5 WILSON ADMINISTRATION ACTIONS IN THE MEXICAN AND BOLSHEVIK REVOLUTIONS

> ... the people cannot decide until somebody decides who are the people.
>
> Sir Ivor Jennings[1]

While in the early 1800s the Concert of Europe mobilized its influences to counter the tide of liberalism, by the early 1900s President Woodrow Wilson championed the cause of liberalism as the basis for legitimate government everywhere. Wilson dedicated his administration to making the world safe for democracy (and capitalism), and the principle which would enable liberal-capitalist, democratic governments to flourish around the world was self-determination. The people, Wilson held, must select for themselves their own form of governance, and, accordingly, other peoples must respect this process.

This shift from monarchical sovereignty to popular sovereignty provided a new answer to the question, "who is represented?" The political representation of popular sovereignty (sign) required that the people (signified) be represented as the foundation of a state's sovereign authority. A popularly elected government (signifier) would represent the people. While clarifying issues of political representation, the symbolic representation of the people was far from resolved. Left unanswered were the questions: who are the people and who can represent them politically?

When the Wilson Administration looked abroad with hopes of universalizing the *sign* of representative government based on popular sovereignty and self-determination, it encountered innumerable obstacles, the most disturbing yet most promising of which was revolution. During times of revolution, no clear domestic community or citizenry could be identified, for the citizenry was divided over the very issues that must be settled in order for the principles of popular sovereignty to find practical political expression. In Mexico and the newly forming Soviet Union, distinct political factions claimed to be

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the legitimate political representatives of their respective peoples. How the people were symbolically represented – how the people were produced as a particular community from which the source of sovereign authority originated – was disputed. The Wilson Administration became involved in the Mexican and Bolshevik revolutions in order to encourage transitions to representative democracy. If successful, these newly democratic nation-states would circulate as signs that the people were the true source of sovereign authority and that their political representation was inevitable.

By elaborating their justifications for becoming involved in these disputes, the Wilson Administration contributed to the symbolic representation (the production) of the Mexican and Russian people. The administration argued that its actions were justified on the basis of aiding the sovereign peoples of Mexico and Russia, even when the acts themselves violated the sovereignty of these very peoples.

The Mexican revolution

When President Wilson assumed office, the Taft government had not yet recognized the government of General Victoriano Huerta. President Taft's Secretary of State Philander Knox regarded Huerta's rebellion against and probable assassination of President Francisco Madero as "a matter of local criminal law and not of international law" (quoted in Callcott, 1977:302). For the Taft Administration, recognition of Huerta's provisional government hinged upon Huerta's willingness to settle United States economic claims against Mexico. Neither these claims nor, consequently, the issue of United States recognition of the Huerta government was settled when the Wilson Administration inherited the situation.

President Wilson approached events somewhat differently than did Taft. Having campaigned against the "dollar diplomacy" of the Taft Administration, President Wilson was not persuaded that United States economic interests should dictate United States' political interests. Of more immediate concern to President Wilson was the issue of what form of government should succeed the provisional government. Where did sovereignty reside in Mexico and who should a government represent as its source of sovereign authority?

Wilson's policy in Mexico appears to be a version of the Roosevelt corollary to the Monroe Doctrine, which holds:

> Chronic wrongdoing, or an impotence which results in a general loosening of the ties of civilized society, may in America, as elsewhere, ultimately require intervention by some civilized nation, and

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> in the Western Hemisphere the adherence of the United States to the Monroe Doctrine may force the United States, however reluctantly, in flagrant cases of such wrongdoing or impotence, to the exercise of an international police power. (Quoted in Greene, 1957:5)[2]

Wilson insisted his policies embodied something more: "The function of being a policeman in Mexico has not appealed to me, nor does it appeal to our people ... Our duty is higher than that" (quoted in Callcott, 1977:357).

Frank Cobb, a member of the Wilson administration, expressed his view: "As the Monroe Doctrine was aimed at the Holy Alliance, so the Wilson doctrine is aimed at the professional revolutionists, the corrupting concessionaires and the corrupt dictators of Latin America ... It is a bold and a radical doctrine" (quoted in Callcott, 1977:316). And in a radical move for the times, Wilson tied together the issues of orderly governance in a sovereign state and prospects for international cooperation.

> The present situation in Mexico is incompatible with fulfillment of international obligations on the part of Mexico, with the civilized development of Mexico herself, and with the maintenance of tolerable political and economic conditions in Central America. It is upon no common occasion, therefore, that the United States offers her counsel and assistance.
> (President's address to Congress, August 27, 1913; quoted in Robinson and West, 1917:191)

Formal recognition would not be granted to the Huerta government until assurances were made that open and democratic elections would be held to install a popularly elected government, and that President Huerta would not be a candidate in those elections. Although not explicitly stated, it was the hope of the Wilson Administration that such a government would be liberal/democratic/capitalist and would be amicable toward the United States both politically and economically (Link, 1954:107; and 1979:Chapter 1).

President Wilson did not view these negotiations nor the withholding of United States' recognition from the Huerta government as interference in the affairs of the Mexican people. Throughout Wilson's presidency and in light of the extraordinary "involvement" of the US in Mexican affairs, President Wilson maintained that he never had and indeed never would intervene in the affairs of the Mexican people (Levin, 1968).

The Huerta government had another view of United States' involvement. Huerta's Foreign Minister Gamboa expressed the view that

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United States' advisement on Mexican governance threatened the very sovereignty of the Mexican state:

> If even once we were to permit the counsels and advice (let us call them) of the United States of America not only would we...forgo our sovereignty but we would as well compromise for an indefinite future our destinies as a sovereign entity and all the future elections for president would be submitted to the veto of any President of the United States of America. (Quoted in Link, 1954:114)

Negotiations were underway between the United States and Mexico on the issue of elections when on October 10, 1913, Huerta arrested and imprisoned 110 members of the Chamber of Deputies, inaugurating a military dictatorship. President Wilson declared that no free or democratic elections could take place in an atmosphere of military rule. The Wilson Administration's immediate policy goal thus was rendered unrealizable. President Wilson responded in his annual message to the Congress:

> Mexico has no government. The attempt to maintain one at the City of Mexico has broken down, and a mere military despotism has been set up which has hardly more than the semblance of national authority... [A] condition of affairs now exists in Mexico which has made it doubtful whether even the most elementary and fundamental rights either of her own people or of the citizens of other countries resident within her territory can long be successfully safeguarded, and which threatens, if long continued, to imperil the interests of peace, order, and tolerable life in the lands immediately to the south of us.
>
> (Delivered by Wilson on December 2, 1913; quoted in Robinson and West, 1917:204)

On April 22, 1914, President Wilson ordered the US Marines to occupy Vera Cruz, Mexico. Thinly veiled behind claims to avenge American honor in light of the Mexican refusal to salute the American flag as an apology for imprisoning two US servicemen, the President was quick to admit that the occupation was an attempt to discredit and lead to the political downfall of President Huerta. And President Wilson justified his action with reference to the Mexican people. Commenting on US actions the day following the landing, Wilson said:

> I wish to reiterate with the greatest earnestness the desire and intention of this Government to respect in every possible way the sovereignty and independence of the people of Mexico.
>
> ... Wherever and whenever the dignity of the United States is flouted, its international rights or the rights of its citizens invaded, or

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> its influence rebuffed where it has the right to attempt to exercise it, this Government must deal with those actually in control. It is now dealing with General Huerta in the territory he now controls. That he does not rightfully control it does not alter the fact that he does control it.
>
> We are dealing, moreover, only with those whom he demands and those who come to his support. With these we must deal. They do not lawfully represent the people of Mexico. In that fact we rejoice, because our quarrel is not with the Mexican people, and we do not desire to dictate their affairs. But we must enforce our rightful demands upon those whom the existing authorities at the place where we act do, for the time being, represent.
>
> (Quoted in *New York Times*, April 24, 1914)

President Wilson's distinction between a government and a people in this context surprised some members of the supposed international community. And indeed this surprise is not unfounded. For it does seem to be ironic that the President of one sovereign state would justify his sending troops into another state on behalf of the sovereign people in that state. Yet to President Wilson, no such paradox existed. How this could be the case depends upon where sovereignty is invested and what intervention means.

For President Wilson, the foundation of any legitimate government was its citizenry. In this sense, Wilson was able to declare the Huerta government illegitimate and once again to tie domestic governance to the issue of international cooperation:

> Co-operation is possible only when supported at every turn by the orderly processes of just government based upon law, not upon arbitrary or irregular force. We hold, as I am sure all thoughtful leaders of republican governments everywhere hold, that just government rests always upon the consent of the governed, and that there can be no freedom without order based upon law and upon the public conscience and approval.
>
> (Wilson, March 11, 1913, quoted in Robinson and West, 1917:179)

Furthermore, President Wilson maintained that US involvements in Mexico did not constitute intervention. During 1914 when the Vera Cruz incident was a focus of attention in United States–Mexican relations, the Wilson Administration publicly and privately denied suggestions that US actions constituted interference much less intervention in Mexican affairs. What intervention meant and – in the Wilson Administration's view – where the limits of Mexican sovereignty might be were not seriously entertained. This was the case, it seems, for two reasons.

First, and as has been mentioned, the Wilson Administration's pre-

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occupation was that the source of sovereign authority – the Mexican people – be represented by a Mexican government. Therefore, from Wilson's induction as President until formal US recognition of the Carranza government in 1917, this issue was of primary concern to the administration and overshadowed all others in United States–Mexican relations.

Second, because the source of sovereign authority could not be guaranteed representation – because the Mexican people could not be represented symbolically or politically by a (or this, i.e., Huerta's) Mexican government – the issue of where the limits of their (and thus the state's) authority might be could not yet become an issue. What *was* at issue was if the Mexican state could be treated as sovereign at all.

The questionable sovereignty of the Mexican state was entwined with the notion of intervention. In his denials of United States' intervention in Mexico, the President supported this claim by adding that the United States did and would continue to respect the sovereignty of Mexico. It may be inferred from his statement that Wilson understood intervention to be a violation of sovereignty. Such an understanding of intervention enabled President Wilson to make a connection between the meaning of intervention and the location of sovereignty. He held that the Provisional Government of Mexico as ruled by Huerta was not sovereign because it was not a government of, by, and for the Mexican people. Thus, the Mexican state represented by the Provisional Government was not sovereign. By this logic, then, the US action could not be intervention because it was directed against the Provisional Government – an agent of the state that was not sovereign. If one accepts this logic, then the claim to act on behalf of the sovereign people of Mexico while acting against the Provisional Government did not amount to a contradiction.

One additional point bears mentioning. Wilson Administration denials of intervention in Mexico were based upon this crude understanding of intervention as an invasion of state sovereignty. At this period in United States–Latin American relations, intervention in its practical form referred to policing practices whereby the United States government established itself as the occupying protectorate of a Latin American state, as occurred for example in Haiti and Cuba. But protectorate status for Mexico was never entertained as a US policy option.

Beyond this practical understanding, a more content-specific meaning of the term intervention was not elaborated until some three years later when in 1916 US troops again crossed into Mexican territory. While agreement was never reached between the United States and Mexican parties as to what actions constituted intervention, the

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existence of debate alone was of importance because it politicized actions and their justifications.

The Pershing Expedition

After the fall of Huerta, the Constitutionalists split into two factions – one led by General Venustiano Carranza and another led by Francisco "Pancho" Villa. Initially, the Wilson Administration supported the Villa faction, believing that Villa could more quickly bring an end to rebellion in Mexico. But when Villa's successes waned, the Wilson Administration backed the Carranza faction instead. Villa avenged himself against the United States by crossing into United States territory and killing US citizens in Columbus, New Mexico, on March 9, 1916. President Wilson responded by sending Brigadier General Pershing into Mexico in pursuit of Villa, insisting that such an act did not violate Mexican sovereignty.

> An adequate force will be sent at once in pursuit of Villa with the single object of capturing him and putting a stop to his forays. This can and will be done in entirely friendly aid of the constituted authorities in Mexico and with scrupulous respect for the sovereignty of that Republic.
> (A statement by the President to the press; cited in *FRUS*,[3] 1916: 484)

The Carranza government responded immediately indicating that such action, if taken unilaterally by the United States in the absence of negotiation with and agreement by the Mexican government, would be resented and would very probably lead to war. In a cable dated March 10, 1916, the Carranza government elaborated its terms for possible US pursuit of Villa in Mexican territory. The cable, sent through United States Special Agent Silliman, referred to raids into Mexican territory by Indians resident in US reservations and the precedent established that either government could pursue such raiding parties across the international border. It continues:

> Bearing in mind these precedents and the happy results to both countries yielded by the agreement above referred to, the Government over which the citizen First Chief [General Carranza] presides, desiring to exterminate as soon as possible the horde led by Francisco Villa, who was recently outlawed, and to capture Villa and adequately punish him, applied through you, Mr. Confidential Agent, to the Government of the United States and asked that the Mexican forces be permitted to cross into American territory in pursuit of the aforesaid bandits led by Villa, upon that understanding that, reciprocally, the forces of the United States may cross into Mexican territory,

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> if the raid effected at Columbus should unfortunately be repeated at any other point on the border.
> (Mexican Secretary of Foreign Affairs Acuna to Special Agent Silliman; *FRUS*, 1916:485)

The crucial phrase in this cable is "if the raid effected at Columbus should unfortunately be repeated at any other point on the border." The notion here was that the Carranza government was dealing and would continue to deal with the Columbus incident. Only if these efforts failed and Villa struck in US territory again would the Mexican conditions apply. Until such time, US troops in Mexico would be regarded "as an invasion of national territory" (Carranza to Mr. Arredondo, March 11, 1916; *FRUS*, 1916:486).

Intentionally or unintentionally, the Wilson Administration did not interpret the Carranza government's terms as precluding immediate pursuit of Villa in Mexico prior to another raid in United States territory. Cables exchanged over the next few days express satisfaction by both parties about their mutual agreement. Secretary of State Lansing sent assurances to the Carranza government that the United States "punitive expedition" would alleviate the possibility of intervention.

> In order to remove any apprehension that may exist either in the United States or in Mexico, the President had authorized me to give in his name the public assurance that the military operations now in contemplation by this Government will be scrupulously confined to the object already announced [pursuit of Villa], and that in no circumstances will they be suffered to trench in any degree upon the sovereignty of Mexico or develop into intervention of any kind in the internal affairs of our sister Republic. On the contrary, what is now being done is deliberately intended to preclude the possibility of intervention.
> (Robert Lansing to Mr. Arrendondo, March 13, 1916; *FRUS*, 1916:489).

When the misunderstanding was discovered some nine days later, the Carranza government entered into more specific negotiations with the United States, only to learn that US troops had entered Mexican territory in the absence of either an agreement with or notification to the Mexican government. US troops remained in Mexico (largely because the Mexican government hoped to avoid war with the United States) while negotiations covering their conduct continued.[4] On April 3, 1916, Secretary of State Lansing expressed the Wilson Administration's approval of an agreement outlining the terms under which foreign troops would be permitted on either United States or Mexican

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soil – so long as the agreement did not pertain to United States troops already in Mexico:

> The Government of the United States, in entering into the reciprocal agreement with the *de facto* Government of Mexico relative to the pursuit of lawless bands across the international boundary by the military forces of the respective Governments, does so on the understanding that the conditions imposed by that agreement are not to be applied to the forces of the United States now in Mexico in pursuit of Villa and his bandits who attacked and burned Columbus, New Mexico, killing a number of American citizens, the said forces having entered Mexico under a previous agreement which arose out of the outrage perpetrated by outlaws at Columbus on March 9th.
>
> (Lansing to Mr. Arredondo, April 3, 1916; *FRUS*, 1916:507)

The Mexican government responded in a long cable which summarized events up to this point. In addition to other issues, it stated:

> the Government of Mexico...necessarily believed in the supposition that the American Government was fully convinced that the expedition sent forth on Mexican territory in pursuit of Villa is without a foundation because of there existing no previous agreement on the subject which has been the only motive of the discussion until this moment.
>
> Furthermore...the Government of the United States had acted in good faith in sending its expedition into Mexico in pursuit of Villa, in the supposition that the note of March 10 contained a definite agreement; and that the American Government agreed that the expedition should remain on Mexican territory only while the details of the agreement were being concluded.
>
> If now the American Government pretends that the expedition sent against Villa should be considered as an exceptional case, and that it should remain outside of the terms of the agreement, it appears altogether useless to continue discussing the conditions and details of same ...
>
> In consequence of the above ... the Government of Mexico believes that it is advisable, for the present, to suspend all discussions or negotiations relative to this matter, and considering that the expedition sent by the Government of the United States to pursue Villa is without warrant, under the circumstances, because there existed no previous formal or definite understanding, and because this expedition is not fulfilling its object and undoubtedly cannot do so, because the band headed by Villa has already been dispersed, and finally, because there are sufficient Mexican troops to pursue him...it is now time to treat with the Government of the United States upon the subject of the withdrawal of its forces from our territory.
>
> (Secretary of Foreign Relations C. Aguilar to Secretary of State Lansing, April 12, 1916; *FRUS*, 1916:517)

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Thus, subsequent discussion expressed the Mexican government's objective to remove US troops from Mexican territory and the US government's intention to remain in Mexico until Villa was captured by either government. Generals of both armies met on March 24, 1916, in hopes of reaching agreement on these conflicting points. They achieved partial success. While the Mexican government failed to achieve agreement on a definite date for total US troop evacuation from Mexican territory, the US government did agree to begin a gradual withdrawal of troops. Of particular interest is that the US government couched its agreement in terms of the capacity of the Mexican government to control its own territory in the absence of US troops. The joint memorandum of March 24 meeting states:

> The decision of the American Government to continue the gradual withdrawal of the troops of the punitive expedition from Mexico was inspired by the belief that the Mexican Government is now in a position and will omit no effort to prevent the recurrences of invasion of American territory and the completion of the withdrawal of American troops will only be prevented by occurrences arising in Mexico tending to prove that such belief was wrongly founded.
> (*FRUS*, 1916:539)

This statement complemented a statement made by President Wilson to the US Congress in which he justified the Pershing expedition in terms of Mexico's incapacity to meet its international obligation of policing international lawlessness on the part of Villa:

> Our recent pursuit of bandits into Mexican territory was no violation of that principle [not take advantage of small states]. We ventured to enter Mexican territory only because there were no military forces in Mexico that could protect our border from hostile attack and our own people from violence, and we have committed there no single act of hostility or interference ever with the sovereign authority of the Republic of Mexico herself. It was a plain case of the violation of our own sovereignty which could not wait to be vindicated by damages and for which there was no other remedy. The authorities of Mexico were powerless to prevent it.
> (Brackets in original; Address to Congress on September 2, 1916; quoted in Robinson and West, 1917:343–4)

Notice in this passage Wilson's reference to "the sovereign authority of the Republic of Mexico herself." This is another example of Wilson's differentiation between the sovereign people of Mexico and in this case the *de facto* government of Mexico.

The Wilson Administration further maintained that the Pershing expedition did not constitute an act of intervention by the United

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States into the affairs of the Mexican people. Of note at this juncture, however, is that the meaning of intervention was not left open as a matter of public, international debate. Rather, the specific implications of the term intervention were a matter of state policy.

In a cable[5] to President Wilson about Villa's attack on Columbus and the subsequent Pershing expedition, Secretary of State Lansing expressed his view that the incident "is simply a state of international war without purpose on our part other than to end the conditions which menace our national peace and the safety of our citizens, and that is *not* intervention with all that word implies" (*FRUS*, 1916:559). The Secretary elaborated that:

> We have long denied any purpose to interfere in the internal affairs of Mexico ... Intervention conveys the idea of such interference.
>
> Intervention, which suggests a definite purpose to "clean up" the country, would bind us to certain accomplishments which circumstances might make extremely difficult or inadvisable, and, on the other hand, it would impose conditions which might be found to be serious restraints upon us as the situation develops.
>
> Intervention also implies that the war would be made primarily in the interest of the Mexican people, while the fact is it would be a war forced on us by the Mexican Government, and, if we term it intervention, we will have considerable difficulty explaining why we had not intervened before but waited until attacked. (*FRUS*, 1916:558–9)

The Secretary elaborated what he viewed as the differences between intervention and non-intervention in a memorandum to the President.[6]

> To intervene in the affairs of a neighboring independent state means to interfere with its domestic affairs and the exercise of its sovereign rights by its people. ... when I became Secretary of State, I realized that the continued conditions of lawlessness and violence in the northern states of Mexico might at any time compel us to employ force to protect the American border and American citizens against the bands of armed men who were committing degradations in that region, and that, if we were compelled to send troops into Mexico, it could only be construed as intervention between the factions which were striving to obtain control of the government. Without a recognized government we could not cause a state of international war between the United States and Mexico.
>
> In view of the policy of non-intervention and the satisfaction with which it had been received by the Latin American Republics to be forced to adopt a course of intervention although the actual purpose was protection of American rights and territory would have placed the Government in an awkward position.
>
> It was important, therefore, to recognize a government in Mexico

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> as soon as opportunity offered in order to avoid a condition which forced us into the false position of intervention. (*FRUS*, 1916:560).[7]

In agreement with Lansing's use of the term, Wilson publicly took pains to invest the term intervention with precise meaning. He stated:

> By intervention I mean the use of the power of the United States to establish internal order there without the invitation of Mexico and determine the character and method of her political institutions. We have professed to believe that every nation, every people, has the right to order its own institutions as it will, and we must live up to that profession in our actions in absolute good faith.
>
> (In *Ladies Home Journal*, October 1916; quoted in Scott, 1918:408)

The Bolshevik revolution

Events in Russia in March of 1917 reassured Wilson that democratic good was winning out over imperialistic evil on a world scale. The authoritarian regime of Tsar Nicholas II, confronted by labor strikes and bread riots, gave way to a Provisional Government on March 15, 1917.[8] United States Ambassador to Russia Francis pronounced the revolution as "the practical realization of that principle of government which we have championed and advocated, I mean government by consent of the governed" (to Lansing, March 18, 1917, *FRUS*, 1917:1207). The Wilson Administration granted almost immediate recognition to the Provisional Government[9] and, as would prove important later, established formal diplomatic ties with the government, exchanging ambassadors and embassy staff.

In his War Message to the Congress, President Wilson declared:

> Does not every American feel that assurance has been added to our hope for the future peace of the world by the wonderful and heartening things that have been happening within the last few weeks in Russia? Russia was known by those who knew it best to have been always in fact democratic at heart, in all the vital habits of her thought. .. The autocracy that crowned the summit of her political structure, long as it had stood and terrible as was the reality of its power, was not in fact Russian in origin, character, or purpose; and now it has been shaken off and the great, generous Russian people have been added in all their naive majesty and might to the forces that are fighting for freedom in the world, for justice, and for peace.
>
> (Wilson on April 2, 1917 in Baker and Dodd, 1925–1927, vol. 5, pp. 12–13)

As with respect to factions within Mexico during its revolution, the President distinguished between forces of oppression and false representation – in this case the Tsar's government – and the forces of

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liberty and true national spirit – the liberal forces in Russia, the Russian people as represented by the Provisional Government. Notice that at this early juncture in what was to be the beginning rather than – as many supposed at the time – the end of revolutionary events in Russia, the Wilson Administration participated in symbolically linking the Provisional Government with the Russian people. This was because, in the view of the Wilson Administration, the Provisional Government was the legitimate political representative of the Russian people. For in a liberal-capitalist world order, a liberal-capitalist Russian government must be the natural successor to authoritarian rule.[10]

On November 7, 1917, the liberal path of the Russian Revolution was interrupted when the Bolsheviks ousted the Provisional Government from power. While Wilson Administration officials had been aware of the frailty of the Provisional Government now led by Alexander Kerensky, the United States had never taken the Bolsheviks or their leader V. I. Lenin seriously as a sustainable threat (Gardner, 1976:25). With the Bolsheviks having seized power, the Wilson Administration did not expect them to remain there for long. President Wilson expressed this view to Representative Frank Clark of Florida in a personal letter shortly after the Bolshevik takeover:

> I have not lost faith in the Russian outcome by any means. Russia, like France in the past century, will no doubt have to go through deep waters but she will come out upon firm land on the other side and her great people, for they are a great people, will in my opinion take their proper place in the world.
>
> (Letter dated November 13, 1917; Baker, 1927–1929, vol 7:355)

Notice Wilson's reference to the French Revolution. This seems to suggest that Wilson regarded the Bolshevik rise to power in Russia as but a dark episode in the liberal revolution begun in Russia with the overthrow of the Tsar.[11] The "firm land" upon which a future Russian government would be established was the Russian people. At this early juncture, Wilson viewed the Bolsheviks as an extreme anti-imperialist element that could be brought back in line with the liberal-democratic-capitalist ideals of Kerensky.[12] While Wilson shared the Bolshevik's disdain for traditional imperialists like the Germans, he did not seem to appreciate Lenin's argument that capitalism necessarily leads to imperialism and the implication therein that the United States was an imperialistic power.[13] Nor, at this point, did Wilson pursue rumors of collusion between the Germans and the Bolsheviks. In an address to the American Federation of Labor on November 12, 1917, the President explained:

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> May I not say that it is amazing to me that any group of persons should be so ill-informed as to supposed, as some groups in Russia apparently suppose, that any reforms planned in the interest of the people can live in the presence of a Germany powerful enough to undermine or overthrow them by intrigue or force? Any body of free men that compounds with the present German Government is compounding for its own destruction. But that is not the whole of the story. Any man in America or anywhere else that supposes that the free industry and enterprise of the world can continue if the Pan-German plan is achieved and German power fastened upon the world is as fatuous as the dreamers in Russia. What I am opposed to is not the feeling of the pacifists, but their stupidity. My heart is with them, but my mind has a contempt for them. I want peace, but I know how to get it, and they do not.
>
> ("Address to The American Federation of Labor at Buffalo, NY, November 12, 1917," in Baker and Dodd, 1925–1927, vol. 5: 120–1).

Even as late as early January, 1918, the President continued to speak of Russia's "independent determination of her own political development and national policy" assuring Russia "a sincere welcome into the society of free nations under institutions of her own choosing" (Wilson, "[Fourteen Points] Address Delivered at a Joint Session of the Two Houses of Congress," January 8, 1918; in Baker and Dodd, 1925–1927, vol. 5: 155–62).

By March, however, Wilson's statements indicated that he was moving the administration away from "watchful waiting" for Bolshevik conversion to liberalism to replaying his distinction between the government and the people. His appeal to the Russian people to reject the Brest-Litovsk Treaty without mention of their Bolshevik leaders offers an early glimpse of this distinction.

> May I not take advantage of the meeting of the Congress of the Soviets to express the sincere sympathy which the people of the United States feel for the Russian people at this moment when the German power has been thrust in to interrupt and turn back the whole struggle for freedom and substitute the wishes of Germany for the purposes of the people of Russia? ... I beg to assure the people of Russia through the Congress that it will avail itself of every opportunity to secure for Russia once more complete sovereignty and independence in her own affairs and full restoration to her great role in the life of Europe and the modern world.
>
> The whole heart of the people of the United States is with the people of Russia in the attempt to free themselves forever from autocratic government and become the masters of their own life.
>
> (Wilson, "Message to the People of Russia through the Soviet Congress," March 11, 1918, Official bulletin, No. 255, in Baker and Dodd, 1925–1927, vol. 5: 191)

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In this passage, Wilson is talking not to the Bolsheviks but directly to the Russian people. As interpreted by Lloyd Gardner, the passage implies that the Russian people's sovereignty must be secured from both the Germans and the Bolsheviks (Gardner, 1976:38).

The hope of wooing Lenin to a liberal-capitalist position was abandoned for a number of reasons. Among them was that Lenin's seizure of power displaced the Provisional Government, the government which the Wilson Administration regarded as the legitimate representative of the Russian people. This unfortunate beginning, from the Wilson Administration's point of view, might have been overlooked had Lenin shown some signs of liberal-democratic conversion. Yet he did just the opposite. When the Constituent Assembly met in January, 1918, Lenin dissolved it because he could not control it.[14] Furthermore, the implications of Lenin's anti-capitalist/anti-imperialist policies were sinking in for Wilson and others in his administration, among them Colonel House.

The most troubling immediate factor for the Wilson Administration was the Bolshevik acceptance of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty. The practical affect of this treaty was to officially remove Bolshevik Russia from World War I, releasing Germany from a two-front war. Symbolically, the Brest-Litovsk Treaty demonstrated to Wilson that for all their anti-imperialistic rhetoric, the Bolsheviks were unwilling to make good on these pronouncements by continuing the war against the Central Powers. Taking these issues together, one scholar noted that "after early 1918 the main drift of Wilson's thought in relation to Leninism would have more to do with finding a liberal-nationalist alternative to Bolshevism than with trying to co-opt the Bolsheviks into a democratic Russian order" (Levin, 1968:71).

Allied Intervention in Siberia

As early as December, 1917, the Entente powers considered some form of intervention in Siberia. Siberia was to be the Allied target for several reasons. The United States was actively involved in a project to develop the Trans-Siberian Railway when the Bolshevik revolution began. The railway was an important supply link in Russia's war effort against Germany. When the Bolsheviks signed the Brest-Litovsk Treaty in March, 1918, securing the railway from a potential takeover by the Germans became an Allied priority.[15] Additionally, Siberia was the region of Russia that, by its sheer distance from Petrograd and Moscow, was the most isolated from Bolshevik rule. Its geographic location allowed the Allies to support anti-Bolshevik movements in

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Siberia without engaging Bolshevik troops. And a number of anti-Bolshevik movements, however lacking in support and resources, were forming in Siberia. Finally, intervention in Siberia was physically possible while intervention into European Russia was not because of World War I. The Allies could enter Siberia by sea without encountering Central Power resistance.

The issue that had to be addressed prior to any intervention was how to oppose both Bolshevism and German imperialism. This was because any intervention imagined at this time would be intervention by the Allies as a whole and not by any individual state. Allied opposition to German imperialism was justified in that the Allies and the Central Powers were at war. But Russia was a former Allied power who had not sided with the Central Powers but who had negotiated a separate peace with them. Thus, the Allies were not at war with Russia. But if Russian neutrality impaired Allied war aims, then maybe Allied opposition to both Bolshevism and German imperialism could be linked.

President Wilson's liberal internationalist agenda linked these problems ideologically. This was so because liberal internationalism[16] equates two very different political dispositions – imperialism and socialism. Both were seen as repressing the nationalistic spirit of what was to Wilson the most privileged political entity because it was the location of sovereign authority – the people. In other words, both denied the political representation of the people. Fusing Allied opposition to imperialism and socialism into a specific Allied intervention policy in Siberia was a more delicate problem.

One possibility was to pursue theories of collusion between Lenin and Trotsky and the Germans. This view was buttressed by the fraudulent Sisson papers (see Levin, 1968:94 and Gardner, 1976:26). A "Bolsheviks as German agents" approach would mean that to oppose either Germany or the Bolsheviks was to oppose both. The German agent theory was entertained briefly by the Wilson Administration, ultimately to be discounted as too simplistic to explain Lenin's complex policies (see Levin, 1968:93). However, as Francis cabled Secretary of State Lansing shortly after the signing of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty, Lenin and Trotsky "may possibly not have been Germany's agents continuously but if [they] had been [they] could not have played more successfully into Germany's hands" (*FRUS, 1918–1919, Russia*, 1913–1937, vol 1:384). Even if the Wilson Administration had pursued the German agent theory as a way to link German imperialism and Bolshevism, this position would not have solved Allied intervention policy concerns. For, in linking Germany and the Bolsheviks,

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how could the Allies be at war with Germany but not at war with the Bolsheviks?

A more credible strategy – because it followed from Wilson Administration policies in Mexico, for example – was to articulate an intervention policy in Siberia based upon claims that the Allies were protecting Russian sovereignty. This was not a difficult case to argue with reference to Germany. But how could the Wilson Administration claim that an Allied intervention in Siberia would protect Russian sovereignty when its aim was in part to counter Bolshevism in the region? Such a claim could be credible depending on where the sovereign authority of Russia was said to reside. As in the Mexican illustration, the sovereign authority of Russia was believed by the Wilson administration to reside in the Russian people. It was the Russian people who were to be represented by a Russian government.

The Wilson Administration concluded that the Allied military intervention in Siberia in no way interfered with Russian political sovereignty by distinguishing between the Allied "military action" which it supported and "military intervention" which it condemned (Acting Secretary of State to Ambassador Morris in Japan, August 3, 1918, *FRUS, 1918–1919, Russia*, 1931–1939, vol. 2:328; Secretary of State to Allied Ambassadors, July 17, 1918, *FRUS, 1918–1919, Russia*, vol. 2:288). By military intervention, the administration meant the unilateral landing of Japanese forces in Siberia not incorporated into a broader Allied program. The Japanese forces ideally would have secured the Trans-Siberian railroad, preventing it from falling under Germany's control. A unilateral Japanese military intervention, supported by France and Italy, was opposed by the United States and Britain. The British hoped that their close ties to Trotsky would result in a Bolshevik invitation to intervene in Siberia (*Colonel House Papers*, 1928:400–7). The United States opposed a unilateral military intervention by Japan for political and military reasons. Politically, they feared – in light of the traditional political and military rivalries and racial prejudices between the Russians and the Japanese – Japanese intervention might consolidate fragmented political groups in Siberia on the side of the Bolsheviks in an effort to oppose a military threat from Japan or – still worse – alienate the Bolsheviks to the extent that the Bolsheviks joined Germany against the Allies in the war. Militarily, the United States distrusted Japanese territorial interests in Asia.[17]

Furthermore, while an invitation to intervene in Siberia would please the United States, an invitation from Trotsky was not acceptable. In a meeting with British intelligence officer William Wiseman about Allied intervention, President Wilson expressed his dissatis-

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faction with both Japanese intervention and Trotsky's credibility. As summarized by Wiseman, the President spoke of a future Allied Commission that would organize the railroads and food supplies, adding: "If in the meantime we were invited to intervene by any responsible and representative body, we ought to do so. An oral or secret agreement with Trotsky would be no good since he would repudiate it"[18] (Wiseman to Drummond, May 30, 1918, quoted in Levin, 1968:96; see also Lansing to Wilson, *FRUS, Lansing Papers, 1914–20*, 1937, vol. 2:360–1).

While the Allies could not agree as to the benefits and liabilities of unilateral Japanese intervention in Siberia, the Allies did agree that, with the signing of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty on March 4, 1918, and its subsequent ratification by the Soviets, the recreation of an eastern front in the war against Germany would avert pressures on the western front (*Colonel House Papers*, 1928:407). The British saw the restoration of the eastern front as the only assurance that the war could be won by the spring of 1919. If the war persisted past the spring, the British argued, Allied resources would be so drained that an Allied victory could not be guaranteed (British cable, June 17, 1918 in *Colonel House Papers*, 1928:410–12). The Wilson Administration, though sympathetic to the British argument, would not risk facilitating a Bolshevik-German military alliance or subverting their liberal-internationalist principles.

While "nuclei [of] self-governing authorities" in Siberia struggled to establish themselves, circumstances offered the Wilson Administration an excuse to intervene. A number of Czechoslovakian troops making their way eastward along the Trans-Siberian railroad in a roundabout effort to reach the western front came into conflict with Bolshevik officials. The incident escalated into a series of shootouts, with the Czech troops eventually occupying a good portion of the Trans-Siberian railroad. To the Allies, this meant that an anti-German, anti-Bolshevik force, friendly to anti-Bolshevik Russians, had accomplished what a unilateral Japanese intervention might have accomplished. With its goal achieved, a unilateral Japanese intervention had little to offer.

In addition to controlling the railroad, the Czech troops' presence in Siberia gave the Allies added reason to enter Siberia. This was so not only because the Czech troops were engaged in battle with former German and Austrian prisoners of war in Russia who were released and armed but also because, as President Wilson saw it, the Czechs were not only Allies but "the cousins of the Russians" (President Wilson to Secretary of State Lansing, June 17, 1918, *FRUS, Lansing*

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Papers, 1914–1920, 1939, vol. 2:363). As the diplomatic liaison officer to the Supreme War Council Frazier expressed his views to the Secretary of State,

> If the Allies are to win the war in 1919 it should be a primary object of their policy to foster and assist the national movement in Russia in order to reform an eastern front or at least to sustain such a vigorous spirit of independence in the occupied territories behind the German lines as will compel Germany to maintain large bodies of troops in the east. Allied intervention at the earliest moment is therefore a necessity if any headway is to be made in organizing that eastern front which is essential, if the Allies are to win the war in 1919 before Germany has concentrated her whole strength once more on the encirclement and domination of Russia. At the present moment intervention as a practical policy is easier than it has ever been.
>
> (July 2, 1918, *FRUS, 1918–1919, Russia*, vol 2:244)

Failure to intervene immediately, Frazier went on, "would mean the abandonment of the Russian people to the [triumphant] militarism of Germany and the destruction of all hope of the resuscitation of Russia as the liberal ally of the western democracies during the war" (brackets in original; July 2, 1918, *FRUS, 1918–1919, Russia*, vol 2:224–5).

President Wilson agreed that the Czech troops could be the Allies point of entry into Siberia. He wrote to his friend and political advisor Colonel House,

> I have been sweating blood over the question what is right and feasible to do in Russia. It goes to pieces like quicksilver under my touch, but I hope I see and can report some progress presently along the double line of economic assistance and aid to the Czecho-Slovaks.
>
> (July 8, 1918, quoted in *Colonel House Papers*, 1928:415)

What went "to pieces like quicksilver" under Wilson's touch was a clearly identifiable Russian people.

Wilson's mention of economic assistance referred to a proposal forwarded to the President by House. House suggested a program of basic economic relief in Siberia – the Russian Relief Commission[19] – as part of an intervention plan. House saw economic relief and food production programs as a positive way for the United States to both assist anti-Bolshevik governing authorities in Siberia and establish a foothold in the region. The Russian Relief Commission, according to House, should precede military intervention in the area. The later military intervention could be justified due to the necessity to preserve order in Siberia to ensure the success of the Commission (see *Colonel House Papers*, 1928:409). Secretary of State Lansing agreed with House arguing: "Armed intervention to protect the humanitarian work done

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by the Commission would be much preferable to armed intervention before this work had been begun" (Lansing to Wilson, *FRUS, Lansing Papers, 1914–20*, 1939, vol. 2:363). In late July, 1918, when the Allied forces landed in Siberia, no economic commission had yet been established, although it was subsequently created.

The United States justified its participation in the joint Allied "military action" as follows:

> As the Government of the United States sees the present circumstances, therefore, military action is admissible in Russia now only to render such protection and help as is possible to the Czecho-Slovaks against the armed Austrian and German prisoners who are attacking them and to steady any efforts at self-government or self-defense in which the Russians themselves may be willing to accept assistance. Whether from Vladivostok or from Murmansk and Archangel, the only present object for which American troops will be employed will be to guard military stores which may subsequently be needed by Russian forces and to render such aid as may be acceptable to the Russians in the organization of their own self-defence.
> (Acting Secretary of State to Ambassador Morris in Japan, August 3, 1918, *FRUS, 1918–1919, Russia*, 1931–1937, vol. 2:328; see also Secretary of State to Allied Ambassadors, July 17, 1918, *FRUS, 1918–1919, Russia*, 1931–1937, vol. 2:288)

A Foucauldian analysis

When we as readers ask "what is represented?" Wilson Administration actions in the Mexican and Bolshevik revolutions reveal to us what meanings of sovereignty, intervention and statehood grounded United States policy during the 1910s. For the Wilson Administration, sovereignty resided in the people. Revolutions by the people for representation in political and social institutions were events that should be applauded by the United States and by the international community. The revolutions of the 1910s, like the French Revolution, were against absolute or totalitarian governments. Notice that, for the Wilson Administration, a government and a people were not identical. If the Wilson Administration had equated governments and peoples, revolutions understood as a contest to capture the political representation of a state between a government and a people would not make sense.

Even though the foundation of sovereign authority resided in the people, according to Wilson, the people may at times lack the capacity to organize themselves into a sovereign state. Revolutions were an instance of such times. Liberal revolutions were moments in history

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when a people of a state attempted to assert themselves as the true source of sovereign authority within the state (something that was true no matter how a state was organized) and put in place a government which represented them. Before this process was successfully completed, however, a state was not sovereign. It would still be ruled by a government that did not embody the sovereignty of the state because it did not represent the people of the state. Thus, it was possible, by Wilson's account, for a state to be a state but for it not to be sovereign. For a state to be sovereign, it must find the origin of its sovereign authority in its people and represent their sovereign authority in the government.

Intervention for the Wilson Administration was a violation of the sovereignty of a state. Because the sovereign authority of a state was located in the people of a state – in the Mexican and Russian people – then intervention was an act which in some way repressed the sovereign authority of the people. By this account, acts of assistance performed by one sovereign state on behalf of the people of another sovereign state were not acts of intervention. Therefore, US actions in the Mexican and Bolshevik revolutions were not regarded as intervention practices.

How were these representations possible? How, in particular, did intervention justifications participate in producing the Mexican and Russian people as the locations of sovereign authority? And why was it so important to the Wilson Administration to claim that its activities in the Mexican and Bolshevik revolutions were not interventions? To analyze the production of meanings in Wilson Administration discourse, one must turn to Wilson's notion of self-determination. For the principles of self-determination to take practical political form, three criteria must be met. First, a "self" – in this case a domestic political citizenry – must be produced and distinguished from others not included in this population (foreigners and/or non-citizens). In other words, whose views count when determining the political character of the state must *already* be determined. This is important because, as the principle holds, it is a domestic citizenry which must select its own form of governance. Without a domestic citizenry, no such determination can take place.

Second, in order to have a domestic population a clear boundary must exist between the domestic and international spheres. For without such a demarcation, it would be impossible to decide who is included and who is excluded from any particular citizenry.

Third, once identified, a citizenry must be invested with sovereign authority. As it pertains to self-determination, sovereign authority

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must minimally be exercised to decide what form of governance will prevail in a state. And investing a citizenry of a state with sovereignty implies that a citizenry has the capacity to decide such issues which arise in and pertain to its state.

A corollary to the principle of self-determination which appears in Wilson's discourse is a doctrine of non-intervention. If self-determination maintains that domestic political considerations are solely the affairs of a domestic citizenry, then non-intervention affirms each state's respect for and non-interference in every other state's domestic affairs. Had the Wilson administration claimed to intervene in Mexico and Russia, it would have violated its own doctrine of self-determination.

In the final analysis, self-determination – and all those criteria required to make this principle politically effective – hinges upon narrowing the scope of investigation about "the people." It is tolerable – even encouraged – in this line of thought to ask a number of questions: Who are the people? What is the "true" character of the people? Which political faction or ideology "truly" represents the people? Such questions are allowed because they assume that there is a "real," "true," and stable identity to the people. This identity may be repressed or concealed. It may be underdeveloped or only projected. But what is assumed in each of these questions is that the identity of the people is ultimately decidable and that it can and should be represented.

Posing such questions limits analysis of the people because it disallows questions which do not begin from the assumption that the people do in fact have some true identity. Not grounded in such an assumption, questions about the formation of the people's identity threaten to disrupt the logic of self-determination. If, for example, it is asked *how* the people are constituted as a sovereign identity, then it becomes possible to think of the people as constituted in various ways, no particular one the necessary outcome in history. And if the people can be constituted in any number of ways, then the concept of self-determination can be seen as participating in their constitution rather than as standing for a morally just, apolitical prescription for governance. Once such a thought is allowed, the whole political position of self-determination crumbles.

In this respect, Wilson's foreign policy can be interpreted as firmly devoted not just to the principle of self-determination but also to silencing the very questions that self-determination must not allow to be asked: How is the identity of the people decided? How are the people produced so they can be represented? This was a particularly

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difficult task during Wilson's presidency because revolutionary movements in Latin America and Russia were destabilizing their respective domestic societies. The convenient practice of pointing to a government (signifier) as the representative of a people (signified) often was not an option because governments were falling and populations were dividing into opposing political factions. The capacity of the people to invest a particular government with sovereign authority was at the very least disrupted. What once appeared to be coherent identities bound into domestic political communities were dissolving and reforming. In such locales as Mexico and Russia, the identity of the people was in question.

Wilson's challenge became one of deferring this very question because the effectiveness of his foreign policy expressed in the principle of self-determination demanded it. Wilson could acknowledge political unrest in Mexico and Russia interpreted as crises of political representation. Coming down firmly on the side of the people, Wilson argued that the people's authorization of a particular state government to serve as its domestic and international agent was repealed. Yet Wilson could not go beyond this to admit that these crises of representation also were symbolic. Wilson could not recognize that the sovereign authority of the state – the very definition of the people – was also in crisis. These revolutions were not only battles over which political faction rightly ought to hold sovereign authority. They were also battles over how that source of sovereign authority ought to be molded. To recognize this aspect of the Mexican and Russian revolutions would invalidate Wilson's principle of self-determination. Therefore, the question of identity formation had to be suppressed at the very moment when events in Mexico and Russia brought this question to the fore.

Needless to say, this was no easy task. Nor was it necessarily a conscious task for the Wilson Administration. How this dilemma was worked out in Wilson Administration discourse was by preventing it from ever becoming a dilemma. This was done by focusing on the question, who is the rightful representative of the people? For Wilson, the character of the people was "decided-ly" liberal-capitalist democratic. Wilson envisioned two opposing forces at play in history – democracy which was associated with liberal-capitalist regimes and totalitarianism which was associated with either "traditional imperialist" regimes (for example, Germany) or with communist and socialist regimes. Democracy represented "the people"; totalitarianism suppressed "the people." While Wilson never doubted that democracy would win out in the end, he believed that democratic states must

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assist and advise not-yet-democratic states in their struggle for democracy. And, not surprisingly, Wilson "discovered" emerging liberal-capitalist democracies in the most unlikely places. Wilson "discovered" them in both the Mexican people who were struggling against authoritarian oppression and in the Russian people who were opposing first an authoritarian Tsar and then the Bolsheviks.

Writing the Mexican people

Turning first to the Mexican Revolution, the strategy of writing or producing the people is illustrated in the US discourse on intervention. Recall Secretary of State Lansing's cable to the President on the Pershing expedition. In this cable, Lansing outlined three criteria which express an act of intervention – interference in the internal affairs of a sovereign state, an effort on behalf of the interfering state to "clean up" the target state, and a justification of the interference as an act undertaken on behalf of the sovereign people in the target state (*FRUS*, 1916:560). While Lansing's cable is addressed to the Pershing expedition, it is interesting to read it back onto the US occupation of Vera Cruz in 1914 and analyze how the assumptions upon which Lansing's definition rest participate in crafting a very specific form of the Mexican people.

The US action at Verz Cruz could be termed interference because President Wilson made it no secret that the occupation of Vera Cruz was undertaken in the hope of leading to General Huerta's political downfall. Also, the occupation was intended to "clean up" Mexico, at least politically. President Wilson aspired to put in place a Mexican government that would be representative not of a military dictator or of one faction of the Mexican people, but of the Mexican people as a whole. While Wilson's special agent in Mexico Lind commented that the Mexicans politically seemed "more like children than like men" (quoted in Callcott, 1977:353), the President had high aspirations for the Mexican people. One foreign diplomat at the time summed up his impression of Wilson's policy toward Mexico saying that Wilson "propose[d] to teach the South American Republics to elect good men."[20] Furthermore, President Wilson was fond of saying that "when properly directed, there is no people not fitted for self-government" (quoted in Callcott, 1977:357).

As for the basis of this action, the Vera Cruz occupation was justified with reference to the sovereign people of Mexico. The occupation was not undertaken in the name of just any Mexican people, but in the name of a Mexican people understood to be like the people of the

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United States. Required in such an understanding was the identification of the Mexican people in the image of the people of the United States, albeit at some earlier moment in their "political development." In this respect, Lansing's argument was consistent with earlier statements by Wilson. In his book, *Constitutional Government in the United States*, Wilson wrote:

> Government may be said to have passed, roughly speaking, through four stages and forms of development: a first stage in which the government was master, the people veritable subjects; a second in which the government, ceasing to be master by virtue of sheer force and unquestioned authority, remained master by virtue of its insight and sagacity, its readiness and firmness to lead; a third in which both sorts of mastery failed it and it found itself face to face with leaders of the people who were bent upon controlling it, a period of deep agitation and full of the signs of change; and a fourth in which the leaders of the people themselves became the government, and the development was complete. (1908:28)

According to this logic, Mexico was in the third stage – a stage in which the Mexican people were finding their own voice in matters of governance but had not yet developed the capacity to rule the state. The Mexican people were struggling to become politically developed. Political development – when it was achieved – could easily be recognized, according to Wilson. For in another passage of this work, Wilson describes political development.

> But the end, whether it comes soon or late, is quite certain to be always the same. In one nation in one form, in another in another, but wherever conviction is awakened and serious purpose results from it, this at last happens: that the people's leaders will themselves take control of the government as they have done in England, in Switzerland, in America, in France, in Scandinavia, in Italy, and as they will yet do in every country whose polity fulfills the promise of modern time. (1908:38)

He continues: "When the fourth and final stage of constitutional development is reached ... one or other of two forms of government may result: the parliamentary English form or the American form" (1908:40).

The telos of political development, according to Wilson, is one or another form of liberal democracy. The French Revolution was an early attempt to move from the third to the fourth stage of political development. Wilson's analogies between the French Revolution and the Mexican Revolution suggest that the Mexican Revolution was another such attempt. And the United States – the reproducible sign of

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institutionalized democracy – expressed the end product of such struggles.

President Wilson told one reporter at the time of the US occupation of Vera Cruz:

> What we desire to do, and what we shall do, is to show our neighbors to the south of us that their interests are identical with our interests; that we have no plans or any thoughts of our own exaltation, but have in view only the peace and prosperity of the people in our hemisphere. (Quoted in Scott, 1918:391).

Making a claim that the interests of the people of the United States and of Mexico are identical is only possible if the signs of democracy – a citizenry (signified) and a representative government (signifier) – can be produced, exchanged, and reproduced in very different locales.

Writing the Russian people

Wilson's strategy of writing or producing the people was even more apparent during the Bolshevik revolution. This was so because a well-articulated alternative "Russian man" was in circulation in the discourse of the Bolsheviks. This "Russian man" was a proletarian worker or peasant involved in the overthrow of bourgeois institutions. Because Wilson's strategy was to support the "Russian people" and oppose Bolshevism, Wilson's discourse on revolutionary events in Russia had to both construct a "Russian people" that the Wilson Administration could support while simultaneously undercutting the credibility of any alternative constructions of "Russian man," especially the one forwarded by the Bolsheviks.

The first strategy employed in Wilson Administration discourse was to differentiate between the authentic Russian people and the Bolsheviks. A cable from Secretary of State Lansing to the President makes this argument. To the administration, according to Lansing, "the Russian people" were not represented by or identical to the Bolsheviks. This was because, in part, the Bolsheviks claimed to represent "a class and not ... all classes of society, a class which does not have property but hopes to obtain a share by process of government rather than by individual enterprise" (January 2, 1918, *FRUS, 1914–1920, Lansing Papers*, 1939, vol. 2:346). Furthermore, Lansing questioned the Bolshevik's authority to rule.

> it might properly be asked by what authority the Bolsheviks assume the right to speak for the Russian people. They seized the Government at Petrograd by force, they broke up opposition in the army by

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> disorganizing it, they prevented the meeting of the Constituent Assembly chosen by the people because they could not control it, they have seized the property of the nation and confiscated private property, they have failed to preserve public order and human life, they have acted arbitrarily without pretense of legality, in fact, they have set up over a portion of Russia a despotic oligarchy as menacing to liberty as any absolute monarchy on earth, and this they maintain by force and not by the will of the people, which they prevent from expression. (*FRUS, 1914–1920, Lansing Papers*, 1939, vol. 2:348)

United States Ambassador to Great Britain Page reported to the Secretary of State that Great Britain held a similar view of who the Russian people were. He cabled the Secretary: "I discover a growing conviction [on the part of the British] that the Bolshevik regime will soon end and that southern Russia will come forward as the real Russia" (*FRUS, 1918–1919, Russia*, 1931–1937, vol. 2:33).

Satisfying themselves as to who "the Russian people" were *not*, Wilson Administration officials demonstrated a profound respect for the rights of the Russian people while they projected onto the Russian people a character in their own image.[21]

> the Government of the United States is convinced that the spirit of democracy continues to dominate the entire Russian nation. With that spirit the United States feels a profound sympathy and believes in the ultimate effect of its cohesive power upon the Russian people as a whole.
>
> The determination of an agency to exercise the sovereign power of the nation belongs wholly and solely to the Russian people. As to that they ought to be supreme.
>
> The United States has only the kindliest feelings for Russia. Its policy as to recognition or non-recognition of a government at the present time is founded on the principle that the Russian people are sovereign and have the right to determine their own domestic organization without interference or influence by other nations. Its desire to aid the people of Russia rests solely upon the fraternal spirit which it possesses for a great democracy which has endured so much in its struggle against autocracy both within and without its borders. (Draft statement to be issued by Secretary of State Lansing, January 10, 1918, *FRUS, 1914–1920, Lansing Papers*, 1939, vol. 2:350–1)

Though not stated explicitly, these passages made several assumptions about the Russian people. The Russian people were characterized by their rights and not by any class affiliation. They had the same goals as the peoples of the Allied nations, namely to oppose autocracy and replace it with democracy. And finally, the Russian people could succeed in this struggle if they organized themselves along the international principles of nationalism and sovereignty.

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For Wilson Administration officials, the urgency of abating Bolshevik attempts to foundationalize an alternative class-based "Russian people" was not a rhetorical exercise without consequences. Lansing's cable, while it betrays an elitist style which is prejudicial to the working class, alerted the President to what was at stake in Russia – the sanctity of the liberal individual, the principle of sovereignty to which nation-states hold, and the social and political international order. Reacting to Bolshevik suggestions that colonized peoples were wrongly suppressed by imperialist nations and had the right to organize themselves in spite of their incorporation in existing states, Lansing began:

> The suggestions of the Bolsheviks in regard to Ireland, India, and other countries which have been and are integral parts of recognized powers are in my opinion utterly untenable if it is desirable to preserve the present concept of sovereign states in international relations. However justified may be the principle of local self-government, the necessities of preserving an orderly world require that there should be a national authority with sovereign rights to defend and control the communities within the national boundaries.
>
> It is apparent, as I said at the outset, that the Bolsheviks are appealing in this address to a particular class of society, which they seek to arouse against the present order of things, enticing them with the possible abolition of the institution of private property and the possible control by that class of accumulated wealth and of its distribution. The document is an appeal to the proletariat of all countries, to the ignorant and mentally deficient, who by their numbers are urged to become masters. Here seems to me to lie a very real danger in view of the present social unrest throughout the world.
>
> Of course the enforcement of the will of the ignorant, indifferent to all save their own pleasures, would be the worst form of despotism, especially as that class has always been controlled by violent and radical leaders. It would be a species of class-despot, which would have far less regard for private rights than an individual despot. This seems to be the present social program of the Bolsheviks, and they appear to be putting it into operation in Russia. It is essentially anarchistic rather than socialistic in character and will, wherever adopted, break down every semblance of social order and public authority.
>
> (Lansing to the President; *FRUS, 1914–1920, Lansing Papers*, 1939, vol. 2:347–8).

The Bolshevik strategy of reinscribing the people was a radical move in the traditional sense of the term radical. This strategy went to the root of the international system – the people organized along nationalistic principles – and reinvented the people by organizing them

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along class lines. The result was to challenge every institution and principle that the Wilson administration stood for – liberal individuals, the nation-state, sovereignty, and a liberal-capitalist international order. Unable to relinquish the necessity of these institutions and principles as the only acceptable forms of social and political life, Lansing concluded that Bolshevism would result in at best class despotism and at worst anarchy.

Bolshevism, with its alternative construction of the people, jeopardized Wilsonian goals of universalizing equivalent democratic images. It is not much of a stretch to go from Lansing's account of Bolshevism and its implications to the position that the Russian people's sovereignty must be safeguarded against Bolshevism. However, such a position was easier to maintain when a non-Bolshevik, alternative Russian people could be translated from vague rhetorical references into a concrete opposition. President Wilson recognized the value of "discovering" a liberal opposition to Bolshevism among the numerous self-governing authorities in Siberia. The President expressed this notion to Secretary of State Lansing:

> I would very much value a memorandum containing *all* that we know about the several *nuclei* of self-governing authority that seem to be springing up in Siberia. It would afford me a great deal of satisfaction to get behind the most nearly representative of them if it can indeed draw leadership and control to itself.
>
> (*FRUS, 1914–1920, Lansing Papers*, 1939, vol. 2:360)

Supporting a "nuclei of self-governing authority" in Siberia would resolve a number of issues for the Wilson administration. If a self-governing authority could be found, it would make tangible the alternative Russian people of whom the administration so often spoke. As noted earlier, Wilson Administration officials could point to former Provisional Government representatives as the Russian people and refer to the ousting of the Tsar as the Russian Revolution. But the Provisional Government had no governing authority within Russia since the Bolshevik revolution. To find a Russian people engaged in political self-determination in Russia would give the Wilson Administration an ideological and territorial foothold in Russia.

The existence of a self-governing authority in Siberia also meant that the semantic play used by the Wilson Administration to distinguish between the Bolsheviks and the Russian people could be simplified. US backing of an organized, self-governing alternative to the Bolsheviks expressed in practice the US position as to who the Russian people were and who they were not.

In terms of the US intervention policy, the existence of a self-

https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511597107.006 Published online by Cambridge University Press
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governing authority was invaluable. Such a government's opposition to both German imperialism and Bolshevism joined together the two ideological foes the Wilson Administration hoped to oppose through an intervention policy. Furthermore, it did so in a positive way. For, given a US-backed, anti-imperialist, anti-Bolshevik government, the United States could in part justify its intervention policy on the basis of protecting the sovereign authority of this infant government. Thus, what otherwise may have been seen as an oppositional motive could be regarded as a morally justified, "disinterested" attempt toward furthering self-determination in Siberia. The State Department emphasized the disinterestedness of the US government in Russian political affairs and the US respect for Russian sovereignty in a cable circulated to Allied Ambassadors justifying Allied intervention in Siberia.

> In taking this action the Government of the United States wished to announce to the people of Russia in the most public and solemn manner that it contemplates no interference with the political sovereignty of Russia, no intervention in her internal affairs – not even in the local affairs of the limited areas which her military force may be obliged to occupy – and no impairment of her territorial integrity, either now or hereafter, but that what we are about to do has as its single and only object the rendering of such aid as shall be acceptable to the Russian people themselves in their endeavors to regain control of their own affairs, their own territory, and their own destiny.
> (Acting Secretary of State to Ambassador Morris in Japan, August 3, 1918, *FRUS, 1918–1919, Russia*, 1931–1937, vol. 2: 329; see also Secretary of State to Allied Ambassadors, July 17, 1918, *FRUS, 1918–1919, Russia*, 1931–1937, vol. 2: 288–9)

The US claim to non-interference, although *prima facia* counter-intuitive, was not a surprising Wilson Administration claim and made sense if one keeps two points in mind. First, as Levin correctly points out,

> Wilsonian non-interference in the internal politics of Siberia really amounted to a tendency to see all non-Bolshevik and pro-Allied elements as an undifferentiated mass known as "Russia" and a refusal to interfere in the disputes among the rival claimants of anti-Bolshevik and anti-German authority. (Levin, 1968: 110).

This position is supported by the "Proclamation by the Commanders of Allied and Associated Forces at Vladivostok" which attests to the Allies "sympathetic friendship for the Russian people without reference to any political faction or party" (see *FRUS, 1918–1919, Russia*, 1931–1937, vol. 2: 271).

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Second, the Wilson Administration concluded that the Allied military action in Siberia in no way interfered with Russian political sovereignty by distinguishing between the Allied "military action" (joint Allied intervention) which it supported and "military intervention" (unilateral Japanese intervention) which it condemned (Acting Secretary of State to Ambassador Morris in Japan, August 3, 1918, *FRUS, 1918–1919, Russia*, 1931–1937, vol. 2:328; Secretary of State to Allied Ambassadors, July 17, 1918, *FRUS, 1918–1919, Russia*, 1931–1937, vol. 2:288).

Thanks to these discursive strategies, the Wilson Administration could claim both that Allied actions in Russia were not intervention and that these actions were undertaken on behalf of the Russian people.

Overall, the Wilson administration policy of self-determination should be interpreted not just as a foreign policy which set out the ideals and goals of that administration and which offered clues as to what sovereignty and intervention meant and where the foundation of sovereign authority resided. Rather, self-determination should be regarded as a political strategy which, through Wilson Administration discourse, worked to silence or defer questions about how "selves" or "identities" were produced by directing analysis toward such questions as: "who were the 'real,' 'true,' Mexican and Russian people?"

By shifting one's interpretive focus from assumptions of decidability and questions about recovery to assumptions of undecidability and questions about production, one politicizes representations. It becomes possible to investigate how decisions about what sovereignty and intervention mean participate in producing and stabilizing representations of the people.

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