teitler, 'Nederland van neutraliteit naar bondgenootschap. Het veiligheids- en defensiebeleid in de twintigste eeuw' in: Bob de Graaff, Duco Hellema and Bert van der Zwan (eds.), *De Nederlandse buitenlandse politiek in de twintigste eeuw* (Amsterdam, 2003) 9-36, 14-15.
[108] Ron Blom, 'Neutral Netherlands' 378-379.
[109] *Het Vaderland*, 'Naar den toekomstigen vrede', 26-01-1915.

convention to review the rights of neutral nations in times of war, which were to be accepted by the European nations at once, especially by the Netherlands and the Scandinavian countries.[110]

Wilson's response to the sinking of the *Lusitania* in 1915, which will be explored more thoroughly later on in this chapter, added to the assumption that America would protect the trade of goods across the Atlantic and the rights of neutrals. *Algemeen Handelsblad* called their response 'strong in tone'.[111] *Het Vaderland* reported that the State of California had recommended to Wilson to expand the naval fleet to protect American honor and lives.[112] Yet, the American commitment to the rights of neutrals did not reach the heights that the Netherlands had aspired, as Wilson took no further action, hoping to resolve the matter diplomatically.[113] Foreign minister Loudon's attempt to create a bloc of neutrals was also rejected, despite his good relationships across the Atlantic.[114]

But the United Sates and the Netherlands once again found themselves in agreement when from the fall of 1915 on, German submarines started targeting merchant ships sailing the open seas. Both countries strongly opposed the German war tactics. Germany claimed they could and would not differentiate between enemy warships and neutral merchant ships, as British ships could sail under false flags and merchant ships could sometimes be carrying arms on board. Moreover, Hugo von Pohl, German commander of the fleet, thought surfacing, searching and saving were incompatible with the nature of the submarine anyway, which was why submarines could not be expected to save the crews and passengers aboard the merchant ships that they sank.[115]

The 'unrestricted submarine warfare' by Germany is commonly seen as one of the reasons for the American intervention during the war.[116] The sinking of commercial ships by German U-boats was a thorn in the American side, but the Dutch were likewise dissatisfied with their neighbor's war tactics, claiming that the vital interests of

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[110] *Het Vaderland*, 'Naar den toekomstigen vrede', 26-01-1915.
[111] *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 'De Amerikaansche nota aan Duitschland', 12-06-1915; *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 'President Wilson en de Lusitania', 13-05-1915.
[112] *Het Vaderland*, 'De ondergang van de Lusitania', 11-05-1915.
[113] *De Telegraaf*, 'De Vereenigde Staten en Duitschland', 02-06-1915.
[114] Hubert P. van Tuyll, 'Dutch-American relations during World War I' 421-423.
[115] Isabel V. Hull, *A Scrap of Paper: Breaking and Making International Law During the Great War* (New York, 2013) 245-246.
[116] Frank Trommler, 'The Lusitania Effect: America's Mobilization against Germany in World War I', *German studies review* 32 (2009) 241–266, 241-242.

belligerents did not excuse any type of behavior in war and certainly not the attacking of neutral merchant and fishing vessels.[117] Rumors swirled that the Netherlands offered rewards to Britons who managed to sink German submarines, though no evidence of this was ever found.[118] The Americans claimed the sinking of ships without warning was an act so unprecedented in naval warfare, their government was surprised the Germans had even contemplated it as possible.[119]

The US had far more problems with Germany's acts of war, but refused to condemn the Germans too harshly out of fear of being dragged into the war themselves. The bombing of Antwerp, for instance, was harshly frowned upon. However, because the U.S. did not want to take sides at that time, it was censured on the basis of endangering Americans in Antwerp and not on the basis of violating several articles in the Hague Peace Treaty. This way, US officials thought, the US was not expected to speak out at every violation of the peace treaty.[120] The US also protested against the use of mines on the high seas, Though Robert Lansing advised his government to protest not only against Germany, but Britain and France as well, stating: "The Protest could be identical and, being sent to both sides, could be made vigorous in language. (…) The use of mines on the high seas is the greatest menace to neutral vessels and the lives of neutrals, and, in my opinion, is the most reprehensible and utterly indefensible method employed in naval warfare."[121] American frustrations with the German war tactics ran so high that President Wilson wrote a letter to Lansing, urging him to solve the matter before the US would have to side with the Alliance, stating: "I venture not with a little hesitation to make this suggestion to you in confidence, that you see some member of the government upon whom you are likely to make the deepest impression in such a matter and whose influence you can count upon as great and say that nothing is making so unfavorable, not to say fatal, an impression in this country as the dropping of bombs from airships upon cities elsewhere than upon fortifications, with no result except terror and the destruction of innocent lives. I am deeply interested in maintaining a real neutrality of public opinion here and a scrupulous fairness of judgement, but my efforts are being wholly nullified,

[117] Isabel V. Hull, *A Scrap of Paper* 244-245.
[118] NA, Archive Inventory Number: 2.05.18, Inventory number: 612, 1914-1918.
[119] [119] Isabel V. Hull, *A Scrap of Paper* 245.
[120] RIAS, U.S. Department of State. Papers relating to foreign relations, Lansing Papers 1914-1920, August 28th 1914, 29-30.
[121] RIAS, U.S. Department of State. Papers relating to foreign relations, Lansing Papers 1914-1920, February 15th 1915, 38.

I fear, by these occurrences and will be so long as the present use of bombs where they can be of no possible military service continues."[122]

Concerning armed merchant vessels, the Netherlands and the United States both held a unique stance. Of all neutral nations, the Dutch were the only ones to prohibit armed merchantmen from entering their ports, in effect treating armed merchant vessels as regular warships. The United States differentiated between offensive and defensive arms, believing the British had a legal right to arm their merchants as long as their vessels engaged in ordinary commerce, embarked cargo and passengers in the ordinary way and they did not seek out enemy ships. The Germans, of course, disagreed with this stance, claiming that defensive arms could still be used for offensive purposes, thus arguing that their U-boats had every right to sink the British ships. But despite initially siding with the British view on armed merchant vessels, the US appeared uncomfortable harboring them, as none arrived in US ports between September 10, 1914, and January 16, 1916.[123] It wasn't until March, 1917, that the US, riled up by the publication of the Zimmermann note, started arming American merchant vessels.[124]

The United States and the Netherlands were more likeminded in their concern for the development of the submarine warfare. From May 1916 through January 1917, due to neutral opposition led by the United States, Germany mostly abided by the legal strictures of the cruiser rules. But from February 1917 onwards, when Germany decided that the submarine campaign would take the shape of a warzone and not a blockade, they disregarded neutral sanctions and threw over the law entirely.[125] When on January 31st, 1917 Dutch Minister of foreign affairs John Loudon received a letter from the German emissary in the Netherlands explaining that Germany felt it had no other option than expanding its submarine aggression due to pressure from Great Britain, the Dutch response was not what the Germans had hoped for. The Germans had claimed that they were willing to negotiate peace, but the British were said to be no longer interested in peace and only out to hurt the German people and their allies. In response to the tightening of their naval blockade, the Germans had therefore seen

[122] RIAS, U.S. Department of State. Papers relating to foreign relations, Lansing Papers 1914-1920, October 19th 1914, 35.
[123] Isabel V. Hull, *A Scrap of Paper* 250-251.
[124] Robert E. Osgood, *Ideals and self-interest in America's foreign relations: the great transformation of the twentieth century* (Chicago, 1953) 252.
[125] Isabel V. Hull, *A Scrap of Paper* 256-257.

no other option but to expand their submarine warfare. A corridor for trade would remain open in the North Sea, but Mediterranean Sea and Atlantic would be completely occupied and unsafe to navigate. The letter concluded by asking the Netherlands to respect the German choice and, above all, to remain neutral in the war.[126]

But Loudon, wrote a response of resistance, much fiercer than one might suspect from a neutral nation. He pointed out to the German envoy that the Netherlands had protested against the North Sea being used as a warzone since the beginning of the war. He recalled the fact that the Netherlands had already sent a letter to the British on November 16th, 1914, asking them not to turn the North Sea into a military zone. And that the Netherlands sent another one to Germany on February 12th, 1915, speaking out against the North Sea and the Channel being turned into a warzone. In both cases, the Netherlands noted that according to international human rights, only the area surrounding military operations may be seen as a military zone, where fighting was allowed. Because both countries had designated the North Sea as a warzone, the Netherlands saw this as an outright attack on the fundamental freedom of the sea.[127]

The Netherlands feared for the safety of their fishing boats and merchant vessels, but it was the German plan to occupy the Mediterranean Sea that evoked the greatest concern as it would cut of the Dutch from accessing the Suez Canal haltering the trade with their colonies and thereby striking at the heart of the Dutch economy.[128] A stronger plea was therefore made to protest the German plans to expand the warzones at sea. The Netherlands deemed the attacks on neutral merchant ships not only as an attack on human rights, but also as a violation of humanity, as the German U-boats did not care about the safety of the people on board. Furthermore, Loudon notified the German envoy that the Netherlands would hold the Germans responsible for any casualties on Dutch merchant ships.[129]

The Dutch-American ties are evident in the timing of their appeals to the Germans. The letter Loudon mentioned in his response to the German envoy was dated just two days after the US voiced similar concerns and demands to Germany on May 10th, 1915, calling on the Germans to spare American merchant vessels and

[126] Roman Romanovič Rosen and John Loudon, *Diplomatieke bescheiden betreffende den verscherpten duikbootoorlog* (’s-Gravenhage, 1917).
[127] Ibidem.
[128] Ibidem.
[129] Ibidem.

always save the American passengers and crew aboard the sunken ships. Due the fear of retaliations, Germany then decided to spare Italian and American merchantmen. The decision to spare Dutch vessels followed two months later in April, 1915. A month thereafter, however, the *Lusitania* was sunk, leading to the first major diplomatic conflict between the United States and Germany.[130]

With the sinking of the *Lusitania* 1,195 civilians, 123 of them American, lost their lives. It was a major event during the Great War and one that nearly pulled the United States in to the war.[131] In their reactionary note to Germany, the Americans emphasized that it was every neutral nation's right to trade with belligerent nations and claimed it was a human right for non-combatants to travel the open seas in safety.[132] When Germany responded with a note addressing none of the legal concerns and instead blaming Britain for arming their merchant fleet and instructing them to attack, the US government found their tone offensive.[133] Wilson is said to have complained to his advisers that the German foreign office "always misses the essential point involved, that England's violation of neutral rights is different from Germany's violation of the rights of humanity."[134] In order to get them to admit wrongdoing, pay reparations and address its obligations under the law, the US was even willing to concede to the Germans the recognition of the submarine as a legitimate weapon, adverting to the 'extraordinary conditions' and 'radical alterations of circumstance and method of attack', agreeing to Von Pohl's stance. But it reiterated its viewpoint that "The rights of neutrals in time of war are based upon principle, not upon expedience, and the principles are immutable."[135] The US also offered to mediate between Britain and Germany to put an end to Germany's unrestricted submarine warfare and the most objectionable aspects of Britain's blockade. If Germany would continue its 'illegal ways', however, the United States would regard that act as "deliberately unfriendly."[136] Germany did not reply.[137]

[130] Isabel V. Hull, *A Scrap of Paper* 257.
[131] Ibidem, 259; Frank Trommler, 'The Lusitania Effect' 241.
[132] Ashley Cox, 'A man for all seasons: Woodrow Wilson, transatlantic relations and the war against militarism', *Journal of transatlantic studies* 16 (2018) 389–407, 393-397.
[133] Isabel V. Hull, *A Scrap of Paper* 259-260.
[134] Ibidem, 260.
[135] Ibidem, 261.
[136] *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 'De Amerikaansche nota aan Duitschland', 12-06-1915; Isabel V. Hull, *A Scrap of Paper* 260-261.
[137] Isabel V. Hull, *A Scrap of Paper* 260-261.

The Netherlands thus saw itself as shrunk between two empires in both Europe and Asia. They were concerned about their trade routes and colonial possessions and looked at the US as a new way to guarantee peace, finding in neutrality a common understanding. Their neutrality was codified through peace conferences and arbitration. Their similar stance on tariffs after Wilson's election illustrating their common struggle for free trade and open markets, both in Europe and in Asia. With both nations having a significant interest in maintaining the status quo in the international order to keep war from disrupting their valuable trade lines abroad. When the war broke out, Germany's attack on shared commercial interests contributed to further alignment of the two powers.

Between a rock and a hard place

In this chapter I look at the American reasons to join the war, the US interests and objectives during the war, and the implications Washington's intervention had for both the Allied and the Central Powers, as well as for the Netherlands. The difficult position of the Netherlands is highlighted, but this chapter also seeks to show how the Dutch difficulties would linger on to affect their international position and bilateral relations with the US after the war.

To better understand the actions of the United States during World War I, it is first off important to know for what reasons the US entered the war and why it did so in 1917 and not sooner or later. This chapter starts by looking at the American views of the war before entering and how these views changed or were shaped during 1917 and 1918. It also discusses the consequences of America's new position for the Netherlands which made increasingly difficult to remain neutral after the US, then protector of the neutrals, declared war on Germany.

Multiple reasons could be named for the American intervention in the Great War. Some believe President Wilson had entered the war primarily because of violations of neutral rights and international law and morality by the ruthless German endless submarine warfare campaigns.[138] Another theory from around the same time was based on American 'unneutrality', basically claiming that the US was never truly neutral and had favored the Entente powers from the beginning.[139]

During the Second World War, a new school of thought emerged, which brought together these arguments and claimed that the US went to war to protect itself against the consequences of a German victory in Europe. The disturbance in the balance of power would harm the American position in global politics, and thus the US had to intervene to prevent Britain from being defeated and losing Anglo-American domination of the North Atlantic. Wilson's claims that he went to war because of the German submarines' violations of America's neutral rights had been a front to his true

[138] Daniel M. Smith, 'National Interest and American Intervention, 1917: An Historiographical Appraisal', *The Journal of American history (Bloomington, Ind.)* 52 (1965) 2–24, 5-6; Charles Seymour, *Woodrow Wilson and the World War : a chronicle of our own times* (New Haven, 1921); Charles Seymour, *American neutrality, 1914-1917 : essays on the causes of American intervention in the world war* (New Haven, 1935).

[139] Daniel M. Smith, 'National Interest and American Intervention' 6; Charles C. Tansill, 'War Powers of the President of the United States with Special Reference to the Beginning of Hostilities', *Political science quarterly* 45 (1930) 1–55; Charles Callan Tansill, *America goes to war* (Boston, 1938).

concern, which was that communications and trade with Britain had been cut off, leaving Britain to starve.[140]

But the US, in fact, had been in no rush to maintain the power balance in Europe. At first, they weren't even interested in the war. In 1916, President Wilson had said that the objects and causes of the war were of no concern to him. "The obscure foundations from which this stupendous flood has burst forth we are not interested to search for and explore."[141] Former President Roosevelt, however, advocated that the US should lead a band of neutral states to oppose Germany, who was perceived as the aggressor. Foreign Secretary of the United Kingdom, Sir Edward Grey even suggested that the US could have stopped the war if it had made clear that states who would use their arms for aggression, would suffer the consequences of collective action by the rest of the world. This conception very much lines up with Wilson's later idea for collective security.[142]

After the war, Wilson would admit that "America did not at first see the full meaning of the war. It looked like a natural raking out of the pent-up jealousies and rivalries of the complicated politics of Europe."[143] In their own isolation, the US had a hard time grasping the events of the Great War in their inter-European context. They failed to see what German unification would mean for the rest of Europe and viewed other European conflicts as discrete events. In the eyes of the American officials, Slavic agitation was just a Balkan problem and Hungarian and Czech nationalism was a problem that only Austria had to deal with. They failed to see the connection to other European countries, let alone the consequences of these events for the United States. It would take until the Second World War and the advance of the Soviet Union in Central Europe for the US to change its perspective of Europe and its own isolation.[144]

For the US, the legal status of neutrality had been enshrined as a moral principle and as a guide for all times and circumstances. The Americans believed that the European conflict had arisen from European causes and would end in European consequences. The best thing for the US to do then, was to conduct itself impartially and lend its moral prestige to the restauration of peace and sanity.[145] Neutrality,

[140] Daniel M. Smith, 'National Interest and American Intervention' 6-7.
[141] George F. Kennan, *American diplomacy 1900-1950* 63.
[142] Mark Weston Janis, *America and the Law of Nations 1776-1939* 166.
[143] George F. Kennan, *American diplomacy 1900-1950* 63.
[144] Chad R. Fulwider, *German Propaganda and U.S. Neutrality in World War I* (2015) 173-174.
[145] Robert E. Osgood, *Ideals and self-interest in America's foreign relations* 223.

however, came with as many obligations as it did rights. The US would have to remain faithful to its obligations as a neutral nation if it wanted to insist upon its rights as a neutral. This also meant that if it kept its obligations and insisted on rights that other nations were not prepared to grant, the very policy that was meant to preserve peace could draw the nation into war.[146]

The sinking of the *Lusitania* was the first wake-up-call for the United States to show that the war in Europe concerned American interests as well. 128 American civilians drowned at the hands of a German submarine. The US could not keep telling itself that the consequences of the war were solely for Europe to bear. But it did not immediately make the case for the US to declare war on Germany. Though voices arose, like that of Theodore Roosevelt, which said that The US had to go to war for the sake of humanity, most agreed the US should no longer try to avert war, but should not seek it out either. The *New York Tribune* wrote on the matter: "We shall not make war now to avenge those who have been murdered, but we shall not continue to avoid war if the question becomes one of defending those who still live."[147]

But the wake-up-call was not the only German action to inspire American animosity. The invasion of neutral Belgium had already shown in 1914 that the Germans had no interest in international morality. The destruction of Louvain and Rheims, reports of Belgian atrocities, and de deportation of Belgian and French labor had shown clear violations of humanitarian sentiment as well. Although these incidents were not enough, in themselves, sufficient provocation for the United States to declare war on Germany, they aroused great indignation among the American people, which tightened their interpretation of their neutral rights and obligations and made them identify the US' honor with the welfare of mankind.[148]

The sinking of the *Lusitania* in 1915 already brought the US to the brink of war, but it did not tip the scales. After the sinking of the British vessel, the US public was quick to voice thoughts of military retaliation. However, it took the United States another two years to declare war on Germany.[149] Relationships between Germany and the United States at the start of the war, were not to be underestimated. Through commerce, scientific and technological innovation and academic and cultural

[146] Robert E. Osgood, *Ideals and self-interest in America's foreign relations* 223-224.
[147] Ibidem, 226-227.
[148] Ibidem, 225-226.
[149] Frank Trommler, 'The Lusitania Effect' 243-244.

exchange between both countries, Germany had tried its hardest to improve public relations.[150] But in April 1917, all ties with Germany were severed by the US. Germany underestimated the American opposition of their militarism and the British sympathy among many Americans as well as the perception of German aggression in Central and South America, which threatened the US interests, according to the Monroe doctrine.[151] Wilson had tried to use the *Lusitania*-shock to halter the German unrestricted submarine warfare, but when they became serious in resuming their naval battle tactics, his political options became precariously limited. With the victims of the sinking of the *Lusitania* still in mind, the public legitimized his ultimate declaration of war.[152]

One reason for the delayed declaration of war, was that, other than the loss of American lives at sea or in bombing of European cities, the US did not have to fear for its own territorial security. That was, until the British published the Zimmermann cable on March 1st, 1917. German Foreign Minister Zimmermann had reached out to the German ambassador in Mexico to try and secure an alliance with Mexico in the event of war with the US. The message contained instructions to offer Mexico the return of the states Arizona, Texas and New Mexico, as well as the request to ask Mexico's provisional president, Venustiano Carranza, to invite Japan to join the Alliance. A request that, looking at Japan's mistrust of the US, did not sound that farfetched.[153]

The message had been intercepted by the British in January of that year, but they had waited to publish it until the time was ripe. Germany had just proclaimed an intensification of the unrestricted submarine warfare. The intensification was perceived by many Americans as an act of desperation, but nevertheless it stirred up a discussion to arm American merchant vessel, thus bring the US closer to the war than ever.[154]

To add insult to injury, Zimmermann had sent his coded note through the American Department of State, to which he was granted permission by Wilson, who desperately wanted to expedite peace negotiations. Wilson had been stounded by the German impertinence, said Robert Lansing in his memoirs.[155] It had been a devastating blow against Wilson's resistance to enter the war. Wilson came to see the

[150] Chad R. Fulwider, *German Propaganda and U.S. Neutrality in World War I* 163-164.
[151] Ibidem, 165-166.
[152] Frank Trommler, 'The Lusitania Effect' 258; Ashley Cox, 'A man for all seasons' 393-397.
[153] Robert E. Osgood, *Ideals and self-interest in America's foreign relations* 254.
[154] Ibidem, 253-254.
[155] Ibidem, 254-255.

German government as cunning, complicit and treacherous in its dealings with other countries. With Germany deemed untrustworthy, the last hope for peaceful negotiations was now gone. The final wall between the US and joining the war had collapsed.[156]

The US' neutrality seemingly thus rested upon indifference towards the fortunes of war, but the belligerents' choice to respect America's rights as a neutral rested upon something else entirely. The US considered itself remote from Europe, but Europe could not say the same for the US. The belligerents knew that the US was a wealthy nation and that the flow of American trade was essential for their self-preservation. But belligerents still frequently violated some of the neutral rights when, in their calculations, the advantage of violating American rights outweighed the disadvantage of American enmity. In 1917, Germany had shown it preferred the continuation of the unrestricted submarine warfare over American neutrality. Consequently, the US was, based upon its own principles, forced to join a war in which it seemingly had no vital interest.[157]

A reason to fight

Americans, as a whole, did not enter the war for the promise of international peace and democracy. They went to war mostly to vindicate their rights as neutrals. But a nation so willing to be a shining example in international relations, so prone to judge others with an ethical yardstick, and yet so reluctant to entangle itself in the global power struggle, could find little satisfaction in fighting a war merely for the limited objective of securing its rights.[158]

The American mobilization to enter the Great War had its own tragic costs at home, aside from the 53,000 Americans killed in the trenches. American writer, intellectual and one of the most outspoken critics on America's abandonment of neutrality, Randolph Bourne, asserted that the endless use of hysteria and repression against minorities and dissenters in the mobilization contradicted the claim that America's entry into the war was a means to achieve democratization in the world.[159]

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[156] Robert E. Osgood, *Ideals and self-interest in America's foreign relations* 255.
[157] Ibidem, 224.
[158] Ibidem, 264.
[159] Frank Trommler, 'The Lusitania Effect' 260-261; Chad R. Fulwider, *German Propaganda and U.S. Neutrality in World War I* 163-174.

Indeed, the US did have vital economic interests in the war. The Triple Entente's war debt to the United States and the belligerents' stance on import tariffs were equally responsible for dragging the US into war. The first concern was that US loans to Britain and France, amounting to 2.5 billion dollars between 1915 and 1917,[160] would never be paid back if they lost the war. American investors had placed their bets against the Central Powers and, though it seemed unlikely, losing would mean a major economic collapse. The second concern was that the US didn't want the victors of the war to impose discriminative trade rights between them and the defeated powers and would profit most from equal trade agreements among nations. Therefore, they had to codify this anti-mercantilist stance in the peace agreements, but this would only be possible if they were handed a seat at the negotiation table as a combatant. These factors too led to military intervention of the US.[161]

The war also brought about new economic opportunities. It was in the same year that the United States went to war, that C. K. McIntosh, vice-president of the Bank of California, made an address about the need for foreign markets to bring about full employment for American citizens.[162] His argument was that, instead of scrambling for a larger share of domestic national income, American businesses should work cooperatively and expand the total volume of income available for allocation among all contending groups. Studies on foreign market development, conducted since 1909, had also pointed out in 1916 that the key to organized development of foreign markets rested on the cooperation rather than on the competition between domestic economic interest groups.[163]

Wanting to expand the export trade to advance the war effort in 1918, the American Congress passed the Webb-Pomerene Act, which removed the last of the great antitrust prohibitions affecting foreign commerce. With the Act, it became possible for competing businesses to divide foreign markets for the purpose of developing them under American auspices. American corporations could now freely bid for sales abroad. With the signing of the Act, the era of individualism among American manufacturers had come to an end and the era of cooperation between them had legally begun. This was already the case for bankers, since the Federal Reserve

[160] Ashley Cox, 'A man for all seasons' 392.
[161] Ibidem, 392-393.
[162] Made at the National Foreign Trade Council (NFTC) Convention in January, 1917.
[163] Carl P. Parrini, *Heir to empire* 1-3.

Act of 1913 had been amended in 1916 to allow bankers to establish foreign branches free of high risks by spreading these risks among many units.[164]

Yet, the Webb-Pomerene Act wasn't solely meant to facilitate cooperation between analogous corporations. Once the law came into effect, producers of primary products, such as copper, cotton and silver, were free to form export trade associations which gave then near unparalleled power on the international markets. They could now offer their products to foreign buyers at high and stable prices while being largely protected against the variables of world market pricing, influenced by the war and foreign buying pools. In just two years, most of the conditions seemed to have been met to allow and encourage the cooperation of US companies in the production, financing, shipping and marketing of US' goods abroad.[165]

President Wilson denied any selfish interests and saw the American intervention in the war as a service to humanity. He did not want selfish interests, unworthy passion, hate or vengeance to darken his higher goal. Self-control and altruism had been his policy when the US remained neutral, and that policy would remain the same in war. On January 22nd 1917, even before the United States entered the Great War, Wilson had dictated the essential terms of peace and considered popular government the most important amongst them. He argued that all peoples had the right to self-determination and should be left free to determine their own polity and their own way of development. No nation would be allowed to extend its polity over another nation or people.[166] On April 2nd, in asking the Senate for a declaration of war, Wilson reinforced his plea for popular government, claiming that if the US was to go to war, it would do so 'for democracy, for the right of those who submit to authority to have a voice in their own government.'[167] He emphasized the necessity of vindicating the principles of peace and justice against selfish and autocratic power.[168]

In an appeal to the people, two weeks after his War Message to Congress, Wilson stated: "There is not a single selfish element, so far as I can see, in the cause we are fighting for. We are fighting for what we believe and wish to be the rights of mankind and for the future peace and security of the world."[169] In the following months,

[164] Carl P. Parrini, *Heir to empire* 7-9.
[165] Ibidem, 8-9.
[166] David Clinton, 'Wilsonianism and the sweep of American foreign policy history' 370-371.
[167] Ibidem, 371.
[168] Ibidem, 371.
[169] Robert E. Osgood, *Ideals and self-interest in America's foreign relations* 266.

Wilson doubled down on his 'American mission'. In May he claimed: "We have gone with no special grievance of our own, because we have always said that we were the friends and servants of mankind. We look for no profit. We look for no advantage."[170] Later that month, he added: "In the providence of God, America will once more have an opportunity to show the world that she was born to serve mankind."[171]

According to those speeches, Wilson's reasons for fighting the war seemed to exempt the loss of American ships and lives in the years prior to the declaration of war. Critics accused him of being deliberately vague in his explanation for war. The President, however, had made clear distinctions between the cause and the objectives of war. The former being the continued wrongs which the imperial German government had perpetrated against the rights, the commerce and the citizens of the United States, stating: "No nation that respected itself or the rights of humanity could have borne those wrongs any longer."[172] The objects, on the other hand, were clear of hate or vengeance. The United States had entered the war for its own reasons, but not its own interests.[173]

The clear distinction between reasons and objectives might indicate that Wilson considered the immediate cause of the war, which was the violations of American rights at sea as an inadequate justification for war. He did not wish to be seen as entering the war purely for the sake of vindicating national concerns. He would much rather justify American intervention for the sake of bringing peace and democracy to the world. [174]

Wilson's objectives made him an idealist and reaped support from liberals and other idealist intellectuals, but he was strongly opposed by American nationalists and realists. And though Wilson's expressions of American righteousness received general acclaim, they failed to inspire the nation as a whole. The American public seemed to want a more concrete reason to fight for. There was little that one could disagree with in Wilson's sermons, but there was also little that one could solidly grasp. Even those that had argued to go to war before the American intervention did not seem convinced by Wilson's benevolence.[175]

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[170] Robert E. Osgood, *Ideals and self-interest in America's foreign relations* 266.
[171] Ibidem, 266.
[172] Ibidem, 267.
[173] Ibidem, 266-267.
[174] Ibidem, 266-267.
[175] Ibidem, 266-267.

Not long after joining the war, the American people already seemed to have lost oversight of what they were fighting for. They lacked tangible interests and because the official explanation of intervention denied any hatred toward the German people, nor did it state that the US committed itself to the cause of the Allied powers, the real reason for the fighting suddenly seemed incomprehensible. However, there remained a general agreement that the US had intervened for its own reasons, which were not in any way associated with the dynastic and nationalistic reasons of the rest of the Entente. Wilson's promise of making the world safe for democracy achieved wide currency, but what it meant, remained unclear.[176]

It wasn't until January, 1918, that the people finally received a clear formulation of the idealistic basis for which they had gone to war nine months earlier. When Wilson mentioned his Fourteen Points to Congress on January 8th, 1918, he finally declared an effective, but also complicated war program.[177] His first five points underlined his idealistic aspirations with which he had already seized the admiration of liberal groups in America. Eight other points applied to political and territorial settlements that spoke to the militant realists. The final, and Wilson's most important point, called for an association of nations to guarantee political independence and territorial integrity of all peoples, the League of Nations. Though he later elaborated on some points and added to others, it was his first codification of his requirements for a better world that captured the moral favor of Americans and made them reconcile with war for the promise of everlasting peace.[178]

Wilson, however, intended that is Fourteenth Points would remain deliberately vague, until the time came to make peace. The President feared that by elaborating on the details and methods of his plan, he would stir up national sentiments that could endanger the national solidarity for the war that he had tried so hard to keep intact. Despite the House of Representatives advising him in the summer of 1918 to announce a more specified version of his plan so that the opinion of the people might crystalize around it, Wilson blocked every form of public discussion. He simply would not draw attention from the war effort.[179]

[176] Robert E. Osgood, *Ideals and self-interest in America's foreign relations* 264-266.
[177] Ibidem, 273.
[178] Ibidem, 273-279.
[179] Ibidem, 279.

Walking a tightrope

Though not entirely unexpected, for the Netherlands, American belligerency was an unmitigated disaster. In the long run, a German victory would have probably meant that the Netherlands would be surrounded and, in all likelihood, dominated by its eastern neighbor, but the short-term consequences for the US' entry into the war threatened core values in the Netherlands. The German unrestricted submarine warfare had cost them valued trade routes, but the US participation cost them a safe haven for Dutch-flag vessels and the protection of a fellow neutral. Wilson's promises of sympathy for the rights of neutrals were soon proven worthless. Furthermore, now that all great powers had been caught up in the war, neither party had to tolerate the international free trade system that the Netherlands had tried so hard to regulate to be acceptable for both camps. The National Overseas Trust Company, one of the system's more famous components soon rapidly declined after the American declaration of war, as it could not negotiate a way through the trade blockades set by the Allies.[180] And while trade revenue dropped, expenses rose when the Netherlands had to assume more responsibility for Belgian relief, as the American envoy there could not remain in place.[181]

Before its declaration of war, the United States was the most important neutral nation for Britain, because of their important trade and communication over the Atlantic. For Germany, The Netherlands and the Scandinavian nations were more vital. But that is not to say that the Dutch goodwill and cooperation was any less crucial for the United Kingdom. Britain gradually tightened its blockade, but not without the countless hours of manpower it had had to spend on the opprobrium in the newspapers, Parliament, and from other sections of government, or the tedious negotiations and delicate diplomatic interventions set up with the Netherlands.[182]

Until the US joined the war, Great-Britain and France had refrained from harsh economic blockades around neutral European states, with the Netherlands being the most likely target because of its location. The Allied Powers knew that such a step could drive the neutral nations into the German camp. The fewer goods the Allies allowed to enter the Netherlands, the more the Dutch would turn to their eastern neighbor for essential imports. But despite their efforts, a profitable trade developed

[180] NA, Archive Inventory Number: 2.05.18, Inventory number: 612, 1914-1918.
[181] Hubert P. van Tuyll, 'Dutch-American relations during World War I' 423-424.
[182] Isabel V. Hull, *A Scrap of Paper* 197-198.

between Germany and the neutral nations. The Allied powers frowned upon the development, even though the Dutch stood firm and said they had only done what could be expected of any neutral nation. When the US' role switched from neutral to Ally, diplomacy changed for Britain. Allied power now rose to an all-time high, making it able for Britain to be more demanding and less considerate of Dutch opposition.[183]

American intervention in the war further complicated Dutch neutrality. Not only did the United States declare a trade embargo against the neutral countries along Germany, it also demanded Dutch cooperation in troop transport. Pressure on Dutch commerce became severe. Ties to the Dutch East Indies weakened. There were no telegraph lines through neutral territory anymore and, supported by the US, Britain could now afford to be far less flexible. Dutch vessels on their way to Asia were regularly halted by British ships for inspection.[184] With the US-supported Entente demanding ever more, naturally so did the Germans. The Dutch stance had always been that no military activities could take place during the war that could be seen as partisan by the belligerents. But with the interference of the US, it became increasingly difficult to maintain this course. Britain exerted great pressure on the Netherlands to stop transports to Germany and German war zones. The Netherlands was effectively under blockade and would have to answer to demands of both belligerent parties that the other would never accept, all the while outright refusal of these demands could drag the small nation into the war.[185]

The Netherlands was not the only one in a tight spot. The Scandinavian countries also faced a difficult choice. The Norwegian prime minister admitted to a Dutch envoy in September 1917 that if the US threatened to stop the supply of food, Norway would cut off all trade with Germany, even if it meant war. For the Dutch this was a grave concern, given that Norway's yielding to American demands would only further weaken the Dutch position vis-à-vis the Allies. For the Netherlands, it was important to show solidarity with Denmark, Sweden and Norway so as not to be backed into a corner by either belligerent power.[186]

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[183] Kees van Dijk, *The Netherlands Indies and the Great War, 1914-1918 (Volume 254.0)* (Leiden, 2007) 354; Isabel V. Hull, *A Scrap of Paper* 197-198.
[184] Kees van Dijk, *The Netherlands Indies and the Great War* 356-359.
[185] Hubert P. van Tuyll, 'Dutch-American relations during World War I' 424; Susanne Wolf, *Guarded neutrality. Diplomacy and Internment in the Netherlands during the First World War* (Boston, 2013) 125; W. Klinkert and G. Teitler, 'Nederland van neutraliteit naar bondgenootschap' 17.
[186] NA, Archive Inventory Number: 2.05.18, Inventory number: 615, 1916-1918, file 125.

But remaining neutral seemed more difficult every day. At the eastern border, the cornered Germans put pressure on the Netherlands to repel the approaching closing offensive and help them avoid an impending defeat. On the other side, Britain demanded the cession of Dutch merchant vessels to the Entente powers to transfer troops and supplies to the front. The British pled that the ships' owners would not much mind these requests, as, due to the constant threat of German submarines, their ships remained idle in their ports anyway. Sailing within the allied convoy seemed like the best chance to still make a profit. However, the Dutch government kept refusing these demands, as they would inevitably lead to having to give in to compensating demands of the Central Powers.[187]

Threats to the Dutch shipping had started even before the United States had officially declared war on Germany. In February 1917, the British had informed the Dutch government that Dutch vessels were no longer allowed to leave British ports until previously agreed-upon food shipment targets were met. When the US joined the war, they also prevented Dutch vessels from leaving their ports before similar agreements were met. In May 1917, Britain seized Dutch-owned vessels sailing under the British flag. One month thereafter, Dutch-flag vessels owned by British citizens were seized. Although the June seizures were legally questionable, the ships being owned by British citizens made the situation sufficiently ambiguous for the Dutch to know better than to issue a major protest.[188]

With Russia out of the war due to the Revolution, the Allied leaders knew that Germany could now transfer a large number of troops to the western front. With the Allied troops being exhausted. The United States would have to haste itself with the deployment of troops after joining the war. The American General Pershing expressed his concerns on the 2nd of December, 1917, stating that he believed that if the United States did not come to the Allied relief in 1918, they might already lose the war before 1919.[189] Pershing emphasized the need for more troop shipments and insisted on strenuous efforts to secure extra tonnage. Allied powers also supplied extra ships, with British transports alone carrying a million American troops to France.[190]

[187] Hubert P. van Tuyll, 'Dutch-American relations during World War I' 424.
[188] Ibidem, 424-425.
[189] Charles Seymour, *Woodrow Wilson and the World War* 194.
[190] Ibidem, 194-195.

General Pershing's plea for more tonnage to transport necessary American troops to France ultimately led to a legal conflict between the Netherlands and the Allies. With the increasingly dire need for troop transports, the US eventually even seized over one hundred Dutch merchant ships in American and British ports.[191] On the 20th and 21st of March 1918, The United States and United Kingdom seized 135 Dutch vessels harboring in their ports at that moment, roughly a third of the Dutch merchant fleet. Vessels on their way to American and British ports could expect a similar fate. However, the Dutch were aware these seizures were at one point going to happen. Despite their legalistic arguments against the confiscation of Dutch merchant vessels, foreign minister Loudon and Prime Minister Cort van der Linden had come to terms with the fact that it was best to await a seizure of the merchant fleet, as opposed to conceding to the demands, which would have led to an undesired German reaction.[192]

The Dutch fear for German repercussions was exactly the reason why the United States felt it was in its right to seize the Dutch ships. Wilson saw the Allied cause as one that protected small nations and the international law. He had frequently claimed that principles and laws were the foundation for all of his actions during the war. According to him, it was in the Dutch's best interest to hand over their vessels to the Allied Powers. Otherwise, the Dutch vessels would be stuck uselessly in the ports anyway. The Dutch simply lacked the free will to make an agreement, Wilson argued, as they had to worry for German threats of sinking their fleet. Notably, this was the same argument that the British had previously used. The American president later added that according to 'the right of angary', an old maritime law, a sovereign may compel any vessel to engage in a public purpose, such as shipping troops and supplies.[193]

In spite of the fact that the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister had expected the seizure of the Dutch vessels, the general public in the Netherlands was outraged. Mainly because of losing the Dutch ships, but also because they found Wilson's argumentation highly hypocritical. Long had the American president been viewed as the torch bearer of international law and equality of nations, but his argumentation for

[191] Duco Hellema, *Neutraliteit & vrijhandel* 72-73.
[192] Hubert P. van Tuyll, 'Dutch-American relations during World War I' 425; 'Nederland en de Oorlog', *Het Nieuws van den Dag,* 23-03-1918; 'De inbeslagneming van onze schepen', *Leeuwarder Courant,* 22-03-1918.
[193] Hubert P. van Tuyll, 'Dutch-American relations during World War I' 425.

seizing the ships for nothing other than military benefit stood in vast contrast to this belief. The Dutch even called the confiscation "the most spectacular single act of force employed by the United States against the neutrals."[194] The anger directed towards Wilson also explains why the British were let of fairly easily by the Dutch, even though the British seized a similar number of ships and remained unpopular due to the Boer war.[195]

The Dutch government issued a powerful legal protest. It believed the actions of the United States to be in conflict with the traditional friendship between the two countries. Though Wilson later would admit he understood that het put the Netherlands in a difficult position, the protest seemed to have a very limited effect. The US State Department did start working to improve Dutch-American relations before the end of the war, but few US officials cared for the Dutch frustration. However, this was not necessarily the reason for the Dutch protest. The Netherlands had feared that Germany might see the seizure as a casus belli on which the Netherlands had refused to act. This would then be a reason for the Germans to demand further concessions or even to occupy the Netherlands. By condemning the Allied actions as hard as they possibly could without claiming a neutrality violation, the Dutch hoped to appease their eastern neighbors enough to not drag them into the war.[196]

The Germans, however, did indeed demand further concessions. They insisted that sand and gravel, meant for military purposes, would be shipped to Belgium through Dutch territory and that the Germans could make use of the Dutch railway system in the southern province of Limburg. In reality, these demands were not made in response to the seizure of Dutch ships, but were in fact made on the same day. The confiscation of Dutch merchant vessels simply made it even harder for the Netherlands to refuse the German demands. German army commander Erich Ludendorff became less flexible this time and even moved some German troops to the Dutch border as a prelude to invasion. The Netherlands was then left with little choice and gave in to the German requests. To these concessions, the United States and its allies did not protest, as they knew that taking a hard stance would surely mean war in the Netherlands. As no Allied troops were available to assist the Dutch if it would come to

[194] Hubert P. van Tuyll, 'Dutch-American relations during World War I' 425.
[195] Ibidem, 425.
[196] Ibidem, 425-426; NA, Archive Inventory Number: 2.05.18, Inventory number: 642, Draft Dutch proposal to open peace negotiations, 1918.

an invasion, the Allied chose to look the other way. In this instance, the Dutch were lucky that Wilson was able to step down from his strictly legally principled stance.[197]

When the German position in the war declined during the summer and fall of 1918, the Dutch relationship to the US and its allies changed again. The Netherlands no longer had to appease two fronts, but this also had its adverse consequences. No longer could the Allied demands be countered with the arguments of putative reactions from the other side. The Dutch, distracted by the threat of domestic revolution,[198] let near 80.000 unarmed German soldiers retreat home through Limburg and granted the German emperor Wilhelm II asylum in the Netherlands. These actions put a strain on the new relationship with the Allied powers. Granting passage to the German soldiers was met with adversity and led to numerous demands. Sheltering the Kaiser, however, got the small nation in less trouble, as president Wilson, unlike his allies, had opposed to demanding the extradition of Wilhelm II.[199]

Safeguarding the Dutch East Indies

The war had put pressure on the link between the Netherlands and the Dutch Indies. Not only were the shipping routes hindered with warzones, but blockades and the seizure of ships also hindered communication between the motherland and the colony.[200] The Germans, using the Indo-German community had hoped to weaken the British, by riling up a rebellion in India, making Great-Britain in need to shift their attention. The British were aware of the plan, however, and used their control of the seas to stop and search ships sailing from or toward India, including the Dutch ships sailing the archipelago. They were not looking for contraband, as was the case for the blockade in Europe, but rather in search of passengers of German descent or German letters. Dutch ships frequently had to hand over their carrying mail. This matter worsened when the United States declared war in April, 1917. Not only did the Allied power grow with the American addition, the British feared that, with the US in their camp, the Dutch Indies might become an important base for Indo-German subversion in Asia. The fear of the Dutch Indies becoming the central hub of the Indo-German plot inspired the British to decree mid 1917 that Dutch ships were no longer allowed to

[197] Hubert P. van Tuyll, 'Dutch-American relations during World War I' 426.
[198] Ron Blom, 'Neutral Netherlands' 387-390.
[199] Hubert P. van Tuyll, 'Dutch-American relations during World War I' 426-427.
[200] Kees van Dijk, *The Netherlands Indies and the Great War* 425.

carry ordinary letters and parcel post. Official and commercial correspondence remained fine, as long as special permission had been granted. Normal correspondence could only be sent by British or French mail.[201]

With communications under strain, the Netherlands struggled to safeguard their colonies. The war had made the Dutch realize that its dependence on trade could be a dangerous liability. So was the case for the Dutch Indies, that was heavily dependent on imports. Efforts were made to increase the economic independence of the Dutch Indies. Its defense could not rest upon military force, so it had to increase its economic strength as well to be able to withstand foreign threats. New industries like a chemical industry and the production of matchsticks were tried, but none really took off. Mostly because the Netherlands did not want their colony to become too independent of the motherland and businessmen were hesitant to invest capital in the development of industry in the colony or to share knowledge for this purpose. [202]

Meanwhile, the Dutch had watched the American handling of the Philippines with great admiration. Their construction of new roads and better sewers as well as improving healthcare and the educational system had significantly improved the quality of life for the Filipinos. This had always been the US' plan for their colony in Asia, as President Taft justified America's colonial presence in Southeast Asia as being dedicated to the welfare of the Filipino people. "We are the guardians" he had said. Not for the purpose of improving the interests and social position of the Filipino elite, but rather for "protecting the rights of the ignorant and uneducated who do not know their rights."[203]

The Dutch had done a comparative study of educational systems in the Philippines and the Dutch East Indies and concluded that American efforts were grounded in a curriculum that cultivated personal aptitude and fostered popular autonomy. This approach was based on the belief that it was the American duty as a colonial power to prepare Filipinos for their own "self-government". This is in line with the US Government's efforts to, in contrary to the Netherlands and other colonial powers, downplay its official role as imperial power. The US, for instance, had not created a department for their colonial rule in their bureaucratic structure. Instead,

[201] Kees van Dijk, *The Netherlands Indies and the Great War* 403-408.
[202] Ibidem, 396-401.
[203] Frances Gouda en Thijs Brocades Zaalberg, *American Visions of the Netherlands East Indies/Indonesia* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press 2002) 70-71.

President McKinley had created the Bureau of Insular Affairs, which was part of the War Department. The most important difference between the Netherlands and the US, however, was that at no time did the American colonial possession represent either a real benefit or a genuine threat to the lifeblood of the American nation.[204]

Struggling to find a way to protect themselves and the Dutch Indies, the Dutch found themselves in a complicated situation in regards to their relationship with the colony. Though the seizure of their ships was a thorn in the Dutch government's side, they weren't entirely free of committing the same crime. The Dutch Minister of Agriculture, Industry and Trade, F.E. Posthuma had made a name for himself as 'the big ships requisitioner'. Posthuma requisitioned thousands of tonnages of ships each month from Dutch sailing companies to transport food to the Netherlands. Posthuma claimed the massive drops of available tonnage for colonial trade was due to the disappearance of German freight trade, the seizure of ships by the British and the longer voyages around Scotland and The Cape, to avoid naval warzones. Nevertheless, Posthuma's actions were said to have brought the Dutch Indies to the brink of a crash. [205]

At first, Posthuma had only requisitioned freighter ships from companies sailing from Dutch ports, but from 1917, he started targeting the ships sailing the Dutch Indies Archipelago as well, much to the disliking of commercial communities in the colony. They found the requisitioning of their ships to be excessive and feared it would seriously endanger the native population if a maximum volume of tonnage that could be requisitioned for the shipping of food to the Netherlands could not be fixed.[206]

At the end of July, 1917, which was only a few months after the Dutch ships were seized in American and British ports, a petition was drawn up by different parties of interest in the Dutch Indies, which spoke of serious concerns for the future of the colony if the interests of the colonial empire kept being sacrificed for the interests of the motherland. The petitioners argued that, if export and production of colonial wares came to a halt, native exporters would suffer and hundreds of thousands of laborers would lose their income. In other parts of the Dutch Indies similar petitions were drawn

[204] Frances Gouda en Thijs Brocades Zaalberg, *American Visions of the Netherlands East Indies/Indonesia* 70-71.
[205] Kees van Dijk, *The Netherlands Indies and the Great War* 416-419.
[206] Ibidem, 416-419.

up and within the Netherland, a total of 196 trading firms and estate companies protested Posthuma's requisitions.[207]

It is thus evident that America's determination to uphold the rights of neutrals was one of the main reasons for the nation to join the war. Though legislature was passed to aid American companies to dominate the global markets at the same time when the US intervened, Wilson maintained that the US had no selfish interests in the war. American intervention did put a strain on Dutch neutrality as their position to not aid either of the belligerents became more complicated with the Allies rising in power. This also endangered the Dutch colonies, which were affected by unilateral decisions to protect the motherland, all the while communication was strained. The US did not face similar problems as their relationship to their 'colony' was entirely different. They were never dependent on the Philippines, as such was the case for the Netherlands and the Dutch East Indies.

A new global order

In this final chapter, I look at Dutch-American relations after the Great War. It will be made clear that both nations counted on one another's support to reach their goals after the war. Both nations changed their policy for international relations, but experienced doubts and troubles in doing so. This chapter also focuses heavily on Wilson's League of Nations, which was created to change the diplomatic global order. Both the United States, as its architect, as the Netherlands, as a 'smaller' member, played significant roles in structuring the supranational organization.

By the summer of 1918, the outcome of the war seemed assured. Knowing the American intervention in the war would almost certainly mean a German defeat, President Wilson began protecting the international community against the threats of an Allied victory before the war had even ended. With an Entente-victory inevitable, Wilson understood that the Allies were now becoming the greatest threat to his beloved global community. In his 14 Points-address to congress on January 8th, 1918, Wilson tried to get ahead of the curve by calling for the removal of international economic barriers and the establishment of equal trade conditions for all nations in service of peace and equality in point 3. This point was largely directed at America's allies who

[207] Kees van Dijk, *The Netherlands Indies and the Great War* 419-420.

had previously decided that they would implement a tariff system to protect their own markets while economically punishing the Central Powers after the war.[208] Wilson argued that discriminatory trade agreements had shown to lead to antagonism and war. Nations who thought themselves denied of legitimate trade opportunities would resort to armament and violence as a technique to acquire a chance on the market. Therefore, disarmament wasn't the sole solution for Wilson and his followers. Getting rid of weapons would be treating the symptoms, but not the disease. If the US wanted to treat the true cause of war, it would have to advocate for an open-door economy.[209]

The Allies were not planning on giving up their advantageous market position so easily. Through the painstakingly hopeless years of warfare the belligerents of the Great War had come to be interested only in a total victory over the other. A victory that would be one of national humiliation, annexations and crushing reparations. The Central Powers had to pay.[210] The United States on the other hand had certainly not been in favor of total victory. In January, 1917, President Wilson had addressed the Senate, claiming that "peace forced upon the loser, a victor's terms imposed upon the vanquished would be accepted in humiliation."[211] He believed that the humiliation of the defeated party would jeopardize the following peace. It "would leave a sting, a resentment, a bitter memory upon which terms of peace would rest, as upon quicksand."[212] Though the US believed German militarism had to be destroyed, its main goal was to create a peace through a community of power. A League of Nations would preside over peace and would mobilize the conscience and power of mankind against aggression.[213]

The founding of the League of Nations was the most important objective for Wilson during the Paris Peace Conference. Only after planning for the League was underway, did he shift focus to the settlements with the Central Powers. He also wanted the covenant of the League to be included in every peace treaty. His League was meant to protect smaller states against the behaviors of great powers. Furthermore, it was seen as the only mechanism which could make the US constitute

[208] Melvyn Leffler, *Safeguarding Democratic Capitalism* 33; Carl P. Parrini, *Heir to empire* 12-13.
[209] Carl P. Parrini, *Heir to empire* 12-13; Ashley Cox, 'A man for all seasons' 393.
[210] George F. Kennan, *American diplomacy 1900-1950* 60-63.
[211] Ibidem, 66.
[212] Ibidem, 66-67.
[213] Ibidem, 67; Robert E. Hannigan, *The Great War and American Foreign Policy, 1914-24* (Philadelphia, 2016) 155.

a factor in international relations in the Eastern hemisphere, as the Monroe Doctrine had ruled out any alternative.[214]

After the Great War, diplomatic relations had changed dramatically. There was a massive public outcry for peace and an international political culture was founded, which focused on sharing ideas, assumptions and practices of interstate relations.[215] The United States expected to exercise considerable leverage over the proceedings at the Paris Peace Conference. They had shown incredible economic and military might since 1917 and most of its allies were in debt to the US and still hoped for financial aid after the war. President Wilson had also gained international popularity as a consequence of his Fourteen Points Address, reflecting the international cry for peace.[216]

Strengthening their influence in Europe, the US had set up a relief program to provide food for the struggling European countries right after the war. This relief program aided the American interests in multiple ways. Firstly, in countered the chance of revolutions due to famine and public unrest. Secondly, it gave the US extra political influence, as provision and denial of food could be used as leverage to pressure the recipient nations. And Thirdly, it also provided the US with an opportunity to relieve its agriculture of towering end-of-the-war surpluses.[217] The relief brought massive popularity to President Wilson among the European people and had its desired effect; American influence in Europe grew to exceed that of Britain and France and put them in a great position to head into the peace talks. For instance, Wilson got France to drop their demand for steep reparation payments from Germany by threatening to halt the American financial aid.[218]

Yet, Britain and France did not want to play second fiddle. They knew Wilson's position was strong, but also that he would have no alternative strategy if the Allied Powers were to oppose his plans. Wilson's Democratic Party had lost the majority in the Senate and the House in November 1918, which meant that Britain and France

[214] Robert E. Hannigan, *The Great War and American Foreign Policy, 1914-24* 156-158.
[215] Michael Riemens, 'The Netherlands, the United States, and the international political culture', in: Hans Krabbendam, Cornelis A. van Minnen and Giles Scott-Smith (eds.), *Four centuries of Dutch-American Relations 1609-2009* (Middelburg, 2009) 531-541, 531.
[216] Robert E. Hannigan, *The Great War and American Foreign Policy, 1914-24* 155; Melvyn Leffler, *Safeguarding Democratic Capitalism* 33.
[217] Frank Costigliola, *Awkward dominion* 15-19; Robert E. Hannigan, *The Great War and American Foreign Policy, 1914-24* 158.
[218] Robert E. Hannigan, *The Great War and American Foreign Policy, 1914-24* 158; NA, Archive Inventory Number: 2.05.18, Inventory number: 639, Treaty of Versailles, 1919.

also had stronger legislative majorities in their governments and would have less trouble ratifying the peace treaties.[219]

Tensions rose between the US, Britain and France after they had won the war. France felt that Wilson underestimated the role their country had played in defeating the Germans and overestimated what safety and peace a supranational organization could provide. Britain was frightful it would lose its dominion at sea.[220] The US and Britain both expected a heightened trade rivalry and competition for oil and the US now possessed a merchant fleet that could oppose that of the British. Meanwhile, the US also suspected that Britain would not honor the open trade agreements and would seek to expand the territory of its empire. The US therefore frequently partnered with one nation to force its will upon the other. Wilson had worked with French leader Clemenceau to get his Fourteen Points accepted by Britain, but had to turn to British Prime Minister Lloyd George to convince France of the need to prioritize the founding of the League of Nations and to allow Germany to become a member in the future.[221]

Because of the rising tensions among the victors of the war, finding any form of structure in the Paris Peace Conference seemed impossible. The Council of Ten, consisting of the political leaders of the United States, Great Britain, France, Italy and Japan and their foreign ministers served as the supreme authority at the Conference. The key idea was to have the great powers dominate the peace talks. Nations of lesser stature would be offered an opportunity to make presentations to the Council on issues of importance to them. They were allowed to participate in occasional plenary sessions and at the very highest, they could be enlisted in the work of committees, dominated by the great powers. There were seventeen committees and 41 subcommittees which together held over 1600 meetings during this short period of time.[222] From March, 1919, American President Wilson and his colleagues from Britain, France and Italy withdrew from the outside world, due to Wilson's obsession with secrecy during the peace talks. They became known as the Council of Four, which later became three when Italian Prime Minister Vittorio Orlando walked out. Due to the many subjects of

[219] Robert E. Hannigan, *The Great War and American Foreign Policy* 159.
[220] Ashley Dodsworth, ''Freedom of the seas': Woodrow Wilson and natural resources', *Journal of transatlantic studies* 16 (2018) 408–421, 411; Robert E. Hannigan, *The Great War and American Foreign Policy,* 159-160.
[221] Robert E. Hannigan, *The Great War and American Foreign Policy, 1914-24* 159-160; NA, Archive Inventory Number: 2.05.18, Inventory number: 639, Treaty of Versailles, 1919.
[222] Michael Riemens, 'The Netherlands, the United States, and the international political culture' 533; Robert E. Hannigan, *The Great War and American Foreign Policy, 1914-24* 161.

discussion and the secrecy, the proceedings of the many committees were informal and chaotic.[223]

By wish of President Wilson, the first part of the all peace treaties was formed by the covenant to establish the League of Nations.[224] The League was necessary to guard the international peace. It was to be an association of sovereign states that pledged themselves not to go to war before submitting their disputes to arbitration or inquiry, making it very similar to William Jennings Bryan's plan for the Advancement of the General Peace.[225] Its organization included a Council, an Assembly and a Secretariat. Multiple smaller committees would be formed to investigate and advise in specific disputes and international issues.[226]

Control of the League was to be in the hands of the Executive Council, which at first was to be composed of only major powers. Britain and France had tried to mollify the 'smaller' states, by giving them only symbolical representation. Naturally, this first draft of the League's organization was challenged by these weaker nations. Brazil argued the League would become a tribunal for the five major Allied Powers, to pass judgement on the rest of the world. Belgium made the case that smaller nations should have an equal amount of chairs in the Council. Wilson, who had previously resisted France and Britain's plan, eventually handed the smaller nations four seats on a rotating basis. The smaller nations would be selected by the members of the League. The five major powers would take five seats on a permanent basis.[227]

The official covenant of the League of Nations of February 14th, 1919 provided three certainties over the League's organization. First, the League would have a body of delegates that would meet on a regular basis and within which all members would have one vote. Second, the League would be directed by an Executive Council, composed of the five major power allies during the war and four rotating smaller nations to be selected by the body of delegates. Third, a permanent administrative Secretariat would be formed, which would be led by the Secretary-General that was to be chosen by the Executive Council. Additional nations might be added to the League if two-thirds of the body of delegates voted in favor of it. These new nations had to be self-governing

[223] Michael Riemens, 'The Netherlands, the United States, and the international political culture' 533.
[224] Robert E. Hannigan, *The Great War and American Foreign Policy, 1914-24* 156.
[225] Michael Riemens, 'The Netherlands, the United States, and the international political culture' 533-534; William Jennings Bryan and James Brown Scott, *Treaties for the advancement of peace between the United States and other powers negotiated by the honorable William J. Bryan, secretary of state of the United States*.
[226] Michael Riemens, 'The Netherlands, the United States, and the international political culture' 534.
[227] Robert E. Hannigan, *The Great War and American Foreign Policy, 1914-24* 163-164.

and be able to guarantee their international obligations. As to what extent these obligations went, depended on the military and naval might of these nations.[228]

US to the rescue

While frictions lingered after the war, they did not massively impact Dutch-American relations. There was a limited showing of anti-Dutch attitudes in the US due to the asylum granted to the Kaiser and republications of the story that the Netherlands had abandoned their defense of Limburg. Neither truly had any impact as the latter was proven false and the former was not really important, as Wilson did not favor extradition. As war hysteria in the US declined, it also became less important to Americans whether or not a country had at one point aided the Central Powers or not. The Dutch and Americans also found common ground in their shared interests for international law and organization, as well as their concern for the future balance of power in the Pacific.[229]

But tensions with other Allied Powers ran high. The Dutch knew chances were high that the frictions with the Allies at the end of the war would lead to serious concessions during the peace talks. The Netherlands having allowed German soldiers to retreat through Dutch territory, harboring Kaiser Wilhelm II and maintaining a profitable trade agreement with Germany during the war had to expect little sympathy from the attending diplomats.[230] To improve the ant-Dutch sentiment, the Netherlands made use of their *Association to Spread Knowledge of the Netherlands Abroad*, established before the war to make attempts to counter inaccurate and unpleasant reflections on the Netherlands in the foreign press.[231]

Belgium, which had suffered badly during the war, laid claim to the southern provinces of the Netherlands and the Allies, including some US diplomats, appeared friendly to the idea.[232] Belgium wanted to annex Zeeuws-Vlaanderen and Southern Limburg, as well as receive control over the Scheldt river to Antwerp. Belgian

[228] Robert E. Hannigan, *The Great War and American Foreign Policy* 167.
[229] Hubert P. van Tuyll, 'Dutch-American relations during World War I' 428-429.
[230] Michael Riemens, 'The Netherlands, the United States, and the international political culture' 534; Hubert P. van Tuyll, 'Dutch-American relations during World War I' 427; NA, Archive Inventory Number: 2.05.18, Inventory number: 656, Papers relating to the request by the Entente powers to the Netherlands for the extradition of former Emperor Wilhelm II of Germany and the Dutch response to it.
[231] Hubert P. van Tuyll, 'Dutch-American relations during World War I' 427; NA, Archive Inventory Number: 2.05.18, Inventory number: 612, 1914-1918.
[232] Hubert P. van Tuyll, 'Dutch-American relations during World War I' 427; NA, Archive Inventory Number: 2.05.18, Inventory number: 646, 1921-1922.

nationalist said these parts had been lost to them during the agreements of 1839, when Belgium and the Netherlands definitively separated after having been joined together in 1815 to form the United Kingdom of the Netherlands. The Belgian nationalists used strategic, economic and historic arguments to make their case, but knew it would be up to the major powers to decide their future. However, they could be optimistic, as many Allied Powers thought the Netherlands had aided the German cause throughout their neutrality.[233]

Dutch-Belgian relations were not exactly warm at the end of the war. In the panic of the German invasion, little was known in Belgium about Dutch attitudes toward the Germans. The Belgian press reported several times of Dutch cooperation with Germany. In the Netherlands, for example, the Germans were said to have crossed the Meuse River and pushed-back German troops were said to have traveled back to Aachen via Limburg to regroup. The Belgian people had responded to this with much anger toward the Netherlands.[234]

The Confusion of the Belgians was reasonably understandable. The Belgian government had long maintained that the fortifications of Liege had had fended off the Germans' attacks. When the Germans suddenly moved right through Belgium anyway, it seemed only explained by Dutch cooperation. In reality, the fortifications near Liege had quickly fallen into German hands and the Germans were advancing rapidly. Still, because of the ever-growing anti-Dutch sentiment in Belgium due to erroneous reporting, by 1914 people were already worried about Belgian reprisals against the Dutch when the war would end.[235]

The Belgian sentiment against the Netherlands did improve later in the war. The Dutch emergency aid and reception of Belgian refugees had not gone completely unnoticed. Consequently, by the time of the armistice, Belgian-Dutch relations had straightened out somewhat, but soon after that they soured again. French newspapers that could once again be published in Belgium weren't friendly toward the Netherlands, and returning Belgian soldiers who had been crushed by the Germans at the beginning of the war did not have a good word to say about the Netherlands. In addition, the

[233] Michael Riemens, 'The Netherlands, the United States, and the international political culture' 534; Hubert P. van Tuyll, 'Dutch-American relations during World War I' 427-428.
[234] NA, Archive Inventory Number: 2.05.18, Inventory number: 651, Messages from the Supreme Commander of the Army and Navy, the mood in Belgium against the Netherlands, passage of German troops through Limburg, protection of Dutch interests in Brussels, 1914-1918.
[235] Ibidem.

granting of asylum to the German Emperor and of passage to the retreating German troops, this time for real, was blamed heavily on the Dutch. Belgians who had fled to the Netherlands during the war also spoke of the poor conditions in which they were received. Those who had crossed the border while others died at the front did wanted to save face and therefore often told wild stories about the miserable conditions in which they had had to live in the Netherlands. Such reporting was grist to the mill for annexionists in Belgium. [236]

During and after the war, the Netherlands also made several attempts to prevent anti-Dutch reporting in Belgian newspapers. More positive reports on the Dutch reception of refugees were printed and distributed in French, and lists were even kept of newspapers and how they wrote about the Netherlands. The Netherlands also undertook attempts to influence the Belgian press. In November 1918, the Dutch envoy to Belgium wrote to the Minister of Foreig Affairs, van Karnebeek, that a new major newspaper had been established in Belgium, *La Patrie Belge*, which had been made entirely available for Dutch coverage. In it he wanted to place more articles about the actions the Netherlands had taken during the war for the benefit of Belgium and France. More Belgian newspapers were recruited on the Dutch side. Representatives of the Netherlands in Belgium also repeatedly requested the ministry to release budget to impact Belgian coverage. [237]

Due to these efforts, their greater experience in international affairs and van Karnebeek's thorough preparation, the Dutch diplomats succeeded in convincing President Wilson and Robert Lansing to protect their national sovereignty and international servitude.[238] Wilsons's support, for a large part, rested upon the Dutch sympathy for his idea of a new international order. The Dutch and the Americans shared similar long-term perspectives on the matter and the Dutch used these similarities to their advantage. By advocating for Wilson's League they could protect their own interests. One example being the talks about the future of the Scheldt river. The river was Antwerp's lifeline, but had proven compromised by the Dutch fortifications of Vlissingen. The Dutch proposed to refer the matter to the League of

[236] NA, Archive Inventory Number: 2.05.18, Inventory number: 651, Messages from the Supreme Commander of the Army and Navy, the mood in Belgium against the Netherlands, passage of German troops through Limburg, protection of Dutch interests in Brussels, 1914-1918.
[237] Ibidem.
[238] Michael Riemens, 'The Netherlands, the United States, and the international political culture' 534; Hubert P. van Tuyll, 'Dutch-American relations during World War I' 427-428.

Nations. By using the new global focus on peace and illustrating a clear example of what the League could do for international disputes, they made a calculated appeal to the Americans to protect their own interests in the river.[239]

To prevent the annexation of Limburg, they again emphasized their interest in the League. On the question of Limburg the delegations of the five major powers in Paris considered a military arrangement with Belgium necessary. However, the Dutch delegation replied that, on the eve of the League of Nations, a military arrangement in general could not be ruled out for the Netherlands, but that a military arrangement with Belgium was now completely out of the question, because of the hostile policy Belgium had been pursuing for nine months.[240]

The battle against Belgium's demands was not only fought in Paris. On October 2, 1919, the Dutch envoy in Washington, Cremer, wrote to the Dutch Foreign Minister, Van Karnebeek, "We are in the midst of Belgian propaganda here. (...) The Belgian press office has been busily working and generously spreading all kinds of incorrect reports."[241] Cremer had subsequently set up a Dutch press agency, as the Dutch delegates in the US were not yet convinced that their country would emerge unscathed from the peace talks. Cremer, however, felt confident in his Minister of Foreign Affairs, writing: "Fortunately, it appears to me from your numerical telegram that the Scheldt question is actually already resolved and that of Limburg the solution is near. This is a wonderful result and a proof that honesty has not yet disappeared. Yet we shall not slacken here, for the Belgians are perseveres, as they showed between 1830 and 1839."[242]

His confidence was not misplaced. Following up on his success during the peace conference in Paris, Van Karnebeek went on to defend Dutch interests elsewhere. At the Conference on the Limitation of Armaments, held in Washington between November 1921 and February 1922, he secured vital international agreements for the Netherlands. With the Nine Power Treaty, the US, England, France, Japan, Italy, Belgium, Portugal China and the Netherlands did not only guarantee the independence and territorial integrity of China, but they also proclaimed the much

[239] Michael Riemens, 'The Netherlands, the United States, and the international political culture' 534; Hubert P. van Tuyll, 'Dutch-American relations during World War I' 427.
[240] J. Woltring, *Documenten betreffende de buitenlandse politiek van Nederland, 1919-1945. 1919-1930. Periode A : Dl. I: 1 juli 1919 - 1 juli 1920* 236-237.
[241] Ibidem, 238.
[242] Ibidem, 238.

sought after Open Door Policy. Van Karnebeek also got the great powers to reaffirm and reinforce the Dutch colonial position in Asia, without making any demands in return. This was a major victory for the Netherlands in international diplomacy, as any fear of losing their economically vital colonies had now been taken away.[243]

However, the Dutch never really had anything to fear concerning Wilson's stance on colonies. His plea for self-determination for all peoples only applied to peoples of British, Dutch, or generally white descent. Wilson was by no means anticolonial. Many people in Africa and Asia were not independent and Wilson did not feel the need for this to change. Only the territories formerly occupied by the Central Powers were to be 'liberated'. But liberated in his sense meant that they were to be controlled by other western nations. He found that these peoples should first be taught how to behave properly. Until they could behave like a civilization, they were to remain under 'tutelage' of outsiders.[244]

Yet, the US acknowledged that colonialism brought with it great dangers to the international market. The policies implemented in the colonies were the result of unilateral decisions made by the motherland, making it near impossible for colonized nations to develop properly. But it was also dangerous among the western nations themselves, as it was the ultimate politicization of the competition by western nations for markets and influence in the underdeveloped world. For other nations it would, as such, constitute an obstacle to participation in those regions. Colonialism would therefore also entail the prospect of future conflicts over these territories, which carried the risk of friction, instability and undesirable reconfigurations of power.[245]

Wilson sought to counter these problems arising in the lands being taken from Germany and the Ottomans by creating a mandate system. On the one hand, this system would stabilize the reconstruction of the international order by providing supervision for those peoples too 'incapable' or 'irresponsible' for real independence. On the other, by depoliticizing these territories, it would also work toward such stabilization. It would reduce friction, caused by greed over trade and territorial possession. This, he feared, would otherwise lead to new wars or the exclusion of American economic access in the region. Instead of being 'reconquered' by various Allied powers, Wilson wanted Central Power territories unready for independence to

[243] Michael Riemens, 'The Netherlands, the United States, and the international political culture' 534-536.
[244] Robert E. Hannigan, *The Great War and American Foreign Policy, 1914-24* 166-171.
[245] Ibidem, 171-172.

legally be turned over to the League. There, they could be supervised by the League's committees.[246] Article 22 of the League of Nations therefore contained a provision for the establishment of a permanent committee to examine the reports and mandates for the former German colonies and lands belonging to the Turkish Empire before the war. The main task of the commission was to oversee compliance and regulations mentioned in Article 22 regarding the equal treatment of trade and movement of goods from and through Central Africa for all members of the League.[247]

A note taken from the Dutch Foreign Affairs file on the League of Nations, stated that it was important that the Netherlands, if it were to join the League of Nations, should become part of that committee. The note identified three arguments for this. First, because the Netherlands had trade interests in maintaining the open-door policy in Central Africa. Second, because European policy in Africa would in all likelihood influence that in Asia. And finally, because it was in the Netherlands' interest to participate as actively as possible in working out the statute of the League of Nations, because it could thereby exert more influence than would otherwise be the case, given its size and population.[248]

Because the Netherlands had had troublesome contact with its colonies during the war and had put the motherland at the forefront of its policy, it was of added importance to the Dutch government that the Netherlands should have a say in how the Mandates Committee would proceed. On October 30, 1919, Minister of Colonies, Ruys de Beerenbrouck, wrote to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Van Karnebeek: “I would consider it inadvisable to create a mood among one or more of the great powers which would lead us to unwelcome criticism of our colonial policy. Although that policy undoubtedly stands the test of impartial criticism and comparison with other countries, a hostile evaluator could easily point out a number of in itself unsatisfactory situations which could give our policy a bad impression.”[249] Ruys de Beerenbrouck therefore felt that the possible Dutch representative on the Mandates Committee of Article 22 of the League of Nations Treaty should have his attitude determined above all by the idea

[246] Robert E. Hannigan, *The Great War and American Foreign Policy, 1914-24* 172.
[247] J. Woltring, *Documenten betreffende de buitenlandse politiek van Nederland, 1919-1945. 1919-1930. Periode A : Dl. I: 1 juli 1919 - 1 juli 1920* 196-197.
[248] Ibidem, 196-197.
[249] Ibidem, 274-275.

that the committee was not created to criticize, but only to function as a mutual consultative body for the exchange of data and results.[250]

Again, the Dutch needn't worry about the United States' stance on the Dutch colonial policies. US diplomats posted on the islands of the Dutch Indies Archipelagos held Dutch colonial society in high esteem. It was a steady pool of income and very profitable for foreign investors. The US diplomats knew that the loss of colonial possessions might lead to the political ruin of the Netherlands. Yet, they did not see any concerns among the Dutch. Even when nationalist agitation grew in British India during the 1920's, the Dutch kept their cool. The Dutch believed they governed their colonies with more wisdom and vigor than the British or French. The Americans noticed, after studying the Dutch colonies, that the Dutch indeed had their own way of colonial rule. The Dutch were purely interested in financial profit. Therefore, they had made serious efforts to improve native welfare. But more importantly, they had not bothered to interfere with native traditions or superstitions. The Americans found that the toleration of some features of the colonial subjects was distasteful to any progressive, liberty-loving society, but had to admit that the Dutch way came with a minimal expenditure of blood and treasure.[251]

The operative words to describe the Dutch in Asia were Intelligence, paternalism and thoroughness. Few Americans disagreed with their diplomats' assessments of Dutch colonial policies. But they also did not give much thought towards it. They weren't yet too concerned with the strategic importance of the Indonesian archipelago, nor the military aggression of Japan. However, there were those who thought that the American appraisals of Dutch policies were only such to please Dutch civil servants and businessmen. Dutch socialists and Indonesian nationalists believed the US only used these characterizations to stay in the Dutch East Indies government's good graces in order to safeguard their interests of oil, rubber and tobacco in Asia.[252]

These interests were of great importance. American imports amounted to 167 million dollars in 1920, while their exports to the Dutch East Indies reached near 60 million dollars. In the later years of the 1920's, trade between the US and the Dutch colonies rose even further. In 1924 several American companies managed plantations in the archipelagos and furnished almost 20% of its rubber production. 45% of all

[250] Ibidem, 274-275.
[251] Frances Gouda, 'American diplomatic perspectives on the Dutch East Indies' 522-523.
[252] Ibidem, 523-524.

rubber produced on the east coast of Sumatra was shipped to the United States to maintain flourishing automobile industry of Detroit. Only British Malaya supplied more rubber to the international market than the Dutch East Indies. These trade figures undoubtedly influenced the attitudes of American diplomats in the archipelago, tasked with securing American political and economic interests.[253]

The Americans saw a vast difference between the Dutch East Indies, which was essential to the life and prosperity of the Netherlands, and the American possession of the Philippines, which they felt they had acquired by chance.[254] The US public believed their intervention in the Southeast Asian string of Islands was part of the American mission. This sense of mission also helps explain the difference in how both countries dealt with their colonies in Asia. The Dutch used their Indonesian islands as a cash cow, while the Americans spent, proportionally, almost three times the amount on investments in infrastructure, education and social work in the Filipino nation, making it a financial drain.[255]

In 1916, the American Congress had passed the Jones-act, which stated that the Philippines should receive its independence as soon as it could form its own stable government. In doing so, they accepted the ephemeral possession of the colony and therefore received loyalty and cooperation from the Filipino people. In reality, however, the US was likely just as interested in turning their colony into a profitable possession. Their blueprint for Filipino independence was likely a precocious move for if the Philippines would remain an economic burden.[256]

Broken dreams

However much the Dutch relied on American support, American involvement in the League of Nations would quickly prove overrated. The League of Nations first saw life on January 10, 1920 when the Treaty of Versailles came into effect. Its birth, however, coincided with the devastating news that that the US Senate would not ratify the treaty and thus would not join the League of Nations, of which Woodrow Wilson had been a key architect.[257] The founding of the League of Nations was one of Wilson's main

[253] Frances Gouda, 'American diplomatic perspectives on the Dutch East Indies' 524.
[254] Ibidem, 521; Edward P. Crapol, 'Coming to Terms with Empire: The Historiography of Late-Nineteenth-Century American Foreign Relations', *Diplomatic History* 16:4 (1992) 573-597, 587-590.
[255] Frances Gouda, 'American diplomatic perspectives on the Dutch East Indies' 521.
[256] Ibidem, 522.
[257] Michael Riemens, 'The Netherlands, the United States, and the international political culture' 536.

reasons for entering the war, but it wasn't so for many other Americans. There was a shared conviction that the United States needed to go to war for the sake of its principles and the international law, but Wilson's idea that American rights were bound up with the rights of all mankind was less common. The American Congress reflected better the general public's attitude toward intervention. On the floor of Congress, Nineteen Senators spoke for the war resolution, but no more than seven mentioned Wilson's international peace organization as a reason for fighting. The vast majority saw intervention primarily as a means to undo violations of American rights at sea, although some others also based their position on the broader ground of sacred democracy versus the German autocracy.[258]

As the end of the war approached, nationalist and internationalist groups in the United States found themselves at odds. Wilson had made clear that he thought the founding of an international organization would be essential for the preservation of the peace settlement. However, nationalists like Senator Lodge of the Republican party argued that Germany's unconditional surrender was far more important to enforce peace. But even with the nationalists skeptical of the League, very few dared to denounce the idea absolutely. Some considered the League might be useful, provided that it could not in any way interfere with national interests.[259]

The covenant of the League of Nations was to be a part of the peace treaty with Germany and thus it had to be incorporated into the Treaty of Versailles. However, to make the treaty acceptable to the allies, President Wilson had to abandon the principle of self-determination that he had advocated in his Fourteen Points speech of January 1918. Britain, France and Italy, the Allied victors, were colonial powers. Naturally, they were highly skeptical of Wilson's plan for self-determination. Their conservative stance on self-determination turned Progressive Republicans in the US against the treaty, while other Republicans, who supported a unilateral or nationalist foreign policy stance, had issues with the commitment to a multilateral supranational organization. The treaty thus became controversial in the US Senate.[260]

The most controversial section of the treaty was article 10 of the Covenant of the League of Nations. Article 10 stated that all members of the League had to come

[258] Robert E. Osgood, *Ideals and self-interest in America's foreign relations* 256-259
[259] Ibidem, 281-282.
[260] Gyung-Ho Jeong, 'The supermajority core of the US Senate and the failure to join the League of Nations', *Public choice* 173 (2017) 325–343, 328; Michael Riemens, 'The Netherlands, the United States, and the international political culture' 533.

to aid if one member would fall victim to external aggression. Wilson's initial draft had been even more radical, as he had hoped for the League to not only guarantee political independence of all nations, but to be given broad powers to 'redraw borders and readjust sovereignties in the future, whenever and wherever they fell short of meeting a list of broad criteria.'[261] This radical idea was based on a very forward-looking approach in the Versailles peace negotiations, as Wilson feared they would lead to bitterness and disappointment for many of the participating parties. He expected harsh peace terms to be inevitable and therefor had engineered the League to alter boundaries in the event of injustice or if conditions had changed. His League would then be able to ease the terms of peace when passions had subsided.[262]

This draft was eventually changed when Wilson was pressured to make the League's objective not to subordinate the sovereignty of individual states to an international body, but to commit to defend it against all challenges.[263] But still many Senators feared such a responsibility would override the constitutional powers of the Congress to declare war and attached reservations accordingly. They also added a reservation which declared the Monroe Doctrine as the baseline of American foreign policy. These reservations received major support on the Senate floor. Over two-thirds of the treaty votes concerned amendments to those reservations or the adoption of them.[264]

Yet, the debate wasn't limited to the degree of US commitment to the League. Another major point in the treaty's controversy were the issues related to the self-determination of colonies or the protection of imperialist interests. Many progressive Republicans opposed the treaty because it ignored the principle of self-determination and restored an international order that protected imperialist interests against those of the colonies. One of their major issues and a fine example of the protection of imperialist interests was the Shantung-provision. This provision transferred the previous German concessions in Shantung to Japan, rather than returning sovereign authority to China. These republicans also added reservations to the treaty to try and modify the treaty to secure freedom for all peoples.[265]

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[261] Erez Manela, 'A man ahead of his time?' 1119.
[262] Frank Costigliola, *Awkward dominion* 28-29.
[263] Erez Manela, 'A man ahead of his time?' 1120-1121.
[264] Gyung-Ho Jeong, 'The supermajority core of the US Senate and the failure to join the League of Nations' 328.
[265] Ibidem, 328.

In the years after the war, many Americans felt the intervention had been a terrible mistake. The reasons for which the US had joined the fight; principles, honor, democracy and world peace did not seem to be adequate motives to counter the grim sacrifices of war. There was a sense of frustration, induced by the disappointing outcome of the war. The Allies had won, but it had not brought the US any national advantage. The American ideals had not outweighed their sacrifices and therefore the public's mood had turned sour. Scholars, the press and politicians turned their attention towards the individuals that were to blame for the selfishness, hypocrisy or gullibility for which the US went to war. Wilson's ideals, beloved around the world, lost support in the US.[266]

This was yet another reason why the US failed to join the League. The American people, being disappointed in what the war had brought them, sought to return to the non-interventionist tradition. Therefore, a large dominance of the isolationist sentiment found its way back to the public. Isolationists in the Senate saw the League of Nations as a threat to the American isolation and blocked US entry into the League. However, looking at over 150 roll call votes, it is clear that a majority of the Senate did indeed wish for some form of the treaty to pass.[267] It seems the American public felt the same. A *Literary Digest* poll in April, 1919, also asked 1.377 people whether they favored the proposed League of Nations, to which 718 replied 'yes' and 478 gave conditional answers, most of them in favor.[268]

Furthermore, President Wilson's failure to compromise also played a major role in the League's defeat in the US. The Republican Party was willing to vote in favor of joining the League if some points would be altered. Their use of the reservations represented a sincere effort to pass the treaty. But Wilson argued that the Republicans' reservation nullified the League's effect and called on the Democrats to vote against the modified treaty. It could thus be argued that it was thus Wilson's intransigence that blocked US participation in his own League of Nations.[269]

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[266] Robert E. Osgood, *Ideals and self-interest in America's foreign relations* 261-262.
[267] Gyung-Ho Jeong, 'The supermajority core of the US Senate and the failure to join the League of Nations' 326-327.
[268] Robert E. Osgood, *Ideals and self-interest in America's foreign relations* 291.
[269] Gyung-Ho Jeong, 'The supermajority core of the US Senate and the failure to join the League of Nations' 426; Thomas A. Baily, 'Wilson to blame for failure of the League', in: Ralph A. Stone (ed.), *Wilson and the League of Nations: why America's rejection?* (New York, 1967) 54-61; Alexander L. George and Juliette L. George, 'Wilson: a study in personality', in: Ralph A. Stone ed. *Wilson and the League of Nations: why America's rejection?* (New York, 1967) 62-68; Perry Laukhuff, 'The price of Wilson's illness', in: Ralph A. Stone ed. *Wilson and the League of Nations: why America's rejection?* (New York, 1967) 69-74.

The United States Senate eventually voted against the treaty on two separate occasions: November 1919 and March 1920.[270] The US would make clear that there was no chance of the nation ever joining the League when Republican presidential candidate Warren G. Harding won by a landslide in 1920, after campaigning against joining the League of Nations. After his victory, the US State Department would even refuse to answer League inquiries. Only on an individual level some Americans would contribute to the supranational organization, though American delegates would take part in discussions and conferences later in the 1920's, remaining faithful to Wilson's dream of a peaceful international system.[271]

Abandoning neutrality

For the Netherlands, the founding of the League of Nations also meant a reshaping of their own position in the world order. After the war, the Dutch foreign policy was restructured. By joining the League of Nations the Netherlands traded in its neutral stance for a less strong policy of independence, but retained its goal to protect its colonial possessions and trade with moral authority.[272] Van Karnebeek personally led the Dutch delegation to the first assembly of the League. He knew it would be important to maneuver the Netherlands into a strong position within the new organization, even though he personally did not think very highly of the League.[273] Van Karnebeek also went to the second League assembly to ensure that his fellow countryman Bernard Loder would be chosen for the Permanent Court of International Justice, which Van Karnebeek managed successfully.[274]

The Dutch delegates at the assemblies of the League of Nations actively contributed to the juridification of international relations. Their main goals were to maintain Dutch sovereignty, liberalize trade and to avoid involvement in conflicts with any of the great powers. The Dutch therefore later opposed potential expansion of the Council's authority, as they feared it would widen the reach of the great powers, who were ultimately in control of the League. For similar reasons they also opposed the

[270] Gyung-Ho Jeong, 'The supermajority core of the US Senate and the failure to join the League of Nations' 327.
[271] Michael Riemens, 'The Netherlands, the United States, and the international political culture' 536-538.
[272] Peter Malcontent and Floribert Baudet, 'The Dutchman's burden? Nederland en de international rechtsorde in de twintigste eeuw', in: Bob de Graaff, Duco Hellema and Bert van der Zwan (eds.),
De Nederlandse buitenlandse politiek in de twintigste eeuw (Amsterdam, 2003) 69-104, 74-75.
[273] Michael Riemens, 'The Netherlands, the United States, and the international political culture' 538.
[274] Ibidem, 538.

Draft Treaty of Mutual Assistance in 1923 and the Pacific Settlement of Disputes in 1924.[275]

The Dutch had reasonable interests in the League of Nations, but that is not to say that their support of it came naturally. The Dutch government's attitude towards the League of Nations could be classified as sober, practical and pragmatic.[276] The Dutch had a long standing legalistic approach to foreign political issues, as they wanted to promote peace and international commerce through international legal order. They deemed themselves a cradle of international law and a world famous peace-loving nation. They had organized the peace conferences of 1899 and 1907 and had produced great scholars of international law like Hugo de Groot and T.M.C. Asser. One Scholar in Leiden, Cornelis van Vollenhoven, had even launched a plan in 1910 for an international police force, causing some to claim him Wilson's predecessor. Since its days as 'the Republic', the Netherlands had seen traditions in its foreign policy that emphasized internationalism, idealism, pacifism, moralism and legalism.[277] Still, the Netherlands had a hard time combining membership to the League with their wish to remain neutral. They had always tried to refrain from international politics as much as possible, as it felt comfortable in the background of the international political jousting.[278] The Dutch policy of neutrality didn't disappear after 1918. The fact that the Netherlands had been able to evade the horror of the Great War had all but proven that their political aloofness was the correct way to go. Yet they realized such a policy would be harder to maintain as a member of a collective security organization such as the League of Nations.[279]

The Dutch policy of neutrality found its origin in its determination to protect their colonial possessions. The Netherlands was far from having the manpower to defend all of its colonial possessions and had therefore decided to stay out of international conflicts. In order to legitimize the policy of neutrality, and to increase the chance that it would be respected, the Netherlands started to profile itself as a leading country when it came to drafting and complying with international law and developing rules of arbitration. The Dutch urge to profile itself as a shining example for the international

[275] Michael Riemens, 'The Netherlands, the United States, and the international political culture' 538-539.
[276] Remco van Diepen, *Voor Volkenbond en Vrede* (Amsterdam, 1999) 289.
[277] Ibidem, 16.
[278] J.C. Boogman, *Van spel en spelers* (Den Haag, 1982) 197-198; Remco van Diepen, *Voor Volkenbond en Vrede* 16.
[279] Remco van Diepen, *Voor Volkenbond en Vrede* 17-18.

legal order was thus largely motivated by self-interest. As soon as an active contribution to the promotion of the international legal order would harm its own interests, the Netherlands preferred to remain aloof.[280]

They had also foreseen potential hick-ups in the League if not all great powers would join. This is evident in a letter written by a Dutch envoy in Sweden, Sweerts de Landas Wyborgh, to the Dutch minister of foreign affairs Van Karnebeek on January 3rd 1920. In the letter, Sweerts de Landas Wyborgh informed Van Karnebeek that Sweden had grown anxious after news had spread that the US would not become a member itself. A plan was then made for the Netherlands, the Scandinavian nations and Switzerland to stand together and demand either the US or Germany to join the League, before entering themselves. But the plan did not hold up and eventually wasn't acted upon.[281]

Still, news that Germany would not be allowed to join had been ill-received in the Netherlands. The Dutch had regretted that Germany, which was of great economic importance to the Netherlands, had been excluded in advance from participation in the League of Nations and suspected the League of being an instrument of power politics for the victorious Allies of the war.[282] In the draft memorandum on the League of Nations to the States General, it was written: "It cannot be denied that this League looks different from what was originally hoped and expected. The treaty bears the stamp of its origin. Born of struggle and victory, it shows traces of relationships that should be unknown to a true League of Nations. The Provisional exclusion of a belligerent party hardly seems compatible with the spirit of renewal, which should be the supporting force of the Union."[283]

Because the League failed to truly change the status quo, the Dutch Council of State also had great reservations about joining the League of Nations. Vice-President of the Council of State, Wilhelmus Frederik van Leeuwen wrote to Queen Wilhelmina on October 28, 1919: "There is no principle which the League of Nations is called upon to maintain or develop. Neither the right of self-determination of peoples, nor the equality of peoples in trade and commerce, nor the freedom of the sea for which the

[280] Peter Malcontent and Floribert Baudet, 'The Dutchman's burden?' 74.
[281] J. Woltring, *Documenten betreffende de buitenlandse politiek van Nederland, 1919-1945. 1919-1930. Periode A : Dl. I: 1 juli 1919 - 1 juli 1920* 360-361.
[282] Peter Malcontent and Floribert Baudet, 'The Dutchman's burden?' 74.
[283] J. Woltring, *Documenten betreffende de buitenlandse politiek van Nederland, 1919-1945. 1919-1930. Periode A : Dl. I: 1 juli 1919 - 1 juli 1920* 205.

Netherlands always advocated. It is not an alliance of equal free nations, but in reality it is a tutelage of a few great ones whose orders the small ones have to carry out. These great ones do not constitute an independent organ of authority vested with supreme power, but an association of diplomats looking after the self-interests of their countries."[284]

Wilson had thus set out to change the international order by creating the League of Nations, which would shape the political arena into the way he thought it should be; a worldwide community of interests. Despite Dutch support for his ideas to secure their own interests at home and in Asia, Wilson failed to have the US join his League. The compromises he had to make to receive support from the Allied Powers cost him support from progressives at home. More importantly, due to the great costs of the war, the American people and the Senate no longer wanted to see themselves interwoven with international disputes. For the Netherlands, the US' refusal to join the League came as a disappointment. There were doubts to join the League, as it would mean the end of their policy of strict neutrality. However, they knew that if they were to position themselves correctly, the benefits outweighed the costs and their membership could bring with it significant opportunities to advance their trade.

[284] J. Woltring, *Documenten betreffende de buitenlandse politiek van Nederland, 1919-1945. 1919-1930. Periode A : Dl. I: 1 juli 1919 - 1 juli 1920* 271.

Conclusion

In summary, the Netherlands found itself moving away from Britain's sphere of influence at the start of the 20th century and saw an increasing necessity for rapprochement to the United States in search of a new protectorate. The Netherlands and the United States both wished to be shining examples of international peace. The Dutch hosting the Peace Conferences of 1899 and 1907 in The Hague and the US taking the lead to advance international peace with multiple treaties to prevent armed conflict and later Woodrow Wilson advocating for the supranational League of Nations which would safeguard everlasting peace between all who joined. The Dutch and Americans had similar ideas about the arbitration of international laws and order. These similarities were codified in treaties and peace conferences.

Aside from their shared appraisal of neutrality, both nations also were heavily invested in trade opportunities. Their similar stance on tariffs prove mutual imperial economic concerns. However, their goal to ensure a global open door trade policy came from two very different reasons. The Netherlands was dependent foreign trade and its colonial possessions, while the US sought to expand its own markets abroad to sell its domestic production surpluses. Their economic interests were one of the main reasons why both countries had tried to create international peace before the war, as conflict would hurt their economies. During the war, the Dutch therefore made valiant efforts to maintain their trade routes, while the Americans passed legislature to help their companies dominate foreign markets.

Their responses to German unrestricted submarine warfare underlined their commercial interests as well. Both nations used moral-legalistic arguments against the Germans' U-boats attacking merchant vessels, while in reality they were mostly concerned with their trade being endangered. The Netherlands, fighting hard to avoid the North Sea becoming a war zone, was mostly irritated as their ships could not safely reach the Dutch Indies. The US was mostly concerned with Britain, being their greatest trade partner, being cut off from international trade lines. Although President Wilson has always maintained that he declared war on the Germans because they did not respect international laws and America's rights as neutrals, not because he was pursuing selfish interests.

The Dutch-American rapprochement was not only due to similar interests, but also due to necessity. The Netherlands found itself stuck between two competing nations at the dawn of the 20th century. Britain had long been seen as the protector of the Netherlands, but due to the Boer War and their alliance with Japan in Asia, animosity between both countries had arisen. Meanwhile, Germany had become an important trade partner due to its rising industry. However, an alliance with Germany was no option as Germany would not be able to protect the Dutch colonies in Asia. What followed was a policy of strict neutrality to avoid conflict with either party. By maintaining trade relations with both Britain and Germany, the Netherlands hoped that neither country could afford to lose Dutch trade routes and would therefore mutually accept the Dutch neutrality.

During the war, little changed for the Netherlands, though the stakes were higher. The Dutch were still mainly focused on maintaining their economic interests, which were endangered by the Allied blockade and the German submarine warfare. The Allied and Central Powers demanded concessions from the Netherlands, which had to treed very carefully, as both giving too little and giving too much could be seen as casus belli for either the Allied or Central Powers and drag them into war.

The Netherlands had looked to the US to be the major power to protect the rights of neutrals during the war, but when the US joined the war, the Dutch situation worsened. Allied Powers, having the upper hand, tightened blockades, demanded further concessions, halted and seized ships to help their war effort. The Germans, desperate not to lose the war, also demanded further concessions. The Dutch government often refused to grant any demands, as they maintained their policy to not aid either side. When ships were seized, or international neutral laws were broken, they issued protests, though they knew these would have little effect. More important for them, was that either belligerent party did not think that the Netherlands had willingly conceded to the other's demands.

Dutch-American relations were also based on issues pertinent to Asia. After acquiring the Philippines, the United States became a new colonial power in the East. The Dutch kept a watchful eye on the American policy in their colonies, as they feared they might interfere with their governing of the Dutch Indies. The Americans, however, had great economic interests in trade with the Dutch Indies and had therefore tried to appease the Dutch with high appraisals of their policies. Despite some progressives in the US advocating for anti-colonialism and self-determination, President Wilson also

had no major problem with Dutch dominion over the Indonesian archipelago, as long as their remained an op door trade policy in place.

Both the Netherlands and the United States had concerns about the rising power of Japan. The Japanese had joined forces with Britain, the greatest European naval power and recently defeated a major European power in the Russo-Japanese war. In doing so, they had inspired colonial nationalists to take up arms against western imperialists, which the Germans also later tried to use against Britain. The Dutch worried that the Japanese would turn to the Indonesian archipelago to further their expansion and had no way of protecting their colony if it were to come down to military might. The Japanese wanted to expand their influence, especially in China, but feared that the US would cut of their progress. It was in the US' best economic interest to maintain the status quo in Asia. Power shifts like the rise of the Japanese empire were thus undesirable.

However, even though the Netherlands and the United States seemed to share similar interests in Asia, their relationship with their colonial possessions and the roles they played in the international politics there were very different. The Netherlands was highly dependent on trade with their colony, but was an empire on decline. Although they were very convinced of their own colonial policies, rumors of rebellions by their colonial subjects continued to pose a danger. As communication with the Dutch East Indies became strained during the war, relations deteriorated further. After the war, the Netherlands had to take a very active stance in the League of Nations in order not to lose control over its colonies. The US on the other hand, was a power on the rise, even though they had no vital interest in the Philippines. Their interests weren't in colonial exploitation, but in market domination. This is evident in their expenditure in the Philippines and their large market share in trade with other Asian regions, like rubber in the Dutch Indies Archipelago.

The League of Nations was seen by both the Netherlands and the US as a way of pursue their interests in Asia. Communication with the colonies had been made difficult for the Netherlands during the war, allowing tensions to rise between the colonies and the motherland. The Dutch therefore tried hard to maneuver themselves into a strong position within the League to safeguard that these tensions would not lead to critique on their policies or loss of influence. Wilson's United States, though not entirely against the idea of Western dominion over 'less educated' peoples, tried to curb the disadvantages of colonialism with the League of Nations. Wilson believed that

colonialism would lead to jealousy, economic tensions and conflict and therefore, through the League, tried to establish a committee that would depoliticize colonial territories, reconstruct international order and ensure an open trade policy.

The US Senate would eventually vote against the ratification of the Treaty of Versailles and therefore would halt American participation in Wilson's League of Nations. This had multiple reasons. First, the sacrifices of the war were hard to bear for the American public, who had not seen any palpable results in return. The domestic favor thus turned back to isolationism. Second, to make the Allied powers agree to support the League, Wilson had to let go of some of his original points, like the right of self-determination. This compromise caused progressive Republicans to withdraw their support for the League. Third, many other members of the Senate thought article 10 of the League, which stated that all member would have to come to aid if a fellow member was a victim to aggression, went against the US constitution. These Senators argued only Congress could officially decide to go to war and that the US should not give up their free choice in such matters. Finally, the Treaty could have been ratified if Wilson had been more able to compromise with the Senate. There surely was enough support for the League in the US, if some adjustments were to be made. However, Wilson did not want to wind down his organization any more than he already had, leaving the Senate and ultimately the American people to rule out American participation.

The League was meant to reshape the diplomatic arena into an international community of mutual interests. The Dutch had sympathy for Wilson's initial idea, though mostly used the League to secure their own interests. They used their support for the League as a bargaining chip to receive American support during the Paris Peace Talks. When the League was formed, the Dutch wanted to play as big a role within its organization as possible, to exert more influence on international than would otherwise be the case, given its size and population. If they didn't, they would be left subjugated to the major Allied Powers in control of the League.

The Netherlands very much regretted that the US would not join the League of Nations, as it knew the League would lack decisiveness without its major contributor. The letter by the Dutch Council of State indicates that the Netherlands truly had hoped to change the international order in some way, as they were saddened that the equality of peoples nor their self-determination was to be included in the League's objectives.

The Dutch major goal, however, remained open trade networks and freedom of the sea. Which it's membership of the League would help secure.

This thesis set out to provide a clearer understanding of American internationalism. By comparing the United States with the Netherlands and analyzing their relations, it sought to provide new insights into the reasons for the US' global expansion and the true meaning of 'Wilsonianism'. The United States and the Netherlands appear very similar at the start of the 20th century. Both tried to be shining examples for moral-legalistic principles within foreign affairs. During the course and aftermath of the Great War, the path of both nations seemed to diverge with the US joining the war in 1917 and both nations having very different positions of power during the peace negotiations. However, by comparing the Dutch with the American case, a pattern becomes clear. This pattern is that both countries throughout the war used moral-legalistic arguments to achieve their economic goals. By looking at the similarities with the Netherlands, who's economic survival rested on their colonial possessions and is therefore more obvious in their proceedings, it is thus made clear how much of a role economic interests played in American internationalism. Seemingly, this would make a strong case for the Wisconsin school of William Appleman Williams and Carl Parrini to be more in the right direction within the historiographical discourse on 'Wilsonianism'. Mark Weston Janis' and Melvyn Leffler's arguments that the US' goals were political, yet only because unstable international politics harm the economy also seem to be closer to the truth.

Naturally, that is not to say that Woodrow Wilson's aspirations to make the world safe for democracy were a hoax, as one man, even a President, would find it impossible to dictate any nation's foreign policy. To better understand the mechanisms that drove the United States, still more research is needed, both within the American as within a global perspective. What exactly the American mission is, is still up for debate. Wilson's mission however, has since proven a failure. Maybe he could take solace in the fact that, over a hundred years later, the world still doesn't seem safe for democracy and ever more seem to wonder whether it ever will be.

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