

**Wilson and Self-Determination – on the Occasion of the 150th Anniversary of US
President Woodrow Wilson’s birth (2006)**

Self-determination reshaped the world in the past century. It continues to hold the key to peace, justice and prosperity today for peoples all over the world, including the Armenians of Artsakh.

As we celebrate Artsakh independence on Sept. 2 and Armenian Independence on September 21, it is appropriate that we remember US President Woodrow Wilson, who was born on December 28, 1856, 150 years ago.

The Armenians have not had a stronger, more prominent advocate than Woodrow Wilson in modern times.

The oppression of the Armenians, a small Christian people halfway around the world, played a critical role in shaping the international law of self-determination and minority rights protection among international leaders such as Wilson.

In his blue print for the new world order, the 14 Points, 2 points were directly related to self-determination and the Armenians. Could he have imagined that his dream of a free, independent Armenia would be realized, at least partially, 80 years after his death?

There is a widespread misconception that there is a contradiction between territorial integrity and self-determination.

Such a contradiction is not possible, since they are legal concepts of different orders.

Territorial integrity is not an independent right, it is an attribute of sovereignty, and sovereignty is subordinate to the people’s right of self-determination.

Self-determination is a jus cogens human right at international law that was the legal basis for the entire de-colonialization movement of the 20th century.

Territorial integrity is an expedient measure aimed at promoting stability.

It came to the fore as a Cold War compromise in the Helsinki Final Act in 1975.

It is properly applicable only to the extent that it promotes stability.

When it ceases to do so or undermines stability, it engenders the violation of international law known as colonialism, whose remedy at international law is self-determination.

Therefore, any analysis of the rights of the Armenians of Artsakh must start and end with the right of self-determination in conformity with the will of the majority who are indigenous to that land.