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THE AMERICAN MILITARY MISSION AND ARMENIA: JAMES HARBORD'S REPORT IN THE CONTEXT OF US MANDATE POLICY AND ARMENIAN-AMERICAN RELATIONS (1919-1920)

Abstract: The present study lies at the intersection of history and other humanities, focusing on Armenian history and the US foreign policy—the position of the US in the region at the close of the First World War, the activities it carried out, and the corpus of information it assembled concerning Armenia and the Armenian people during the pivotal years of 1919 and 1920. Particular attention is devoted to President Woodrow Wilson's Armenian policy in the matter of an American mandate in order to investigate and elucidate the aims of the American mission dispatched to Armenia, and the circumstances under which the US undertook the commitment to determine Armenia's borders. Major General James G. Harbord's mission report is used as a seminal primary source for the historiography of Armenian-American relations, the mandate issue, the Armenian Genocide, and the diplomatic history of boundary delimitation.

Keywords: US foreign policy, First World War, James G. Harbord, Armenia, mandate, Woodrow Wilson, Senate.

1. Introduction

The role of the US in contemporary geopolitical relations is both crucial and strategic. Events that took place nearly a century ago testify to America's longstanding ambitions and interests in Asia Minor and the South Caucasus. Unveiling historical truth and analyzing its multiple layers is of great importance for the credibility and international perception of any state. A proper evaluation of historical and political lessons constitutes a vital element in the developmental trajectory of any society.

2. Chronological Scope of the Study

The research covers the period from the end of the First World War in 1918 through the pivotal years of 1919 and 1920. At the conclusion of the war, amid the formation of a new world order, the US sought to assert a more prominent geopolitical role. A vivid display of this ambition was President Woodrow Wilson's "14 Points."¹ These points, aimed at establishing a new international order, set the stage for far-reaching political transformations.

During the Paris Peace Conference, alongside peace negotiations, the issue of mandates (protectorates) was actively discussed. Within this framework, the question of an American mandate for Armenia became particularly significant, promoted by President Woodrow Wilson himself.² A key challenge for the US government was to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the mandated territory and to evaluate its geopolitical significance.

Advocating for an assertive foreign policy, President Wilson sought to maximize the benefits of the US participation in the First World War. His "14 Points" and the acceptance of mandate responsibilities opened new strategic opportunities for America. To investigate the mandate territories and assess the feasibility of US administration, Major General James G. Harbord was dispatched to the region.³

The cornerstone source for this study is the report prepared by James G. Harbord,⁴ which is currently preserved in the Library of Congress.⁵ Of particular importance is the contribution of George Van Horn Moseley (1920), a member of the military mission who provided a detailed analysis of the proposed mandate's military aspects.

The topic has also been extensively examined in James B. Gidney's work (1967), which addresses the Armenian Question and the mandate issue within the context of the Paris Peace Conference and the San Remo Conference, considering the dynamics among the great powers.

The research further draws upon a range of other critical studies, including P. M. Brown (1920), R. L. Daniel (1959), and H. Akar (2005).

¹ Woodrow Wilson, *President Woodrow Wilson's 14 Points (1918)*, US National Archives.

² Daniel 1959: 260.

³ Brown 1920: 396.

⁴ Harbord 1920.

⁵ Harbord 1920.

3. Methodology

The research is grounded in a set of qualitative historical methods tailored to the rigorous reconstruction and analysis of early 20th-century geopolitical developments. The following methodological approaches were employed throughout the study:

- Historical reconstruction: The study systematically identified and analyzed key events relevant to the period under investigation, focusing on their geopolitical and diplomatic significance.
- Chronological documentation: Events were documented and narrated in strict chronological order, allowing for a coherent and contextualized understanding of the historical trajectory.
- Comparative analysis: Cross-case comparisons were applied to evaluate the United States' engagement in the South Caucasus vis-à-vis its broader foreign policy objectives in the postwar era.
- Source triangulation and factual validation: Emphasis was placed on verifying historical truth by consulting a wide array of primary and secondary sources, including archival documents, government records, and eyewitness accounts.
- Analytical synthesis: Based on the collected evidence, thematic conclusions were drawn regarding the nature and implications of American diplomatic and strategic involvement in the region.

This combination of methodological tools ensured a nuanced and evidence-based reconstruction of the historical context surrounding the US mission in Armenia and the mandate question.

4. The Armenian Question in American Public Opinion and Political Circles during the First World War

American missionaries had been active in the Ottoman Empire and in numerous settlements in Western Armenia since the late 19th century. By the beginning of the First World War, dozens of missionary institutions—including schools, hospitals, and charitable organizations—were already functioning in these areas, many of them serving Armenian communities. These American educational and humanitarian centers played an important role in local life and became hubs of cultural, social and charitable activity. In terms of policy, the American government was guided by the Monroe Doctrine principle of non-interference in European affairs; however, this did not imply indifference to the Armenian Question.

In 1915, American Ambassador Henry Morgenthau Sr. revealed the policy toward Armenians in numerous reports and, through his activities, caused a great public reaction to the Armenian question. In 1917, he toured various US states and gave numerous speeches presenting the disastrous situation in the Ottoman Empire regarding Armenians, Greeks, and Assyrians.⁶ Henry Morgenthau Sr. was the US ambassador to Turkey from

⁶ Payaslian 2005: 104–122; Travis 2006: 327.

1913 to 1916. He was an expert on the Armenian question and acted as a defender of the interests of the Armenian people. As a result of his activities, the public opinion in the US was steered considerably in favor of the Armenian Cause and the protection of the interests of Armenians. Drawing US political attention to the problems of Armenians and ensuring an international response to these problems, Morgenthau's following publications also testify to his humanistic activities and are a significant source for studying the Armenian question: "On the Armenian Massacres" (1918), "Armenia Calls" (1918), "Why the Ottoman Empire Must Be Destroyed" (1918), "Will Armenia Be Destroyed?" (1920), "The Massacres of the Armenians in 1915" (1922), and other articles on this topic, as well as books, including *The Story of Ambassador Morgenthau* (1918), *The Tragedy of Armenia* (1918),⁷ *Secrets of the Bosphorus: 1913–1916* (1918).⁸ Despite his heavy workload, the Armenian question remained central to Ambassador Morgenthau.⁹ Following the dire situation of Armenia and Armenians in the Ottoman Empire during the First World War, 1914–1916, and sending numerous reports to the US government, Henry Morgenthau Sr. requested the intervention of the American government.¹⁰ Speaking in 1918, as part of his public awareness work in the US, regarding the massacres of Greeks and Assyrians in the Ottoman Empire, he noted that Greeks and Assyrians were being subjected to the "same methods" of deportation and "wholesale murder" as Armenians, and that two million Armenians, Greeks, and Assyrians had already perished. Of course, Henry Morgenthau's proposal for the US government intervention in the above-mentioned problems was legally possible with the approval of a mandate commitment.¹¹

Numerous articles were published in the American press about the current situation in Armenia. The *New York Times* alone published a large number of articles about the persecution and extermination of Armenians in 1894–1915 and the following years.¹²

The information about the plight of the Armenians gave rise to a private charity movement in the country. This was accompanied by mass demonstrations, fundraisers, resolutions and other rallies in favor of the Armenians. Many prominent individuals in American society created structures to help the Armenians.¹³

The Americans tried to help the surviving Armenians. Cleveland Dosh and James Barton led the Armenian Relief Committee, which was later reorganized into the American Relief Committee in the Near East. After the Armistice of Mudros in 1918, many prominent American figures supported the idea of creating an independent Armenia, and the US Congress also adopted a resolution calling for the creation of a united Armenian state (from Cilicia to the eastern provinces of Armenia).

As a result of all this, the Armenian question also left its mark on political processes.

Following the conclusion of the First World War, the US took on an active and influential role in international relations. This aspiration led to the deployment of a special

⁷ Morgenthau 1918a: 15.

⁸ Morgenthau 1918b: 275.

⁹ Balakian 2003: 223.

¹⁰ Oren 2007: 333–336.

¹¹ Travis 2006: 327.

¹² Oren 2007: 336.

¹³ Balakian 2003.

mission to the region of Asia Minor and Armenia. At the Paris Peace Conference, one of the critical issues under deliberation was the determination of the borders of defeated Turkey. During the San Remo session of the conference, the question of precisely delineating the borders of Armenia was brought to the fore.

On April 24, 1920, the US recognized Armenia's independence. After that, the Supreme Council of the Allied Powers officially appealed to President Woodrow Wilson to assume the mandate over Armenia and adjudicate the issue of the Armenia–Turkey borders.¹⁴ The relevant provisions of the Covenant of the League of Nations regarding mandates made this course of action feasible.

The idea of the US assuming the Armenian mandate aligned closely with President Wilson's political interests and global vision. It was a realistic proposal, as Wilson's desire to shape a new international order—articulated in his “14 Points” and his strategic ambition¹⁵ to establish a geopolitical presence in both Asia Minor and the South Caucasus—fit the broader political context.

President Woodrow Wilson was trying to keep the US from entering the First World War.¹⁶ This was evidenced by the negotiations to establish peace with the Germans during 1916 and 1917, and President Wilson's initiatives were embodied in the American position in those negotiations, in the principles of establishing peace, which were first presented to the Senate on January 22, 1917.¹⁷

The US, becoming one of the victorious powers, participated in the signing of the Treaty of Versailles, where Wilson presented his peace program, “14 Points,” the publication and future implementation of which would lead to an increase in the role of the US in world processes.¹⁸ At the Paris Conference, the US representative House undertook to agree on the principles of the “14 Points” within the framework of the conference with the other powers. In particular, these provisions were accepted by Britain, with the exception of the point on freedom of the seas.¹⁹

Of President Wilson's fourteen points, the twelfth point directly concerned the Armenian people and the future Armenian state. It stated that the non-Turkish nations of the Ottoman Empire, including the Armenians, should live freely and establish autonomy. The Turkish portion of the present Ottoman Empire should be assured a secure sovereignty, but the other nationalities that were, at the time, under Ottoman rule should be provided with an undoubted security of life and an absolutely impervious opportunity of autonomous development, and the Dardanelles should be permanently opened as a free passage to the ships and commerce of all nations under international guarantees.²⁰ The president later reaffirmed his ideas on this, as evidenced by his advisor, Colonel House, head of the US delegation to the Paris Conference, who noted in his memoirs that President Wilson stated the above-mentioned circumstance in official

¹⁴ Gidney 1967: 77.

¹⁵ Manela 2007: 4.

¹⁶ Link 1954: 275.

¹⁷ Link 1954: 265.

¹⁸ Brockway 1968: 71–74.

¹⁹ Grigg 2002: 384.

²⁰ Wilson 1924: 470.

comments: “Armenia must be given a port on the Mediterranean, and a protecting power established. France may claim it, but the Armenians would prefer Great Britain.”²¹ Later, President Wilson reiterated his claims about the need for Armenia’s independence.²²

Subsequently, the Turkish authorities also acknowledged that Wilson’s fourteen points were the basis for the end of the war and the negotiations.²³ On January 30, 1919, within the framework of the Paris Peace Conference, the leaders of the US, Great Britain, France, Italy, and Japan adopted the Draft Resolution in Reference to Mandatories, which affirmed that Armenia, Syria, Mesopotamia, Palestine, and Arabia were to be severed from the Ottoman Empire and placed under the governance of more advanced nations as mandates assigned by the League of Nations.

Within this framework, British Prime Minister David Lloyd George proposed that the US take Armenia as its mandated territory.²⁴ Indeed, it would have been inconsistent to propose such a mandate without first deploying a mission to study the region in detail. In accordance with a decision adopted by the Paris Peace Conference on March 20, 1919, the United States government later dispatched a fact-finding mission composed of more than fifty individuals, under the leadership of Major General James G. Harbord.

Notably, the suggestion to send this mission to the region was originally made to President Wilson by Henry Morgenthau—former US Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, a prominent Jewish-American statesman, and a vocal advocate for the Armenian people.²⁵

5. The Mission of Major General James G. Harbord and Armenia

Major General James G. Harbord played a decisive role in securing the US its share in the victory of the First World War, because he commanded the American troops and ensured coordination of operations with the Allies during the hostilities and the final stages of the war. Through Harbord’s delegation, the US government aimed to clarify the ethnopolitical character and economic and other capacities of the mandated territory proposed by the Peace Conference. After the war, a delegation led by Harbord was dispatched to Armenia. The report submitted to the Senate was titled “Mandate for Armenia.”²⁶

The delegation’s visit and the resulting report became a reliable source for revealing the US policies and goals toward the Near East, Asia Minor, and Armenia, including their numerous nuances. The study of the mandate issue and the documentation of the prevailing conditions in Armenia and its surroundings were closely tied to the US military mission and the professional work and report submitted by its leader, James Harbord.

James Harbord was born on March 21, 1866, in Bloomington, Illinois, US. He studied at Kansas State University,²⁷ and later at the Military Academy in New York.

²¹ Seymour 1928: 199.

²² Wilson 1927: 358–359.

²³ Scott 1921: 419.

²⁴ Gidney 1967: 80.

²⁵ Gidney 1967: 171.

²⁶ Harbord 1920.

²⁷ Zabecki, Mastriano 2020: 153.

Beginning his military career in 1889, he advanced through the ranks.²⁸ During the First World War, when the US entered the war on the side of Britain, France, and Russia, General Pershing, who was appointed commander of the US expeditionary forces, chose James Harbord as his chief of staff.²⁹

In May 1918, Harbord was placed in command of American troops at the front lines and coordinated the movement and integration of US forces with the British command.³⁰ In June and July, Harbord and his forces participated in battles against German troops.³¹ During this time, due to complications in the supply lines, Pershing entrusted Harbord with resolving logistical issues, which he handled with great success.³² James Harbord received the permanent rank of major general and was, respectively, awarded medals by both the Army and the Navy for “distinguished service.”³³ The distinguished officer passed away in August 1947 in New York and was buried at Arlington National Cemetery.

Because of his high reputation and trustworthiness, President Woodrow Wilson, after the war, in August 1919, assigned him to lead a mission to Armenia to study the proposed mandated territory. The high-ranking officer fulfilled this task with great responsibility and presented the corresponding report.

The archival documents, dated October 16, 1919, addressed to the US Secretary of State,³⁴ include the itinerary of the mission. The delegation traveled aboard the *Martha Washington* military ship to Constantinople, from where they reached Mediterranean Adana by the Baghdad railway, then continued to other Cilician cities—Tarsus, Ayas, and Mersin. From there, the delegation traveled by rail to Aleppo and Mardin, then by motor vehicle to Diyarbakir, Harput, Malatya, Sivas, Erzincan, Erzurum, Kars, Yerevan, Tiflis, and then by train to Baku and Batumi.

Being in Asia Minor, Armenia, and the South Caucasus, James Harbord’s mission prepared an extensive report titled “Conditions in the Near East: Report of the American Military Mission to Armenia,” which included the following content: a transmittal letter to Secretary of State Robert Lansing, the history and current condition of the Armenian population, the political situation and proposals for reconstruction, the conditions and challenges of the mandate in Turkey and the Transcaucasia, military issues, population and resources, and conclusions.³⁵

The report included five-year estimates of the financial costs of the mandate and supplementary materials: a brief memorandum concerning the Association for the Defense of the Rights of Anatolia and Rumelia was signed by Mustafa Kemal, Harbord’s response letter to him, the declaration of the Sivas Congress, the petition sent to the US President on behalf of that congress, and statistical tables related to the region.³⁶

²⁸ Davis 1998: 159.

²⁹ Venzon 2013: 273.

³⁰ Harbord 1936: 257–263.

³¹ Zabecki, 2020: 161.

³² Lacey 2008: 121.

³³ Havel 1996: 255.

³⁴ Gidney 1967: 189.

³⁵ Harbord 1920: 2.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

The work of the mission also included sectoral studies provided in the appendices.³⁷

The American military mission's report, in its entirety, is a crucial source for studying the international and military-political context of the region during that period.

At the beginning of the report, the itinerary is outlined, noting that the mission traveled to Constantinople, and from early September³⁸ continued to Batumi, various Armenian settlements, the Russian Transcaucasus, and Syria. A request was made for the Secretary of State to review the report and consider the political, military, geographic, administrative, economic, and other interests of the US in the region and report on them.

The report notes that the mission members traveled the full length of Asia Minor and across the Transcaucasus from north to south and east to west. In Armenia, the mission met with the spiritual leader of the Armenian Church, Catholicos Gevorg V, in the ancient seat of the Armenian Apostolic Church in Etchmiadzin, founded in AD 301.

The mission spent thirty days on this journey, meeting with representatives from various communities and conducting research throughout the region, providing an objective picture of the situation. The core of the mission's report concerned Armenia and an in-depth examination of the circumstances under which the US might assume the country's mandate. Naturally, before taking on the mandate of Armenia, it was logical and reasonable to understand the country's geographic and political position, civilizational heritage, and ethnic structure.

The report referred to Armenia as composed of Caucasian Armenia, which had separated from the Russian Empire and on which the Republic of Armenia had been formed, and Asia Minor or Western Armenia. At times, the eastern part under the Russian Empire was called Russian Armenia, and the western part under Ottoman rule was referred to as Turkish Armenia.³⁹

Naturally, Turkish researchers and various figures are trying to present the issue in a different way,⁴⁰ avoiding acknowledgment of Armenia's historical and cultural presence in the area, but that does not alter the political and other aspects reflected in the report. For the US mission, there clearly existed a historically rooted Armenian civilization in Asia Minor (confirmed not only by James Harbord himself but by all co-authors of the report),⁴¹ which was regarded as the homeland of the Armenian people, corroborated by ancient Persian, Greco-Roman, and other authors.⁴²

This fact is also detailed in the work of James B. Gidney, one of the authors who studied the history of the mandate,⁴³ where the history of the Armenian people is presented, including the fact that in the six vilayets of Western Armenia under Ottoman rule, Armenians were the majority population as of 1912.⁴⁴

³⁷ Moseley 1920; Harbord 1920: 2.

³⁸ Gidney 1967: 172.

³⁹ Bournoutian 1994: 44–45.

⁴⁰ Akar 2005: 188.

⁴¹ Gidney 1967: 175.

⁴² Chahin 2001: 177; Yamauchi 2003: 36; Clackson 2008: 124; Tyler-Smith 2016: 931–936; Lang 1980: 85–111.

⁴³ Gidney 1967: 2.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* 22.

6. The History and Homeland of the Armenian People in the Harbord Report

When presenting the history and homeland of the Armenian people, Harbord affirms that the Armenians are one of the most ancient peoples in the world: “Although Armenians were scattered more or less throughout the whole of Transcaucasia and Asia Minor, Armenia was an organized nation 1,000 years before there was one in Europe, except Greece and Rome.”⁴⁵

According to the author, following the adoption of Christianity, the Armenian people experienced a cultural golden age that lasted two centuries. Harbord notes that sixteen Byzantine emperors were of Armenian origin. After a long historical rise in statehood, Armenian civilization became a victim of the Turkic peoples who arrived from Central Asia.⁴⁶

Harbord adds that the insufficient efforts by European states to protect Armenians from suffering and exploitation led to the development of an image of Imperial Russia as the Armenians’ sole protector.⁴⁷ In his view, Russia’s protection of the Armenians following the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–1878 was effectively neutralized by the unfavorable Treaty of Berlin, a result of Anglo-Russian rivalries, through which Britain gained the island of Cyprus in exchange for concessions to Turkey. The report also outlines how the Armenian Question was exploited within the sphere of great power relations.

Harbord’s report also addresses the organized deportation and destruction of the Armenians under the Young Turks regime. It details numerous tragic aspects of the policy of neutralization and annihilation of the Armenian population, ultimately describing the current condition of the people as follows:

Such are conditions to-day in the regions where the remnant of the Armenian people exist; roads and lands almost back to the wild; starvation only kept off by American relief; villages and towns in ruins; brigandage rampant in the Transcaucasus; lack of medicines and warm clothing; winter coming on in a treeless land without coal.⁴⁸

From the standpoint of the mandated territory’s examination, the Young Turks policy toward it is described as directly targeting the Armenian population, as noted by Brigadier General George Van Horn Moseley, who authored the military section of Harbord’s report. He writes:

But let us try to find this country which the powers would have us govern. Does the Armenian problem now exist, or did the Young Turks actually accomplish their purpose “to rid themselves of the Armenian problem by ridding themselves of the Armenians”?⁴⁹

Thus, in summing up the material presented in the first section of the mission’s report, it must be affirmed that the opening part of Harbord’s report, alongside General Moseley’s contribution, offers a portrayal of Armenia’s history, its civilizational legacy, historical

⁴⁵ Harbord 1920: 5.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Harbord 1920: 7–11.

⁴⁹ Moseley 1920: 7.

upheavals, the Armenian Question, the great powers' positions regarding Armenian issues, the policy of extermination carried out by the Turks, and the deeply complex political and socioeconomic situation Armenia faced following the First World War.

Hence, by examining the first part of James Harbord's mission report, the following conclusions and inferences can be drawn: The Paris Peace Conference, which concluded the end of the First World War, established a system of superpower patronage or mandates. The mandate of Armenia, which participated in the war on the side of the Allies and suffered heavy losses, was offered by Great Britain to the US At the behest of President Woodrow Wilson, a military mission led by General James Harbord was sent to the region to study the mandated territory. Starting in the Middle East and ending in Asia Minor and Transcaucasia, Harbord's fifty-person committee presented a report containing answers to more than a thousand questions regarding mandate issues to the US Secretary of State and the Senate in October 1919. From an analytical perspective, the report of Harbord and other mission members is a thorough and reliable source for studying the history of Armenia, the Armenian Question, and the situation created in the Middle East, Asia Minor, and Transcaucasia after the First World War.

The war brought enormous human losses to various peoples, including the Armenian population that was subjected to genocide in the Ottoman Empire. The victory of the Allied countries awakened hopes among Armenians for independence from the rule of the Ottoman Empire and the restoration of justice. Two Armenian delegations participated in the Paris Conference: Republic of Armenia, formed after the collapse of the Russian Empire, and Western Armenians, who wanted to be liberated from Turkish rule. Both pursued the same goal: the unification of the two parts of Armenians into an independent Armenia. In this regard, it was clear that the Armenian people, who had come out of the war with heavy losses, could not establish their independent statehood without external assistance, and the offer of a mandate to the US was a significant signal of support for Armenians at that time.

7. The Political Situation and Reconstruction Proposals

The second section of General Harbord's report, entitled "The Political Situation; Reconstruction Proposals," analyzes the politico-military conditions in the mandated territory. It describes the destructive nature of Turkish domination over the peoples and civilizations under its control, referencing the content of a formal reply presented to the Turkish delegation at the Paris Peace Conference.

The Republic of Armenia sought, through the establishment of the mandate, to secure international recognition of the country by uniting the six vilayets of Turkey (Van, Bitlis, Diarbekir, Harput, Sivas, and Erzerum) and Cilicia with Armenia.⁵⁰ Any expression of independence or autonomy by Armenians, Greeks, or other nationalities under Turkish rule was met with opposition from every Turk. According to George Van Horn Moseley's section, "Military Conditions in Turkey," this was the situation regarding Turkish nationalist attitudes toward Armenians and Greeks, and also reflects the danger posed by Mustafa Kemal's rise to power.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Harbord 1920: 11–12.

⁵¹ Moseley 1920: 11–12.

Importantly, the analysis of the politico-military context demonstrates that the Armenian people—despite their considerable contribution to the victory in the First World War—found themselves in a disastrous situation, facing the Turkish threat alone. The withdrawal of British forces from Transcaucasia in August 1919, especially after the Russian withdrawal following the events of 1917, left Turkish-Muslim forces unsupervised.

Even within the Allied command, there was clear awareness that the withdrawal of Western forces would lead to the final destruction of the Armenians.⁵² Nonetheless, British troops were withdrawn, and the Armenians were left defenseless against Turkish aggression.

Harbord, analyzing the political and ethnic landscape of the region, concludes that the mandate cannot be sufficient for Armenia and the Transcaucasus alone if Constantinople and Asia Minor, “with their significant strategic value,” are excluded from the mandated territory. He notes that even the city’s strategic location could become a source of competition among the powers.⁵³

Even if Armenia were restored it remained troubling that Turks would form a minority in those territories. Of particular importance here is the documented fact that the Ottoman Empire pursued a policy of annihilation against the Armenians.⁵⁴

Upon examining the political, civilizational, and strategic challenges, Major General Harbord draws the following objective conclusions as possible solutions: One great power must exercise control over Armenia and the Transcaucasia, and the Armenian Question cannot be resolved without answering two key problems—what should be done with Turkey and what Russia’s response would be.

The mission believes that, for reasons set forth, the power which takes a mandate for Armenia should also exercise a mandate for Anatolia, Roumelia, Constantinople, and Transcaucasia; the boundaries of the Turkish vilayets of Armenia and Anatolia and the interior boundaries.⁵⁵

These questions are essential for understanding the issue effectively and provide a general framework for comprehending the broader realities of the time.

8. The Conditions and Problems Involved in a Mandate for Turkey and Transcaucasia

The section titled “The Conditions and Problems Involved in a Mandate for Turkey and Transcaucasia” addresses issues surrounding the credibility of the US and presents the sectoral studies associated with the mandate’s research. The list of these appendices is found in the report’s contents. It must be noted that these appendices are of significant academic importance, particularly for the study of the region’s history and civilizational foundations. Examining these mission reports is both timely and essential for shaping of current US policy.

The subsequent section of General Harbord’s report is entitled “The Military Problem,” which examines the security challenges within the mandated territory.⁵⁶ This

⁵² Gidney 1967: 170.

⁵³ Harbord 1920: 16.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 18.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 19.

⁵⁶ Harbord 1920: 21.

issue is explored in more depth in the appendix authored by Brigadier General George Van Horn Moseley.⁵⁷ His report includes detailed information on the military situation in Turkey, including the composition of the Turkish army, descriptions of the Armenian-Turkish border,⁵⁸ the military condition of Armenia and data on the Armenian army,⁵⁹ the military situation and army of Georgia,⁶⁰ and the military state and army of Azerbaijan.⁶¹ Additional appendices with supplementary data are also included.⁶² This portion of the report holds independent research value.

Returning to Harbord's discussion of the military problem, it is stated that the number of armed forces necessary for securing the mandated territory would range between 25,000 and 200,000,⁶³ subject to adjustment based on situational needs. The delegation recommended that an initial force of approximately 59,000 troops be considered. Support for military forces was to include four to six warships. For the first year of mandate administration, the financial expenditure was estimated at \$88,500,000, a figure projected to be reduced by nearly half by the third year. The total estimated cost for a five-year mandate was \$756,014,000, which encompassed expenses for government operations, communications, humanitarian aid and education, military and naval operations, healthcare, and other related functions. Significantly, James Gidney concludes:

It should be borne in mind that this was written on the assumption of a mandate for all of Asia Minor. If the mandate was accepted for Armenia only, it is unlikely that the mission, aware of the attitudes and growing strength of Kemal's Nationalist movement, would have ruled out the possibility of defending the country from external attack.⁶⁴

Following this section, the Harbord Report presents a set of final conclusions. These conclusions reflect the level of responsibility associated with accepting the mandate, the specific conditions that would apply to the US, and the broader scope of international obligations involved.

It is of particular importance that the final section of the report contains assessments both in favor of and against assuming the mandate, organized in a format prepared by Stanley K. Hornbeck.⁶⁵ Before analyzing these positions, it should be noted that Harbord requested written responses from individual members of the delegation regarding their personal stance. While most did not provide clear answers or definitive positions, a majority leaned in favor of the mandate. The only unambiguous objection came from Eliot Grinnell Mears, who argued that assuming the mandate would contradict the principles of the Monroe Doctrine, which had long guided US foreign policy.⁶⁶

⁵⁷ Moseley 1920: 7.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* 8–17.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* 17–20.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* 20–22.

⁶¹ *Ibid.* 20–24.

⁶² Harbord 1920: 8–43.

⁶³ *Ibid.* 23.

⁶⁴ Gidney 1967: 185.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* 187.

⁶⁶ Gidney 1967: 186.

In maintaining objectivity throughout his report, Harbord listed fourteen arguments in favor of assuming the mandate and thirteen arguments against. Among the supportive points, one of the most significant is point six:

America is the only hope of the Armenians. They consider but one other nation, Great Britain, which they fear would sacrifice their interests to Moslem public opinion as long as she controls hundreds of millions of that faith. Others fear Britain's imperialistic policy and her habit of staying where she hoists her flag. For a mandatory America is not only the first choice of all the peoples of the Near East, but of each of the great powers, after itself. American power is adequate; its record clean; its motives above suspicion.⁶⁷

Equally vital from the standpoint of addressing the Armenian Question is point nine: "It would definitely stop further massacres of Armenians and other Christians, give justice to the Turks, Kurds, Greeks, and other peoples."⁶⁸

Key concerns raised in opposition to assuming the mandate included the great powers' competition and geopolitical ambitions in the region (point two), the high financial costs involved (point seven), and the region's geographical distance from the US (point ten).⁶⁹

Taken together, these conclusions encapsulate the findings of the American military mission and contain valuable information regarding the US potential policies in the region, its guiding principles and objectives, the geopolitical landscape of the Near East in the early 20th century, the complexities of the Armenian Question, and the feasibility of the US assuming the mandate over Armenia.

9. Results

The study reveals the geopolitical aims of the US in the region following the end of the First World War, with particular focus on the year 1919. Specifically, the US pursued, through its mandate policy, the resolution of numerous political and socio-economic issues in the Near East, Asia Minor, and Armenia, while simultaneously enhancing its strategic role in global affairs. This was among the central objectives of President Woodrow Wilson's foreign policy agenda. The report of the military mission dispatched for this purpose outlines the situation in the region across the Near East, Asia Minor, and Armenia from the standpoint of the consequences of the First World War and the prevailing geopolitical conditions. The war brought immense devastation to the peoples under Ottoman rule, particularly Christians, and most acutely the Armenians. These realities are documented in the report of Major General James Harbord's mission. The presentation of the Armenian people's civilizational heritage and historical trajectory through Harbord's report is a key component of this study. The political future of Armenia and the hope for the rebirth of the Armenian people were linked to the possibility of the US accepting the mandate, and to President Woodrow Wilson's commitment to determine Armenia's borders as an independent and impartial arbiter.

On May 24, 1920, President Woodrow Wilson formally requested authorization from

⁶⁷ Harbord 1920: 26.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* 27.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

the US Congress to establish an American mandate for Armenia. However, the Senate—first in its Committee on Foreign Relations, and then in full session on June 1, 1920—rejected the request by a vote of 52 against and 23 in favor.⁷⁰

Not assuming the Armenian mandate led to even more disastrous consequences for Armenia and the Armenians. Kemalist Turkey had decided to annihilate Armenia physically and politically. It regained control of the western part of Armenia, which had been recognized as independent by the Treaty of Sèvres, and attacked the First Republic of Armenia in September 1920. Left without the assistance of its former First World War allies, the Republic of Armenia suffered a painful defeat and was destroyed.

10. Discussion

Why was the Armenian mandate ultimately not accepted by the US? This question is still important today from the perspective of correctly assessing and understanding that event of the past. Two main reasons can be suggested. The Democratic Party did not have a sufficient majority in the Senate, while the Republicans opposed active international engagement and an interventionist US foreign policy. President Wilson's position within the US had weakened significantly due to his health. On October 2, 1919, he suffered a stroke that rendered him largely incapacitated.⁷¹ This condition was kept secret⁷² for a significant period, but by 1920, serious doubts had emerged about his ability to fulfill presidential duties.⁷³ His declining health profoundly affected his political influence. The rejection of the mandate coincided with this critical period.

To understand the issue under study, it is necessary to explore a number of interpretive questions in light of US and Armenian national interests.

Did the US genuinely intend to assume the League of Nations mandate over Armenia?

In terms of assessing the nuances of this issue, it is important to reflect on Erez Manela's comments on the Wilsonian principles proclaimed and the aspirations of the peoples who pinned their hopes on the activities of the Paris Conference. At the heart of these peoples' aspirations for self-determination, Woodrow Wilson was perceived as the main advocate for their cause and a dominant global figure. These peoples included the Chinese and Koreans, Arabs and Jews, Armenians and Kurds.⁷⁴

President Woodrow Wilson and several members of his administration such as Major General James Harbord were inclined to accept the mandate. Harbord himself believed that it was a noble undertaking, stating: "...this is a man's job, and, as the world says, no nation could do it better than America."⁷⁵

Henry Morgenthau Sr., who first proposed the mission and was a staunch advocate for Armenian rights, co-founded the Committee on Armenian Atrocities (later renamed Near

⁷⁰ No American Mandate for Armenia: Text of the President's Request and Record of the Vote. *Current History* (1916–1940), 12(4), 1920, 710–713.

⁷¹ Ober 1983: 410–414.

⁷² Berg 2013: 659–661, 668–669.

⁷³ Cooper 2009: 535.

⁷⁴ Manela 2007: 4.

⁷⁵ Harbord 1920: 26.

East Relief) along with other devoted figures. His position is well-documented in articles published in the *New York Times* issues from this period⁷⁶ and in his memoir.⁷⁷ Within the framework of the Paris Conference, the King-Crane Commission was formed in 1919, whose main goals were to study mandate issues in the territories of the Ottoman Empire. Henry King and Charles Crane were appointed to the commission by US President Woodrow Wilson.⁷⁸ The commission was to carry out its work under the joint leadership of representatives of the US, France, Great Britain, and Italy. However, in practice, the work was carried out only by representatives of the US,⁷⁹ the problem was that, in accordance with the principles defined by President Wilson, a number of territories of the Ottoman Empire—Palestine, Syria, Lebanon, and Armenia—were to receive mandated territory status and acquire sovereignty. However, Great Britain and France were actually striving to carry out the colonial division of these Middle Eastern territories, which they later did.⁸⁰ When the commission toured the territories of Syria, Palestine, and Lebanon, and, after conducting its studies, presented its report to the Peace Conference in August 1919, the fate of these territories had already been determined⁸¹ by the Sykes-Picot Agreement. The activities of the King-Crane Commission were mainly aimed at studying the mandated territories of the Middle East, while the target of James Harbord's mission was mainly Armenia. However, it should be noted that the King-Crane report also addressed the problems of Armenians. The Commission concluded that the creation of an Armenian state was necessary and rejected the idea that Turkey would respect the rights of the Armenian population, citing the extreme suffering inflicted upon them during the war. They referenced James Bryce's description of the Armenian Genocide as one of the darkest crimes in human history.⁸² According to the commission's findings:

In creating a separate Armenia, it was not proposed to... establish the rule of a minority of Armenians over a majority of other peoples... But such a separated state should furnish a definite area into which Armenians could go with the complete assurance that they would never be put under the rule of the Turks.⁸³

The results of the King-Crane Commission's work also did not receive sufficient attention, the president's illness being one of the key reasons.⁸⁴

However, in contrast to many Democrats, Republicans were not enthusiastic about collective US engagement in international governance. Their rejection of the League of Nations and of the mandate system reflected that stance, further exacerbated by Wilson's deteriorating health.⁸⁵

⁷⁶ Oren 2007: 336.

⁷⁷ Morgenthau 1918c: 1–407.

⁷⁸ Gelvin, Lesch 1999: 13–14.

⁷⁹ Harms 2008: 73.

⁸⁰ Howard 1963: 1.

⁸¹ Fromkin 1989: 396–397.

⁸² Report of the American Section of the International Commission on Mandates in Turkey, U.S. Department of State.

⁸³ Gidney 1967: 157.

⁸⁴ Allen 2020: 31–37.

⁸⁵ Thompson 2015: 98.

Did the United States have an active presence in the region, and was it engaged in social and missionary work?

The answer is unequivocally yes. During those difficult years, the US supported Armenia and the Armenian people. This is explicitly affirmed in the third paragraph of House Resolution 296, passed by the 116th US Congress on October 29, 2019:

Whereas President Woodrow Wilson encouraged the formation of the Near East Relief, chartered by an Act of Congress, which raised \$116,000,000 (over \$2.5 billion in 2019 dollars) between 1915 and 1930, and the Senate adopted resolutions condemning these massacres.⁸⁶

The role of American humanitarian organizations is further acknowledged in the 12th clause of House Resolution 106 from the 110th Congress, which reads:

President Woodrow Wilson concurred and also encouraged the formation of the organization known as Near East Relief, chartered by an Act of Congress, which contributed some \$116,000,000 from 1915 to 1930 to aid Armenian Genocide survivors, including 132,000 orphans who became foster children of the American people.⁸⁷

On August 10, 1920, between Turkey on the one hand and the Entente and its allied countries on the other. According to Article 89 of the Treaty of Sèvres, Turkey recognized Armenia as a free and independent state. Turkey and Armenia agreed to submit to the arbitration of US President Woodrow Wilson regarding the borders of the vilayets of Van, Bitlis, Erzurum, and Trebizon and to accept his terms regarding Armenia's access to the Black Sea. Article 230 of the treaty required the Ottoman government to hand over individuals responsible for the massacres committed during the state of war. On April 26, 1920, at the San Remo Conference, the Council of Allied Powers proposed that the determination of the borders of Armenia and Turkey, which were to be separated from the Ottoman Empire and recognized as independent, be carried out by President Woodrow Wilson, as an independent arbiter. President Wilson gave his consent to fulfill this obligation on May 17, 1920, and on November 22, 1920, he presented to the Council of Allied Powers a package for determining the borders of Armenia and Turkey,⁸⁸ in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Treaty of Sèvres.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ H. Res. 296 – Affirming the United States record on the Armenian Genocide.

⁸⁷ H. Res. 106.

⁸⁸ Karabekir 1960: 901.

⁸⁹ Decision of President Wilson respecting the Frontier between Turkey and Armenia, Access for Armenia to the Sea, and the Demilitarization of Turkish Territory adjacent to the Armenian Frontier.

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**АМЕРИЧКА ВОЈНА МИСИЈА И ЈЕРМЕНИЈА:
ЏЕЈМС ХАРБОРДОВ ИЗВЕШТАЈ У КОНТЕКСТУ МАНДАТНЕ ПОЛИТИКЕ
САД-А И ЈЕРМЕНСКО-АМЕРИЧКИХ ОДНОСА (1919–1920)**

Резиме

Ова студија се налази на раскршћу историје и хуманистичких наука, са фокусом на јерменску историју и спољну политику Сједињених Америчких Држава током кључних година 1919–1920. Основни циљ истраживања јесте да се испитају и расветле намере америчке мисије упућене урегион након завршетка Првог светског рата, активности које је та мисија спровела, као и корпус информација који је прикупила о Јерменији и јерменском народу. Посебна пажња посвећена је политици председника Вудроа Вилсона према Јерменији, питању америчких циљева над Јерменијом и околностима под којима су се Сједињене Државе обавезале да одреде њене границе. Извештај мисије генерала Џејмса Г. Харборда користи се као кључни примарни извор за историографију јерменско-америчких односа, питање мандата, јерменски геноцид и дипломатску историју разграничења.

Кључне речи: Спољна политика САД, Први светски рат, Џејмс Г. Харборд, Јерменија, мандат, Вудро Вилсон, Сенат.