High Commissioner Bristol's Implementation of Wilsonian Internationalism in Asia Minor and Its Shortcomings

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This article aims to examine the conduct and policies of Rear Admiral Mark Lambert Bristol, the American High Commissioner to Turkey, in the hope of shining light on Woodrow Wilson's post-war aims. Ultimately, it aims to explore the relation between Bristol's actions and Wilson's political desires. A century after the drafting and signing of the Treaty of Versailles, there remains a debate about Woodrow Wilson and Wilsonianism. Several questions immediately arise. To what extent was President Wilson a thoroughly committed idealist, who truly desired to create a new liberal international order? To what extent were his aims primarily realist in nature? Did he make extravagant promises that were designed to cover up solidly realist intentions? If so, did he do this in order to gain public approval for casting away longstanding American traditions against becoming involved in European affairs? As for Rear Admiral Bristol, does his conduct in the Near East coincide with Wilsonian ideas and ideals?

The first question to be asked, however, is what was the general context in which Bristol was operating? America's conception of itself and of its role in the world had, by the end of the First World War, substantially evolved. As American industry expanded in the late 19th century, the search for markets abroad naturally ramped up. However, until the 1890s, direct American involvement abroad was typically limited to Central and South American. This changed dramatically after the Spanish-American War of 1898, which resulted in America's acquisition of colonies in Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines. Now, established as an imperial power in the Pacific, the United States sought to access the markets of China. However, the Unites States found itself at a serious disadvantage. The great powers already held trade ports in China and shut the door to other powers in their sphere of influence. In addition, the US worried that great power rivalries in the Far East would lead to the partitioning of China, which in turn could lead to a war that would disrupt trade and create greater insecurity for American merchants. But the McKinley administration held on to the American tradition of avoiding entangling alliances, and refused an offer of military alliance from Great Britain that was designed to ensure Chinese territorial integrity. With direct military intervention out of the question, Secretary of State John Hay, taking inspiration from a memorandum written by British customs agent Alfred Hippisley, proposed the Open Door to the other great powers in China.[1] The Open Door became a central American policy, and would later be invoked by Bristol when dealing with other major powers in Asia Minor. Initially, however, it was employed mainly to establish free trade, or

[1] Cullinane and Goodall, *The Open Door Era: United States Foreign Policy in the Twentieth Century*, 19.

at least freer trade, within China, and as such it aimed to reduce tensions, encourage economic investment, and give the United States an opportunity to enter the region without the need to claim a trade port for itself.

Teddy Roosevelt began, in the early 20th century, to promote a broader international role for the US, but it was not until the election of Woodrow Wilson in 1912 that a clear and broadly conceived view of America's international role began to be enunciated. America's successful involvement in the First World War, as well as the damage suffered by the other major powers, gave this enunciation greater weight than it might otherwise have had. In the Middle East, increased American presence came about for a number of reasons. First, though perhaps not mostly importantly, it was recognized that there were clear possibilities for American industries, businesses and banks to gain markets and to acquire access to raw materials. Second, Wilson himself promoted broader American involvement to help ensure postwar peace settlements were adhered to. For one thing, this meant direct American involvement for the first time in Near East affairs since Wilson accepted, initially at least, the proposal that America should guarantee the security of the planned Armenian mandate. In part, this explains why Admiral Bristol was dispatched as American High Commissioner to Turkey. Eventually, however, Wilson became less enthusiastic about the Armenian mandate as it became clear that the British and French had proposed American control over Armenia largely because, unlike the mandates they sought to procure, it promised little opportunity for profit and would in fact be expensive to maintain. In any case, Admiral Bristol took a very pragmatic view, downplayed the atrocities against the Armenians, and did his best to shelve any possibility of an American mandate.

Second, we need to look at the question of whether Wilson was a realist or an idealist, which runs parallel with another debate concerning what exactly is meant by political idealism or realism. Erez Manela offers some hints that might help in defining "idealism" and "realism". In "Imagining Woodrow Wilson in Asia: Dreams of East–West Harmony and the Revolt against Empire in 1919," he notes:

> *"Along with the millions in Europe who cheered Wilson upon his arrival there, Indians and Chinese saw Wilson's wartime rhetoric as a blueprint for a more peaceful and inclusive international order, one in which Asian nations could achieve a greater measure of equality and sovereignty."*[2]

With this observation in mind, this article will define "idealism" as being a political philosophy intent on creating, as Manela puts it, a more peaceful and inclusive international order. Conversely, "realism" can be seen as political conduct in foreign affairs aimed at advancing the perceived interests of the state in the realm of military, diplomatic, and economic power.[3]

It is common to believe that after the First World War, America, as if under the influence of cultural and political gravity, rapidly descended back to the isolationist traditions that had, to a great extent, guided the nation's foreign policy since its founding. Largely ignored today, at least among the general public, are the implications of Wilson's failure at

[2] Manela, "Imagining Woodrow Wilson in Asia," 1332.
[3] Robertson, *Dictionary of Modern Politics*, 420.

Paris to make good on his declared vision for a new international order, as well as his failure to exact from his European allies a peace treaty that was actually based on his Fourteen Points, as was promised to both the people of Germany and the United States.[4] The degree to which responsibility for the Second World War can be laid on the Treaty of Versailles is still debated by scholars, but that the treaty embittered the citizens of a newly democratized Germany is commonly accepted. What is far less acknowledged today is how the conduct of Allied leaders and President Wilson led to the disillusionment of American voters and their representatives in Congress.

As the peace conference moved forward, the victorious nations began to look at each other as potential rivals. Britain saw America as it's only possible naval rival. France viewed British expansion as a potential threat. Italy looked to expand in the Mediterranean to the consternation of France and Britain both. Meanwhile, the ascent of the Bolsheviks was met with a sense of panic and impotent frustration. American officials viewed allies' territorial expansion as an impingement on potential exports, and as a violation of the ideals that had rallied the nation to war. In the realm of international politics, America felt rebuffed, but would continue as it had before the war, fostering economic relations. The business of America, after all, was business. However, the willingness of Americans to undertake any new overseas adventures was largely exhausted. It was in this environment of frustration with their old allies, and a withdrawal of America from European political affairs that the American officers, sailors, missionaries, and officials found themselves while serving in the Near East in the aftermath of the First World War.

Admiral Mark Lambert Bristol was fifty years old when he arrived in Constantinople and raised the US flag on his command ship, the converted yacht *Scorpion* at the end of January 1919. His career in the United States Navy had spanned thirty-six years.[5] Of interest is the fact that when Admiral Bristol was appointed the American High Commissioner to Turkey, he had next to no foreign policy experience; his previous posts had primarily involved the application of his technical expertise in fields such as naval aviation and torpedo maintenance, and he had spent twenty-one years of his navy career at sea.[6] Bristol's journey to his new command began in Plymouth, England, where he'd been commander of the American naval facilities.[7] After receiving his orders in London in December, 1918, Bristol travelled to Paris. Here he met with the American delegation and spoke in person with President Wilson, Secretary of State Robert Lansing, and Herbert Hoover of the Food Administration. His instructions could essentially be summed up as "do what is right, and protect American interests." More specifically, he was to oversee the conditions of armistice with the Ottomans, as well as provide support for the Near East Relief and examine the possibilities for mandates in the region. His range of command was to include the waters of the Near East, Black Sea and Greece.[8]

Admiral Bristol's knowledge of the Near East seems to have been based on three events: his meeting with officials in Paris, a quick read through former American Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, Henry Morgenthau's memoirs, and a conversation with a

[4] Blakemore, "How the Treaty of Versailles Ended WWI."
[5] Beers, "United States Naval Detachment in Turkish Waters," 209.
[6] Shenk, *America's Black Sea Fleet,* 38.
[7] Beers, "United States Naval Detachment in Turkish Waters," 209–210.
[8] Ibid. 211.

former American missionary. This missionary, Bristol claimed, had informed him that the peoples of the Near East were ignorant of the difference between right and wrong.[9] In short, Bristol was assigned to his new command because of his reputation as a military officer, not because of his knowledge of the region. His chief responsibilities, and America's chief interests, in Anatolia and in the Black Sea region were to ensure the lives and property of American missionaries, to assist American business interests, and to help alleviate the unfolding humanitarian crises of the region.

Anyone searching through the Bristol files in the Library of Congress, or reading through secondary sources concerning his position, is sure to rapidly conclude that High Commissioner Bristol's primary focus was on defending and advancing American business interests in the region. These actions were often an attempt to counter the restrictions placed on American business by the other Allied nations, especially Britain. Specifically, Bristol was attempting to advance the old Open Door policy. Thomas Bryson notes, in his article "Admiral Mark L. Bristol, an Open-Door Diplomat in Turkey", that the Allies were hindering American trade through a consumption tax that impeded American exports to Turkey — a tax that was not in accordance with US-Turkish trade agreements. Further, the Allies controlled trade via an Advisory Trade Committee to which they refused the United States membership. Lastly, the Allies in Paris had aligned the arrangement of mandates to ensure that the United States did not have access to the oil rich regions of Mesopotamia.[10] Bristol would do his utmost to undo these restrictions, even going so far as to suggest to one American businessman that he establish a price-fixing syndicate, along with other American businesses, to challenge competitors from other Allied nations.[11] From this, it would seem that Bristol was intent on advancing American national interests, in line with a typical realist approach to foreign relations, and on continuing the Navy's "open door" tradition of supporting American trade and business.

However, Bristol's worries about Allied conduct in Asia Minor appear to be partly based in the idealist tradition and partly in the realist tradition. He was clearly concerned with avoiding a future war in the region by preventing further territorial partitioning and by forcing economic equality among the Allies, but he also wanted to promote American commercial interests. While attending an investigation into the Greek landing at Smyrna, Bristol wrote from Paris in November 1919 on the need for an American policy towards Turkey. In it he observes:

> *"The altruistic reasons for American intervention in Turkish affairs are well known. For those to whom altruism carries no conviction two arguments based on selfishness may suffice: first, the argument of National Safety; secondly, that of Protection to our National Interests.*
> *(1) In the interest of peace we ought not to permit a patchwork division of Turkey, based on the spoils system and callous to local sentiment, such as will certainly be made if America holds aloof. No Power except the United States can prevent the*

[9] Shenk, *America's Black Sea Fleet,* 39.
[10] Bryson, "Admiral Mark L. Bristol, an Open-Door Diplomat in Turkey," 459.
[11] Mark L. Bristol Collection, MSS13854, Box 1, November 1919.

carrying into effect of those notorious "secret" agreements, which would lead certainly to war and probably to another world-war.
We ought therefore to join in the Turkish Treaty, and refuse to permit such a settlement even if the refusal costs us money and trouble.
(2) If the United States takes no part, or an apathetic part, in the settlement of the Near East, its material interests must suffer incalculably. Commercial opportunities in Turkey, as well as in the Ottoman territories placed under mandates, will be lost to the United States if it keeps aloof. The only way to maintain in Turkey our traditional trade policy of the "open door" is to be on the spot and hold the door open."

Bristol's outlining of his mission clearly echoes the Open Door policy as it was conceived in relation to China. He wishes to avoid a "patchwork division" of Turkey in the belief that such a partitioning would lead to future wars, a concern American officials had raised earlier with regard to China. Concerning how to avoid future war, Bristol is essentially clear in his thinking and his motives are sound. However, in regard to the Ottoman Empire having siding with the Central Powers, the Turkish campaign of ethnic cleansing during the war, and the unfolding post war conflicts in Anatolia.

In consistently ignoring Turkey's actions, Bristol's reports become deeply skewed, and sometimes puerile. His most glaring omission in his reports is any attempt to come to terms either with the war-time pogroms against Christian minorities in Turkish territories or with the continued post war ethnic cleansing both of the Armenians who managed to return to their pillaged properties and of the Greek civilians in Asia Minor. These and other minorities were now threatened with a new Turkish Nationalist attempt to ethnically purify their future state. Moreover, Bristol repeatedly excuses Turkish massacres by highlighting ethnic cleansing perpetrated by Armenians and Greeks. In his work *America's Black Sea Fleet*, Robert Shenk writes that Bristol's downplaying of the wartime atrocities, as well as those occurring during his tenure, are driven by a "pragmatic naïveté".[12]

It was not that Bristol was wholly or even partly ignorant of the grim details of the crimes that had taken place. Yet, when describing the crimes, he is capable of shifting, almost in one breath, from the mildest depiction of the events in question to a depiction of their full horror and then proceed to lay part of the blame for the deportations and massacres on the victims themselves. For example, shortly after his first excursion to the Caucasus region, he notes in a letter to his wife that many of the deportees had simply not returned because they "were taken too far inland." As Robert Shenk notes, such statements suggest that, in part of his mind at any rate, "Bristol thought the deportees were just living elsewhere, in a more hospitable region (as some Turkish propagandists claimed)."[13] On the other hand, later in the same letter to his wife, Bristol acknowledges the real Turkish purpose for the deportations: "Greek women and children were first put in the Turkish bath in mid-winter then driven into the country only half alive" and were then left to die "by the wayside of hunger and cold. This was the so-called 'white death.'" But, shortly after describing such events, Bristol's letter adds a caveat to the whole grisly act: "These massacres were terrible beyond description and yet the Greeks and Armenians are most unattractive

[12] Shenk, *America's Black Sea Fleet*, 73.
[13] Ibid. 72.

and in some ways have irritated the Turks."[14] One year later, he would make a similar remark in another letter:

> *"The Armenians have for centuries suffered under Turkish rule and in recent years have been subjected to massacre, deportations, and many cruelties, but it is useless for anyone to disguise to himself the personal characteristics of the Armenians.*[15] *Throughout his reports, when discussing ongoing or past massacres against Christians, Bristol's refrain amounts to 'horrible massacres… however. Deportations… but.'"*

So odd could Bristol's line of reasoning be that in the aftermath of a Nationalist offensive, Bristol went so far as to blame the Armenians for resisting the Turkish attack. In June of 1921, the American consul in Aleppo wrote the State Department and Admiral Bristol about the heroism of the Armenian population in Aintab. During a prolonged siege of the Armenian quarter, they had protected not only themselves but the American missionaries and doctors who were working there. Bristol's response to the consul was odd to say the least: "I was very glad to hear the reports of the fight the Armenians put up in Aintab and I think they undoubtedly prevented a massacre or a wholesale killing at that time, but this may only be laying up trouble for themselves in the future… Sometimes discretion is the better part of valor." Not quite satisfied with the fairness of this conclusion, Bristol engaged in his usual rhetorical maneuvering and added: "The Turks, undoubtedly, want to get rid of the Armenians and will probably exterminate them if they cannot find another means."[16] This "other means" would, presumably, be deportation. As previously noted, Bristol had already, in a letter to his wife, concluded the intended purpose of the deportations. It's hard to imagine that he's somehow forgotten.

What then could lie behind Bristol's inconsistent line of reasoning? To what ends is his "pragmatic naïveté" deployed? In his August 1921 report, Bristol writes of sending a destroyer to Batoum after a long discussion with his assistant Allen Dulles, the future director of the CIA, and the brother of future Secretary of State John Foster Dulles. Bristol states that, even though being instructed not to offer official assistance to American business interests in conducting business with Bolshevik Russia, he sent his destroyer to Batoum to investigate whether a line of communications could be opened as a prelude to regular visits in the future. He did this not only in the interest of American business, but also in the hopes of assisting American relief organizations. He writes:

> *"I made up my mind to take the position that the three Republics of the Caucasus are autonomous governments and not a part of Soviet Russia, although the form of government, so far as we know, of all three of these republics is a soviet Government. In this particular Mr. Dulles and I agreed. The question then arose as regards lending assistance to American business men and this was discussed at some length, and Mr. Dulles' principal objection was that in rendering assistance to American business interests we might compromise the position that our Government had taken*

[14] As quoted in ibid.
[15] Ibid. 73.
[16] Ibid. 42.

> *in all its negotiations with Soviet Russia in this particular. Again I arrived in favor of considering the autonomous Governments of Azerbaijan, of Georgia, and of Armenia, as separate from Soviet Russia, and, even though controlled by Soviet Russia, they were no different from other autonomous governments, for instance Greece, which is controlled by Great Britain."*[17]

Here, Bristol contends that Greece is, in August of 1921, controlled by Great Britain. This is not quite in line with the reality of the matter. While Britain was cooperating with Greece, after the removal from office of Eleftherios Venizelos in November of 1920, British support for Greek efforts in Asia Minor had been withdrawn. However, the British did still maintain a strong level of economic leverage over the Greek government, and used Greek held areas in Asia Minor to serve as a check upon American imports – a fact that Bristol complains about in his reports. In a sense, it would appear that High Commissioner Bristol views the conflict between the Turks and Greeks as a proxy conflict between the British and the Americans.

In Bristol's reports, it is made repeatedly clear that it is the Greeks who are responsible for the ills of the region. He may at times, as we have seen above, acknowledge the atrocities committed by the Turks during the war, but at nearly every step of the way he downplays their enormity and fails to consider the possibility of providing reparations or security for the survivors. At most, Bristol suggests that the actions of all the local peoples are equally foul. Quite likely, he sees the Turkish crimes as a *fait accompli* and believes that the appropriate response for the "greater good" is to allow the process to work itself out so that the ethnically dominant Turks can re-impose order on the region. This order, Bristol thought, would also be beneficial to American business.

Furthermore, the deportations of minorities and the seizure of their property could also be seen as a step towards progress for the future Turkish state. Moreover, Bristol appears to have accepted that the methods by which Turkish Nationalists wished to make progress, namely through an etatist approach, was not necessarily invalid. There was more behind the American policy of open trade than just dollars and cents. For decades, America had promoted free international trade and the navy had been foremost in furthering, and at times enforcing, this Open Door policy. As Bryson notes:

> *"*[…] *economic expansion is but one side of the coin of the Open Door, for progress, reform and modernization of social and political institutions constitute the reverse… Reform, progress, and modernization of social and political institutions in underdeveloped countries was… a concomitant benefit that would accrue through heightened economic activity."*[18]

Similarly, Woodrow Wilson had put forward, in his Fourteen Points, that freedom of trade is important not merely to spread economic benefits but also to induce social and political modernization. Yet the Open Door policy as well as Wilson's arguments were both grounded in a classic liberal "bottom up" view of governance, which held that economic

[17] Mark L. Bristol Collection, MSS13854, Box 3, August 1921.
[18] Bryson, Admiral Mark L. Bristol, an Open-Door Diplomat in Turkey, 458.

improvements would lead to strengthened institutions, which in turn would lead to stability, which in turn would lead to democracy. Bristol may have held this view but he recognized that, at least in the Near East, it could run into difficulties in actual practice. His approach to Anatolian issues actually exhibits a strong appreciation of the competing "top-down," government-centered, approach to solving social and economic problems. First and foremost in Bristol's view, the Turkish Nationalists would, as Bryson notes, ultimately bring "the benefits of modern civilization; that is, good government, liberty of religious belief, universal education and at some future time the right of self-determination."[19] Bristol's faith in the Nationalists' ability to bring about positive social change via a top-down approach marks a shift – one which was not uncommon among progressive elements in the United States at this time – toward an acceptance that modern government had to take an active role in social and economic engineering. An examination of Bristol's formal correspondence, written in the 1930s, to and from major political figures such as J. Edgar Hoover,[20] indicates that he was sympathetic towards the application of top-down governance even within America's borders.

Bristol's acceptance of the possible validity of top-down government in the region, and his readiness to excuse the Turks for their wartime and postwar atrocities, may well be because he viewed the annihilation of Christian communities and the concomitant seizure of goods and property as acts that were ultimately leading to the establishment of a secure stable state. Concerning the economic motive behind the wartime Ottoman policy of seizing Christian-held property, Ryan Gingeras writes in his work *Sorrowful Shores*:

> *"Istanbul's approach to abandoned property facilitated a collective solution of two problems that had lingered since the Balkan Wars. The acquisition of movable goods on farms and businesses by recently founded Muslim companies helped to complete the process begun during the boycott of 1914 and served further to "strengthen the culture of trade among Muslims" that was so crucial to building a national economy. Expropriation of Christian land also held the added bonus of supplying the tens of thousands of refugees who remained without homes or work since 1912. As a result, all property formerly associated with local Rum* [Greeks] *and Armenians appeared up for grabs."*[21]

Economics played a role in Wilson's vision of a new order, and though America had never declared war on the Ottoman Empire, the region still held a place in Wilson's 14 points. Further, his aims for the region were in themselves the means to an end: the end being the creation of more liberal societies, the bedrock of which was to be social and political stability grounded in economic growth. Wilson's aims for the region had two main components. First, he aimed to internationalize the Straits in order to advance free global trade. The final portion of Wilson's thirteenth point stated that the Dardanelles should be

[19] Ibid.
[20] J. Edgar Hoover was a member of the wartime Creel Commission, which had been responsible for propagandizing in favor of American involvement in the Great War, and for monitoring and censoring anti-war publications. He went on to become the FBI's first director and to be notorious for blackmailing American politicians and public figures.
[21] Gingeras, *Sorrowful Shores*, 46.

open to free passage under international guarantees. Second, Wilson wished to prevent the further Allied partitioning of the Near East. Bristol was apparently appointed in order to achieve these aims and did so, though by means that would probably have surprised Wilson.

Both of Wilson's main aims are apparent in his cool response to an early peace effort, one promoted by Henry Morgenthau, the former American Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, in the summer of 1917. Secretary of State Lansing thought Morgenthau's chances of success were slim, but was excited at the chance to achieve peace without victory; Woodrow Wilson, on the other hand, showed no interest in the scheme.[22] In the end, Morgenthau's group of peace envoys never made it further than Spain. Wilson, in a note to the State Department, made his views clear:

> *"Arrangements must be made at the Conference which closes the war with regard to Constantinople which could hardly be made if Turkey were first made peace with. Indeed, I suppose that peace could be made only at terms which preclude any radical changes of control over Constantinople and the Straits. The only advantage to be gained would be to prevent the bargains of the Allies with regard to Asia Minor from being carried out [in other words, to prevent territorial partitioning]."*[23]

In a sense, Bristol's efforts did achieve Wilson's two primary aims for the region – to make the Straits internationalized, and to develop the economy in Asia Minor. However, the means by which this goals were achieved would likely have surprised Wilson. Bristol consistently sided with Mustafa Kemal and the Nationalists, and thus through siding with them, gained good favor for the United States. The Turkish National Pact (misak-ı millî), signed in 1920, allowed for the internationalization of the Straits, and this was what Kemal brought forward when trying to avert a crisis with the Allies after the Greeks had been expelled from the region.[24] The Straits were internationalized, and the partitioning of Asia Minor was prevented. Further, the success of the Nationalists seemed to hold the promise of a strong unified state capable of developing the national economy.

Despite these successes, the desire of Wilson and Bristol, that of a liberalized economy was not realized, nor was there an increase of Turkish American trade. Bryson characterizes the situation well, but fails to note a significant reason why trade remained moribund and why the Turkish economy could not rebound:

> *"Unfortunately, Admiral Bristol's efforts did not result in increased American trade with Turkey. Statistics and commerce reports on American trade indicate a marked decline after 1920 and show no appreciable increase by the time Bristol departed Turkey at the conclusion of his tour of duty in 1927. The economic climate in Turkey in the decade of the I920's simply did not provide an incentive conducive to American investment, because the cautious Turks, shunning the possibility of further foreign economic control, opted for etatism, a policy not at all guaranteed to attract*

[22] Brecher, "Revisiting Ambassador Morgenthau's Turkish Peace Mission of 1917," 357–359.
[23] As quoted in Brecher, "Revisiting Ambassador…", 359.
[24] Mango, *Ataturk,* 348–349.

> *foreign capital. It was not until the following decade that American investors exhibited an interest in Turkey as a field for investment."*[25]

Mustafa Kemal's statist policies, as Bryson observes, did hinder economic growth and foreign investment in the region. However, Bryson's article is too cut and dried, for it only focuses on apparent economic realities, government policies, and Bristol's efforts to expand and support American trade in the region. Consequently, it misses or steers clear of several crucial elements that explain why economic growth in the region was destined to be stagnant whatever the economic policy of the new regime in Ankara. In doing so, Bryson avoids what should be seen as Bristol's greatest deviation from Wilsonian liberalism while in pursuit of more tangible goals, namely Bristol's failure to condemn or prevent the Nationalists' ongoing destruction of minority communities, nor to condemn their precursors ethnic cleansing in Asia Minor during the First World War. Bryson fails to call Bristol to account, first because he ignores both the destruction of Smyrna at the hands of the Nationalists and the economic consequences, and second because he fails to note the economic implications of the expulsion of the Greeks, the destruction of their communities, as well as the near-total annihilation of the Armenians. Smyrna stood as the trade capital of Western Anatolia, and its destruction, was the final blow to a region that had suffered from ethnic conflict since 1912.

Even some Turkish Nationalists were puzzled at the needless destruction of economic assets. Turkish journalist Falih Rıfkı, who was himself a Nationalist, observed of the destruction:

> *"Why were we burning down İzmir? Were we afraid that if waterfront mansions, hotels and restaurants stayed in place, we would never be free of the minorities? When the Armenians were deported in the First World War, this same fear made us burn down all the neighbourhoods fit to live in, in Anatolian towns. This did not derive from a simple urge to destroy. A feeling of inferiority had a part in it. It was as if anywhere that resembled Europe was destined to remain Christian and foreign and to be denied to us."*[26]

Andrew Mango, in his biography of Atatürk, adds that the expulsion and extermination of the Christian minorities was catastrophic for the region, as they were the craftsman that the Turkish economy had relied upon. For example, the Turks, who were known for the prowess of their cavalry, had to rely on Armenian farriers. Those craftsmen were now gone.[27] Mustafa Kemal himself recognized this problem. In a public speech in Bursa shortly after the burning of Smyrna, he compared the "general ignorance" of the Turkish population to a disease. "We will acquire knowledge and science wherever they are to be found and we will stuff them into the head of every individual in the country."[28] Bristol was hoping to expand trade in a depopulated wasteland that had an extreme dearth of the knowledge and talent required for economic expansion.

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[25] Bryson, Admiral Mark L. Bristol, an Open-Door Diplomat in Turkey, 466.
[26] As quoted in Mango, *Ataturk*, 346–347.
[27] Ibid. 368.
[28] As quoted in ibid. 369.

Bryson also fails, then, to try to make a comparison with a neighboring country that Bristol harbored no end of ill-will towards – Greece. Greece was, in 1921, importing from the United States as much as all the rest of the Balkan nations combined. Further the American trade commissioner to Greece noted in 1929 that it was the United States that had emerged as the greatest foreign influence there.[29] This at a time when, as Bryson observes, American trade in Turkey was floundering.

Summed up, Bristol's instructions were "do what is right, and protect American interests." Judging by the loss of trade in Asia Minor, and the expansion of trade in Greece, it seems that, ironically, Bristol might well have served American interests to a far greater extent had he attempted to focus on doing what many people at the time would have considered to be morally right, rather than focusing on the protection of immediate American interests. By ignoring the Nationalists' destruction and expulsion of Christian minorities, he was ultimately doing a serious disservice to the interest of trade, which if he and Wilson could be believed, were to lead to the economic success and social improvements that were key to a more liberal international order. However, as previously noted, a far greater fear for Bristol was that another great war could break out over the spoils system, the Allies' efforts to divvy up the whole region. And as Wilson wrote of Morgenthau's failed peace attempt with the Ottomans, Wilson was balancing the desire for the internationalization of the Straits along side thwarting Allied territorial agreements in Asia Minor. Further, if Bristol did, in fact, see the annihilation of Christian communities as effectively being a *fait accompli*, then it could be that he felt the interest of peace was ultimately served by allowing the inter-communal blood-letting to come to a conclusive end. By siding with the Nationalists against Allied territorial aims, Bristol was trying to ensure what he and Wilson viewed as the two chief deliverers of a more inclusive liberal international order: peace and free trade. It must be noted, however, that by ignoring the plight of dispossessed and endangered minorities, while also ignoring the issue of justice for the Armenians, he was ultimately setting the stage for a future tyrant to remark, "Who remembers the Armenians today?"[30]

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[29] Cassimatis, *American Influence in Greece: 1917–1929*, 10.
[30] Adolf Hitler, as quoted in MacMillan, *Six Months That Changed the World*, 377.

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High Commissioner Bristol’s Implementation of Wilsonian Internationalism in Asia Minor and Its Shortcomings

This article is an examination of the commonalities and incongruities between Woodrow Wilson’s liberal internationalism and the conduct of Admiral Mark Lambert Bristol, America’s High Commissioner in Turkey. The article uses both secondary and primary sources to investigate Bristol’s policies and statements. It focuses on his lack of concern for the plight of the Armenian and Greek communities in Asia Minor, and his efforts to support American businesses and protect them from restrictions placed by other Allied powers. The article finds that while Admiral Bristol failed to consider issues of justice for minority communities in Turkey, he did, in fact, seek to improve the likelihood of a democratic future for the region by pursuing the Open Door Policy, the internationalization of the Straits, while also attempting to counter European designs on the region. While his aims were aligned with Wilson’s desires, Bristol’s methods and callousness towards minority communities were not in keeping with Wilson’s vision.