Alternative Vision: The United States, Latin America, and the League of Nations during the Republican Ascendancy

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Introduction

As the guns fell silent on November 11, 1918, and World War I mercifully came to an end, the world was left to ponder the cost of the global tragedy. Humanity was confronted with the grim reality that much of Europe was physically and economically devastated, millions of veterans returned home with physical and mental ailments, and an estimated twenty million people had perished as a result of the catastrophe. The horrific cost of the war led the victorious powers to create the League of Nations in an effort to prevent future wars. While the United States refused to join the League, numerous nations flocked to the organization, including many in Latin America. By the time the First Assembly of the League of Nations opened in November 1920, every Latin American nation had entered the League save the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, and Mexico. A number of Latin American nations even became influential in the new organization. During this period, Brazil and Cuba were selected to be members of the Council of the League of Nations, Cuban native Dr. Antonio Sanchez de Bustamante was voted a jurist on the World Court, and Agustin Edwards of Chile was elected president of the Assembly of the League of Nations in 1922.\(^1\)

Despite Latin America’s active role in the League of Nations, during the Republican Ascendancy the United States sought to weaken the League’s influence in the

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region by thwarting its peacekeeping efforts in the Western Hemisphere. During the presidencies of Warren G. Harding, Calvin Coolidge, and Herbert Hoover the United States prevented League involvement in settling the region’s land disputes; such as disagreements between Peru and Chile, Panama and Costa Rica, and Bolivia and Paraguay. Instead, those administrations urged regional states to submit their disputes to the United States for arbitration. This stance changed only late in the presidency of Herbert Hoover, when in 1932 the administration agreed to tolerate League assistance in settling intra-American controversies.²

Coincident with U.S. efforts to limit League involvement in Latin American disputes were initiatives designed to utilize the Pan American movement to conclude peace agreements that would supersede the League’s peacekeeping machinery in the Western Hemisphere. Beginning with the Gondra Treaty of 1923, the United States led the way in creating two courts of arbitration where threats to hemispheric tranquility were to be taken before any nation resorted to war. It became clear to League advocates that the United States was utilizing Pan Americanism to weaken the League of Nations in Latin America. F. P. Walters, the former Deputy Secretary General of the League of Nations, later wrote “the United States government was, at this time, doing its best to keep the affairs of North and South America as a field apart [from the League], to be dealt with, whenever international action was required, through the agencies of the Pan

American Union. The natural consequence of this policy was that the Pan American Union now began to extend its activities in ways that had never been contemplated at the time of its foundation.”

This study will examine two primary questions concerning the foreign policy of the Republican Ascendancy. The first question is what caused these Republican administrations to limit Latin American involvement with the League of Nations from 1921 to 1933. The second is how successful the United States was in achieving its objectives. By examining these two questions, one can see the genesis of U.S. attempts to lead the world to peace that lasted until the deepening of the Cold War in the late 1940s, as well as the ultimate U.S. failure to achieve its lofty objective.

The administrations of the Republican Ascendancy labored to weaken the influence of the League of Nations in Latin America in the hope of remaking the world’s international system in the U.S. image. The basis of this envisioned *pax-Americana* system was to be constructed on America’s perceived core domestic value of liberty. The League of Nations seemingly threatened this overriding objective with its reliance on collective security. The Republican administrations argued that the hard paternalistic approach of collective security would fail in bringing peace to the world, because the threat of military or economic punishments would not fundamentally alter humanity’s

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behavior in international relations. Without a change in perspective, nations would continue to resort to war in order to secure their essential national ambitions, and the world’s great powers might possibly utilize the League’s collective security machinery to compel the organization’s members to use their military or economic power to achieve their interests. Alternatively, the administrations of the Republican Ascendancy sought to use soft paternalistic methods to establish an international system based on legal-internationalist principles, where the liberties of all nations were protected. In this approach, U.S. policymakers advanced proposals that they believed people would voluntarily and predictably accept, thereby producing the desired alteration of human behavior.  

These administrations focused much of their attention on Latin America to begin the process of reconstructing the international system. U.S. policymakers saw Latin America as an ideal region to begin implementing their vision, because their racial views led them to believe that Latin Americans would follow their lead. Thus, all three Republican administrations thwarted League activity in Latin America in order to ensure that their alternative vision would begin to be adopted by the nations of the Western Hemisphere. In addition, the long history of U.S. involvement in the region would reduce opposition from the U.S. Senate. As the system was progressively implemented in the Western Hemisphere, the Republicans theorized that the rest of the world would begin to adopt and employ their alternative vision. By 1932, the Hoover administration

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believed that the world was indeed beginning to accept the U.S. position, and thus, the hostility to League activity in Latin America during the closing days of his administration was dramatically reduced.\(^5\)

This study will also demonstrate the paradox of the Republicans’ soft paternalistic strategy, which ultimately doomed it to failure. While Republican leaders sought to alter humanity’s perception concerning international interaction, they simultaneously refused to modify their own deeply held beliefs. The American leadership refused to denounce the U.S. “right” to intervene in the internal affairs of Latin American nations because of their steadfast defense of the sanctity of international law. By citing international law that gave nations the right to intervene in a foreign nation in order to protect their citizens and their property, they refused to denounce the Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine. Their actions kept alive the mistrust between the United States and Latin America, thus sabotaging their efforts to get the region’s nations to turn over their disputes to the Pan American courts for arbitration before resorting to war. Thus, the Republican policy of soft paternalism was able to create a Pan American peace machinery but unable to induce member nations to voluntarily utilize the system. The failure of this approach was obvious by the beginning of the 1930s, when tensions between the Latin American nations had risen to the point that all calls for a peaceful

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settlement were ignored and they resorted instead to military means to settle their disputes.

By examining the U.S. attack on League activity in Latin America, this study fills a gap in the historical literature of period. Recent works on the foreign policy of the Republican Ascendancy have either overlooked the question entirely or given it only scant attention. When the issue does receive the attention of historians, authors have overwhelmingly taken the position that the League threatened U.S. attempts to gain hegemony in Latin America and that the Republicans reacted with hostility toward the new organization. This perspective is clearly seen in works such as Carl Parrini, *Heir to Empire: United States Economic Diplomacy, 1916-1923* and Gordon Connell-Smith, *The United States and Latin America: An Historical Analysis of Inter-American Relations*. Bryce Wood in his study *The United States and Latin American Wars, 1932-1942* briefly examines the Hoover administration’s softening toward the League’s activity in Latin America in 1932. Wood argues that the Republican administrations sought to settle intra-American disputes through the use of Pan Americanism. When the Hoover administration failed to peacefully settle the Peruvian-Colombian dispute over Leticia, however, it sought League assistance in order to protect U.S. prestige in the region, while simultaneously preventing the nation that ultimately lost the territory from blaming the United States.6

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While there has been a dearth of discussion on how the League influenced U.S. foreign policy toward Latin America, there are influential studies that discuss the overall foreign policy of the Republican Ascendancy. The more recent studies have argued persuasively that contrary to the conventional thought of earlier historians, the United States did not retreat into isolationism after the election of Warren G. Harding. The primary focus of many of these prominent works is how the Republicans relied heavily on U.S. economic power to bring peace and security to the world. Melvyn Leffler’s *Elusive Quest: America’s Pursuit of European Stability and French Security, 1919-1933*, Michael Hogan’s *Informal Entente: The Private Structure of Cooperation in Anglo-American Economic Diplomacy, 1919-1928*, Frank Costigliola’s *Awkward Dominion: American Economic and Cultural Relations with Europe, 1919-1933*, and Joan Hoff Wilson’s *American Business and Foreign Policy, 1920-1933* are all examples of prominent works that focus on the U.S. reliance on economic foreign policy to bring peace and stability to the world. This view has also been present in works analyzing U.S.-Latin American relations of the period. An example is Mark Gilderhus’s *The Second Century: U.S.-Latin American Relations since 1889*, which argues that the Republicans pursued a regional integration policy designed to limit European influence in Latin America by utilizing the Pan American system to create the conditions necessary to produce peace, prosperity, and security in the Western Hemisphere. During the Republican Ascendancy, the United States continued to see a threat from the outside world and thus refused to renounce its “right” to intervene in Latin America. While defending the U.S. “right” to intervene, however, Washington’s primary method of
ensuring its continued primacy in the Western Hemisphere was the use of economic incentives instead of a reliance on force.\(^7\)

Rather than focusing on the economic motivations of the United States, this study instead will concentrate on the establishment of a Pan American peace machinery based on U.S. “superior” values of liberty. Thus, this dissertation is heavily influenced by historical works describing the paternalism and racial views of the United States. Anders Stephanson in *Manifest Destiny: American Expansion and the Empire of Right* traces Americans’ beliefs in the nation’s providential standing in the world throughout the nation’s history, arguing that by the Wilson administration, the nation sought to spread its greatness around the world through regenerative intervention. Michael Hunt’s *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy* views race as one of the three major aspects of the creation of American ideology. Hunt argues that in the U.S. racial hierarchy, Latin Americans held a middle position, above the “inferior races,” such as Africans and Asians, but below the “superior” races based on Americans’ views on the “black legend” and its disdain for Spanish characteristics. Thus, throughout U.S. history, Americans chose to see Latin Americans in either a positive or negative light depending on the circumstances of the era. David F. Schmitz in his book *Thank God They’re on our Side*, correctly points out how racial issues helped develop the paternalistic policies of the United States. Because

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Americans believed that anyone who was not of Western European descent was inferior, and thus much more susceptible to radical ideas, the United States had to support right-wing dictatorships in the region to ensure a period of stability while the necessary prerequisites for the establishment of stable democracies could be established in the region. In *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of U.S. Imperialism, 1915-1940*, Mary Renda demonstrates the impact of paternalistic discourse on the U.S. intervention into Haiti, arguing that this discourse was essential for U.S. marines, politicians, and other Americans to justify the use of force to bring economic and political stability to that nation.\(^8\)

This dissertation will build on the recent historiography of the Republican Ascendancy by demonstrating that the United States did not revert back into isolationism. Instead of adopting an economic determinist stance, however, it will focus on U.S. attempts to spread the domestic core values of liberty to the international system of the Western Hemisphere. In addition, instead of describing U.S. foreign policy simply as paternalistic, this study will argue that the United States adopted a specific paternalistic approach to accomplish its goal. This study will conclude that the Republican Ascendancy pursued a flawed foreign policy approach based on soft paternalism in an attempt to transform the international system. Officials saw themselves as altruistic in their efforts to prevent the League of Nations from expanding its influence in Latin America in order to spread American core values to the international system, but their

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policy was doomed because they failed to realize that their defense of the U.S. “right” to intervene in Latin America violated the American values of liberty in the Western Hemisphere. It was this error of continuing to defend the hard paternalistic methods of interventions that perpetuated Latin American mistrust of the United States. As a result, these nations felt they had no alternative but to ignore U.S. leadership and resort to war to settle their border disputes by the early 1930s.
Chapter 1: The Triumph of Legal-Internationalism in 1920

The years between 1917 and 1920 are some of the most examined and controversial years of U.S. history. During this period, the United States entered and fought World War I against Germany and participated in the negotiations for the Treaty of Versailles, which ended World War I and produced one of the most memorable political fights in U.S. history. The focus of the debate that raged from 1919 to 1920 concerned the creation of the League of Nations. Americans had come to feel by the end of the 1910s that the time had come to begin creating a *pax-Americana* international system. As Anders Stephanson wrote in *Manifest Destiny*, the United States ended its attempts to be a shining example for an immoral world to emulate and adopted the viewpoint that it needed to intervene in world affairs in order to transform the globe in its image. The League fight clearly shows America’s desire to transform the global system in its image, but the debate also demonstrates that Americans had divergent views on how best to accomplish this aspiration.¹

In 1919, President Woodrow Wilson and his supporters insisted that the United States join the League of Nations in order to ensure the transformation of the world’s international system. Wilsonians believed if the world was left to its own devices, the

world’s powers would continue the practices of the old nationalist international system, which would inevitably lead to another war. Wilson and his supporters envisioned a U.S.-led League of Nations that would spread American principles and bring peace and stability to the world. Wilson and his supporters’ mistrust of the world led them to support the principle of collective security that was proposed in the League of Nations. Wilsonians argued that the threat of universal action would be enough to guarantee that all international disputes would be settled through rational means in the U.S.-led League instead of nations resorting to war.²

If Wilson and his supporters saw hope in the League of Nations, other Americans saw a lurking danger. In their minds, the Treaty of Versailles demonstrated that the world had not yet rejected the nationalist international system. Thus, they saw the collective security clauses of the League not as a guarantee for the world to follow the lead of the United States but as a way for unrepentant nations to force Americans to defend their immoral interests. With this primary concern, protectionists advocated that the United States lead the world toward future peace, but in a way to limit the potential threats posed by Wilson’s League of Nations. The protectionists offered alternatives to the League of Nations, including placing reservations on the Treaty of Versailles, as well as advocating legal-internationalist principles. In the end, the protectionists won the

resulting League fight in the U.S. Senate, but Americans continued the battle in the 1920 presidential election.³

The League issue was one of the prominent issues in the 1920 presidential campaign. Both major candidates supported the United States leading the world to adopt a new international system but had two different perspectives on how to accomplish this lofty objective. James M. Cox (D-OH) supported the United States joining the League of Nations with only minimal reservations, while Warren G. Harding (R-OH) campaigned in favor of the United States seeking to establish a legal-internationalist alternative to Wilson’s League based on his perception of what had led to America’s greatness, the steadfast defense of individual liberty. American voters had a clear choice to make in the election of 1920, and they decisively decided in favor of Harding’s viewpoint.⁴

A War for the World

During his presidency, Woodrow Wilson sought to further the goal of spreading American ideals globally. Wilson believed that America could cure the ills of the world, including the risk of further imperialism, militarism, and radical leftist revolutions, if it shared its political and moral greatness with the world. Wilson held that only a world


⁴ Warren G. Harding, The League of Nations: What it Means to America Senator Harding’s Position (Columbus, OH: Ohio Republican State Executive Committee, 1920), 10-18; James Cox, speech, 4 July 1920, box 2, folio 14, James Middleton Cox Papers, Paul Laurence Dunbar Library, Wright State University, Dayton, Ohio (Hereafter cited as Cox MSS); James Cox, speech, 3 September 1920, box 2, folio 18, Cox MSS; James Cox, speech, 4 September 1920, box 2, folio 19, Cox MSS.
system based on liberal-internationalism, which called for an open economic system rooted in capitalism, a reliance on constitutional governments, and the rule of international law, could bring peace, stability, and economic benefits globally. When the United States was being drawn into World War I, Wilson saw American entry as an opportunity to achieve a dual goal: defeating evil in the world and guaranteeing the United States a place at the peace table in order to get his vision adopted by the other world powers.5

In 1917, Wilson hoped to bring an end to the European-dominated nationalist international system. The nationalist international system was a world system where nations used Machiavellian tactics to expand their economic, strategic, and political power at the expense of their rivals. In this world structure, nations used militarism, secret diplomacy, and alliances to realize their national desires. While in operation for centuries, this method of conducting foreign affairs led to a dramatic intensification in tensions between European nations in the latter half of the nineteenth century. This upsurge of tensions resulted from the European nations’ drive to expand their imperialistic holdings, resulting in these powers becoming increasingly militarized in order to defend and expand their position vis-à-vis their rivals. American leaders came to see the eruption of World War I in 1914 as the inevitable result of the European method of conducting foreign policy. As Robert Lansing, Wilson’s secretary of state, argued, “Extreme Nationalism was the evil spirit of international politics during the 18th and 19th centuries. Its over-development resulted in Imperialism with its greed of territory and

5 Thomas J. Knock, To End All Wars, 118-19; N. Gordon Levin, Jr., Woodrow Wilson and World Politics, 1-10.
power and in the wars and bitter commercial antagonisms which marred the progress of Individualism and checked the movements for political liberty which began during the latter half of the 18th century. Imperialism produced the World War.”

In 1917, Wilson amplified his effort to change the nationalist international system that had triggered World War I. On January 22, he renewed his administration’s attempts to bring the belligerents to the peace table in a speech to the U.S. Senate that outlined the U.S. vision for a new internationalist system. Wilson argued that the war must end, not in a victor’s justice but in “a peace without victory.” If the belligerents concluded a peace treaty that terminated hostilities without a victor’s justice, then the agreement would contain terms that would be “worth guaranteeing and preserving, a peace that will win the approval of mankind, not merely a peace that will serve the several interests and immediate aims for the nations engaged.” Wilson believed that the peace terms needed to represent “the principles of the American governments, elements consistent with their political faith and with the practical convictions which the peoples of America have once [and] for all embraced and undertaken to defend.” Wilson enunciated the primary American goal as respect for the rule of law. Wilson argued that like the United States,

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7 From 1914-1916 Wilson sent his trusted advisor Colonel Edward House to Europe in order to convince the belligerents of World War I that their national interests would be better served by negotiating a peace rather than continuing the war. House argued that a peace based on mutual co-operation with each other and the United States could create a lasting peace based on the freedom of the seas, territorial integrity, and an open economic system. The Wilson administration hoped that acceptance of their vision would make traditional imperialism obsolete and bring in a new international system based on an American liberal-capitalistic goals. See Levin, Wilson and World Politics, 22-23.
the world needed to adopt the principle that all nations and peoples were equal before the law. As Wilson declared, “The equality of nations upon which peace must be founded if it is to last must be an equality of rights; the guarantees exchanged must neither recognize nor imply a difference between big nations and small, between those that are powerful and those that are weak.”

Wilson saw the United States playing a prominent role in this new international system once it was created. In order to achieve his vision for the postwar world, Wilson called for the creation of a “League for Peace” that was to guarantee peace and justice throughout the world. By working within this new international system, he expected that the “United States will join the other civilized nations of the world in guaranteeing the permanence of peace upon such terms as I have named I speak with the greater boldness and confidence because it is clear to every man who can think that there is in this promise no breach in either our traditions or our policy as a nation, but a fulfillment, rather, of all that we have professed or striven for.” However hopeful Wilson was that the war would be ended by a conference between the Central and Allied Powers, in just over two months time, Wilson went to Congress to ask for a declaration of war.

When Wilson went before Congress on April 2, 1917, to ask for a declaration of war on Germany, he did not seek American glory but instead declared that the United

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States had to engage in battle to protect humanity. Wilson argued that German militarism and inhumane actions, especially unrestricted submarine warfare, had forced the United States into taking the drastic step of declaring war. With their barbaric actions, the Germans were threatening all of humanity, setting the precedent that a nation could disregard international law if it helped it accomplish its diabolical goals. Wilson believed that if the German government was not defeated, its national policies of intrigue and aggression would remain a constant threat to world peace. As the president declared, “Our object now, as then, is to vindicate the principles of peace and justice in the life of the world as against selfish and autocratic power and to set up amongst the really free and self-governed people of the world such a concert of purpose and of action as will henceforth ensure the observance of those principles.”

While Wilson chastised Germany and other militaristic governments, he maintained that the U.S. objectives in the war were altruistic and sought to change the international system for the better. The president once again announced his vision for the postwar world in his “Fourteen Points” address in early 1918. He contended that while the Central Powers were pressing their military advantage over Russia at the Brest-Litovsk conference in order to gain territorial and financial advantage, the United States

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11 From November 1917 to March 1918, peace negotiations between the Central Powers and the Bolsheviks of Russia were held at Brest-Litovsk. The resulting Treaty of Brest-Litovsk transferred the territory that consisted of the Baltic provinces, Belarus, Finland, Ukraine, and portions of present day Poland from the Bolsheviks to the Central Powers. This territory had contained a third of Russia’s population, nine-tenths of its coalfields, and about half of its industry. See Orlando Figes, A People’s Tragedy: The Russian
sought victory for truly humanitarian causes. In stark contrast to this German power grab, Wilson announced fourteen principles that he believed the world should adopt, including open diplomacy, the open door, self-determination, freedom of the seas, and the creation of the League of Nations. Again, Wilson was arguing that the treaty ending the war should be a “peace without victory” that promoted the ideals of the United States. In order to spread these goals to the world, Wilson stated, “For such arrangements and covenants we are willing to fight and to continue to fight until they are achieved; but only because we wish the right to prevail and desire a just and stable peace such as can be secured only by removing the chief provocations to war, which this program does remove.” Thus, while the Central Powers fought for self-centered goals, the United States claimed to battle for a new world order, seeking to ensure that “the world be made fit and safe to live in; and particularly that it be made safe for every peace-loving nation which, like our own, wishes to live its own life, determine its own institutions, be assured of justice and fair dealing by the other peoples of the world as against force and selfish aggression.”

Many influential Republicans were echoing Wilson’s call for war against the Central Powers in order to benefit humanity. By 1915, Elihu Root\(^\text{12}\) argued that

\[\text{References:}\]


\(^{13}\) Elihu Root held the position of secretary of war from 1899 to 1904 under the McKinley and Roosevelt administration. Theodore Roosevelt would later name him secretary of state, which he served in this position from 1905-1909. After his years in the cabinet, he ran and was elected Senator in 1909, which he
Americans had to demand that all belligerents adhere to American principles, not only to protect the position of the United States but also for the benefit of all of humanity. Root was concerned that the belligerents of World War I would ignore and break international law, and thus threaten the rights of all nations. To prevent these violations, it was the duty of the United States to insist that the warring nations respect the principles that humanity had agreed to concerning international law. While it was important to Root for Americans to insist that international agreements be respected, he also saw that the United States should push for American principles to be adopted by the world in order to limit aggressive warfare and end the reign of dangerous and repressive militaristic governments. Senator Henry Cabot Lodge (R-MA) believed from the beginning of the war that “nothing less was at stake on the result of the conflict than the freedom and civilization of the Western World.” The worst violation to Lodge was the killing of civilians by the German use of unrestricted submarine warfare. In discussing these German attacks, he stated that “I think the United States stands for something higher in the world than mere trade and mere dollars. I do not want to see our citizens wronged in their property, but I think we should also stand, and above all, for morality and humanity in the dealings of nations with each other.”


Americans of both political parties supported the United States entering World War I in order to replace the nationalist international system with a system dominated by American values. The question, however, was how to accomplish this task during the peace conference that would officially conclude the war. The Wilson administration had hoped the destructiveness of World War I would persuade the world to follow the administration’s vision. The resulting Treaty of Versailles, however, did not meet Americans’ hopes for the dawning of a new world order, but instead divided Americans on how to accomplish the task of transforming the international system.15

Americans and the Treaty of Versailles

After the guns fell silent on November 11, 1918, and the First World War came to an end, Wilson decided to travel to Europe in order to personally negotiate the peace treaty, certain that his presence would help convince the other victorious powers in the war to accept the “Fourteen Points” that he had laid out earlier in the year. Wilson received a confidence boost when he took a tour of Europe before the opening of the peace conference, which was to be held at the Palace of Versailles outside of Paris, France. Wilson was welcomed by adoring crowds everywhere he went on the Continent. While he might have had the favor of the general European population during these early months of 1919, the group known as the “Big Four” who dominated the peace conference did not share his postwar vision. The Big Four were Wilson, Prime Minister David

Lloyd George of Great Britain, Prime Minister Vittorio Orlando of Italy, and French
Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau. Wilson was forced to compromise many of his
Fourteen Points away during the peace conference, but he was able to get agreement
regarding what he considered the key to his peace plan, the League of Nations.\(^\text{16}\)

Wilson saw the League as vital to the world, because he believed that with
American leadership the international organization could eventually correct the problems
with the peace treaty and firmly establish his vision of a new world system. Wilson
insisted that the devastation of World War I brought to the world the realization that
“every government that took thought for its people or for justice or for ordered freedom
should lend itself to a new purpose and utterly destroy the old order of international
politics.” Thus he believed that the world was awakened by the First World War and
ready to follow America’s lead in creating this new world order. The League of Nations,
Wilson believed, was essential to ensure that the nations of the world upheld the
principles of the rule of law, peaceful adjustment of disputed international borders, the
self-determination of peoples, and open trade throughout the world. The League would

\(^\text{16}\) While Wilson arrived in Paris in 1919 hoping to get the world to accept the “fourteen points,” the other
major powers at the conference arrived with alternative goals. Out of the victorious nations of World War
I, France had sustained the most damage, with 1.3 million men dead and 6,000 square miles of territory in
ruins from the war. Thus, Clemenceau arrived to the conference wanting to ensure the end to German
aggression. Accordingly, Clemenceau sought to preserve their war time alliance and to punish Germany.
In order to sufficiently weaken Germany, Clemenceau sought staggering reparations, loss of territory, and
the destruction of Germany’s military to ensure Germany could never again attack France. The primary
concern for David Lloyd George was the expansion and protection of the British Empire. With this
primary goal, the British sought to ensure that the German navy and colonies were seized in order to protect
the British imperial interests. Vittorio Orlando of Italy came with a clearly defined set of objectives, to
claim the spoils of war that were promised to Italy by the Allies in the Treaty of London of 1915. Italy had
been promised by the Allies that they would receive the disputed territory between Italy and Austria-
Hungary, territory in the Balkans, and islands in the Mediterranean in return for their declaration of war
against the Central Powers. See Margaret Macmillan, Paris 1919: Six Months that Changed the World
(New York, NY: Random House, 2001) and Arno J. Mayer, Diplomacy of Peacemaking: Containment
and Counterrevolution at Versailles, 1917-1918.
be able to accomplish this difficult task because the organization would include representatives from around the world. Wilson argued that the League would create a world voice that would create a “moral force of the public opinion of the world—the cleansing and clarifying and compelling influences of publicity—so that intrigues can no longer have their converts, so that designs that are sinister can at any time be drawn into the open, so that those things that are destroyed by the light may be properly destroyed by the overwhelming light of the universal expression of the condemnation of the world.” In this way, all of humanity would be uplifted by the altruistic ideals of the pax-Americana system that all people of the “world will come into a new light and into a new hope.”\(^\text{17}\)

Wilson believed that the new hope would come from U.S. leadership in the League of Nations, and the use of collective security. It was up to the United States, he contended, to assist the world in accepting freedom because it “understands the laws of freedom by understanding the laws of service, and that mankind always confidently look to her as a friend, as a cooperator, as one who will stand shoulder to shoulder with free men everywhere to assert the right.” This assistance would lead the United States to use the League of Nations to end the nationalistic policies being practiced in the world. Wilson hoped that most international disturbances could be handled by rational discussion, but he believed that at times force might be needed.\(^\text{18}\)


Wilson believed that the League was formed because the calamities of World War I had brought the world to the realization that a new era of international relations had to be adopted that sought to ensure the rights of every nation, instead of the old nationalistic system in which “every nation thought first and always of itself and not of its neighbor, thought of its rights and forgot its duties, thought of its power and overlooked its responsibility.” To ensure that no other nation followed this discredited notion, Article X had to be adopted by the world without change. Article X of the Covenant stated, “The Members of the League undertake to respect and preserve as against external aggression the territory and existing political independence of all Members of the League.” To Wilson, this single article was the bedrock on which a new world order was to be established. It was essential to Wilson’s vision for the postwar world because it was the embodiment of all that America had fought for since its founding, a world that guaranteed freedom to all and was itself free from the peril of political and military aggression. As Wilson put it, “The doctrine of Article X is the essence of Americanism, and we cannot repudiate it without at the same time repudiating our own history.” Thus, Wilson believed that Article X took American values and placed them in the League of Nations for the world to adopt and spread to all nations of the world.19

58, pt. 2, 1446-50; Congressional Record, vol. 58, pt. 2, 2057-58; Cooper, Breaking the Heart of the World, 110-11.

Wilson was elated when the League of Nations Covenant was placed in the Treaty of Versailles, but he was not completely satisfied with the document. He realized at an early moment that the treaty was not a perfect document, because numerous sections of it continued the old nationalist international system. Specifically, the treaty included agreements that went against his vision of a “peace without victory,” especially with the transfer of territory to the victors from the vanquished. Wilson argued that these unfortunate decisions had to be included in the treaty because promises were made before and during the war using the old nationalist ideas. He explained the inclusion of these nationalist gains as a result of the transition between the old and new international system:

Old entanglements of every kind stood in the way,-promises which Governments had made to one another in the days when might and right were confused and the power of the victor was without restraint. Engagements which contemplated any dispositions of territory, and extensions of sovereignty that might seem to be to the interest of those who had the power to insist upon them, had been entered into without thought of what the peoples concerned might wish or profit by; and these could not always be honorably brushed aside. It was not easy to graft the new order of ideas on the old, and some of the fruits of the grafting may, I fear, for a time be bitter.²⁰

While Wilson was not fervent over all portions of the Treaty of Versailles, he did believe it would help to usher in a *pax-Americana* international system once it was operational. Unlike Wilson, however, many Americans were dismayed that most of the Allied nations at Versailles were seemingly only interested in gaining territorial, economic, or political advantage. They saw nations from around the world taking territory and economic privilege from the vanquished nations. Thus, to many Americans,

the peace conference demonstrated not the dawn of the creation of a new international order, as Wilson argued, but merely a continuation of the old nationalist international system.21

Numerous American leaders felt that Japan was one nation that worked to further its nationalistic interests at the Paris Peace Conference instead of endeavoring to create a new world order. The prime example of Japanese self-interest was the attempt to gain control of the Shantung peninsula of China. Shantung was extremely important to China. It was the birthplace of Confucius, home to thirty million people, contained rich mineral deposits, and commanded the southern edge of Peking. Germany was able to gain control of the peninsula before World War I, but after its defeat in the Great War, Japan sought to take control of the area. At the Paris Peace Conference, Wilson agreed to hand Shantung to the Japanese as the price for their acceptance of the League of Nations without the Racial Equality Clause.22

There was a widespread feeling among political leaders in the United States that Japanese acquisition of Shantung was a striking example of the kind of nationalistic covetousness that occurred in Paris, instead of the world modeling itself after the United


22 The Racial Equality Clause was introduced to the Paris Peace Conference by Japan on February 13, 1919. This proposal called for the Covenant of the League of Nations to include a clause that stated that “all alien nationals of States members of the League equal and just treatment in every respect, making no distinction, either in law or in fact, on account of their race or nationality.” This clause gained the support of Asian nations, but was opposed by many of the great world empires, especially the British Empire who felt that such a clause threatened to break down the colonial system they had built based on the inferiority of races that needed to be enlightened. See John Milton Cooper Jr. Breaking the Heart of the World, 88-89; Macmillan, Paris 1919, 316-34; Knock, To End All Wars, 249-51.
States. One senator who opposed Japan’s acquisition, Hiram Johnson (R-CA), believed that the peace treaty allowed Japan to take control of Shantung in order to carry out the same policies that Germany had in China. Johnson condemned the supporters of the Treaty of Versailles for being “willing not only to condone the cruelties of the Japanese but to approve the crime of Shantung and the delivery of forty millions of people, who were modeling themselves after us, to the Prussians of the Orient.” Henry Cabot Lodge echoed Johnson’s trepidation concerning Shantung, branding the transfer one of the worst examples of nationalistic diplomacy in history and warning that the United States might have to defend the injustice if it joined the League of Nations as it was written in Paris. Lodge argued that if China fought Japan for control of its territory, Japan had the right to turn to the League for defense of its immoral acquisition of foreign territory. Senator Robert La Follette (R-WI) also opposed the transfer, which he saw as taking territory from an ally “for the benefit of the most despotistic Government on earth.”

While opponents of the treaty were outraged at the Shantung award because it showed the continuation of the nationalistic international system, supporters of the treaty took a different tack on the issue. Although they were not happy with Japan controlling Shantung, they believed it would be a great mistake to reject the treaty over the issue. Former President William Howard Taft agreed that the “Japanese spirit is the only Prussian spirit that is left in the world,” but he believed it would be a serious mistake for

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the United States to reject the treaty because of this unpalatable agreement. He argued that U.S. membership in the League of Nations would prevent Japan from seriously interfering with the internal affairs of China. The United States could not play that role, however, if the U.S. Senate refused to ratify the treaty. As Taft wrote, “If we destroy the League, we leave China at the mercy of Japan. Under the League, China can bring before the tribunals of the League and the public opinion of the world, every attempted encroachment by Japan upon her independence.” Senator John Creeps Wickliffe Beckham (D-KY) argued that Japan had been given the territory, and if the United States insisted on its immediate return Japan would be insulted because the other allies received territory as a result of the war and did not have to return it. Instead of insulting Japan, the United States, with its leadership in the League of Nations, could use the organization to get Japan to relinquish the territory if it did not follow the terms of the award. Thus, to treaty supporters, it was the United States’ leadership in the international system created in Paris that would prevent the continuation of Japan’s attempt to use nationalist tactics to gain at the expense of weaker nations.24

While many Americans were attacking the Japanese over Shantung, European nations were also scrutinized because of their actions in Paris. Condemnation also arose over the adoption of the mandate system, which gave European nations virtually total control over the former German colonies around the world. When the major European allied powers arrived in Paris, they had all desired to increase the size of their empires by

seizing German colonies. The French sought Togoland, Cameroon, and to become the sole protector of Morocco. The Italians arrived with the aspiration of gaining control of Somalia. Great Britain hoped to acquire German Southwest Africa, German East Africa, New Guinea, and German Samoa. The European powers argued that they had to control these territories in order to teach the “inferior” peoples who inhabited them how to properly rule themselves once they were given their independence. After intense international pressure, however, these European nations agreed to control the territories as mandates that were technically to be directed by the League of Nations. While the League was ostensibly in charge, individual nations were granted the power to run the areas, and thus the European nations were able to gain virtually total control.25

With European actions, such as the taking of colonies under the mandate system, as well as pushing for astronomical reparations from Germany, Americans saw Europe as a major threat to world peace. To Senator Johnson the allied greed contained in the treaty threatened the future peace of the world. As he stated, “The result of the war was . . . not to punish Germany, but, literally, to steal her trade and destroy her economic life, and take from her industries. The Treaty is so full of bartering and theft that, of course, it has within it possibilities of many future wars.” League supporter Senator John Sharp Williams (D-MS) stated that it would have been tempting for the United States to walk out of the peace talks, because of France’s efforts to secure high reparations from

Germany and the victorious European nations’ efforts to seize the territory of the vanquished powers.\textsuperscript{26}

Thus, when Wilson returned to the United States with the Treaty of Versailles, almost all Americans saw great problems with it. The nation became divided over the issue of the treaty, with the focal point being the proposed League of Nations. The argument was not over whether the United States should change the international system, but how the League would affect this objective. Wilsonians believed that with U.S. leadership in the organization, the nation could lead the world to a new era in international relations. The protectionist faction, however, saw in the League a lurking danger that would work to spread the old nationalist international principles.\textsuperscript{27}

The League Fight

While Wilson expected only brief opposition to the ratification of the Treaty of Versailles in the U.S. Senate when he returned from Europe, he found instead serious opposition to the treaty as senators pointed out perceived flaws in the proposed League of Nations. Quickly, senators were criticizing the organization as an attempt to force America into protecting the unjust Japanese and European gains from the war. Senatorial objections to the League of Nations focused not on Wilson’s goal of creating an


\textsuperscript{27} Cooper, \textit{Breaking the Heart of the World}, 3-5; Ambrosius, \textit{Wilson and American Diplomatic Tradition}, 136-37.
American-led internationalist system but on the enforcement of the new global order with
the League. Many opponents of the League believed, like Wilson, that the United States
had entered the war for the whole of humanity and that it was in the interest of all peoples
to follow America’s model. Yet they feared that many nations around the globe,
particularly England, France, and Japan, did not share this vision, as evidenced by their
selfish demands at the peace conference instead of seeking to create a new ethical world
system. To many American leaders, the actions of the other nations at the peace
conference confirmed the necessity that the United States protect itself from having to
defend the unjust goals attained at the peace conference. They saw the League of Nations
as cause for great worry, as instead of altering the international system, it promised to
continue the old system. As Robert Lansing, Wilson’s secretary of state, stated, “I am
sure that it is impracticable. There is in it too much altruistic cooperation. No account is
taken of national selfishness and the mutual suspicions which control international
relations.”  

The protectionist faction in the United States during the League fight has come to
be known by different names, including the reservationists and the irreconcilables, but
most members of both groups held common views. The overriding difference between
the irreconcilables and the reservationists was in how faulty the Treaty of Versailles was.
The irreconcilables held that the treaty was so flawed that they could not vote for the

(Hereafter Cited as Lansing MSS); Congressional Record, Vol. 58, pt 1, 695; Congressional Record, Vol.
58, pt. 2, 1449-50; Congressional Record, vol. 58, pt. 2, 1737-39; Cooper, Breaking the Heart of the World,
3-5; Ambrosius, Wilson and American Diplomatic Tradition, 136-37.
ratification of the Treaty of Versailles. The reservationists argued that they would vote for the treaty, but only if the United States was protected from the nationalistic governments through the placement of reservations on the treaty. While the differences between the two groups are clear, there was also a commonality, which was that most members in these groups believed that the United States needed to use its influence to bring significant changes in the international system. The two groups of protectionists agreed that the United States should seek to create a *pax-Americana* although they also believed that the nation had to protect itself from a world that had still had not learned the folly of the nationalist international system.  

The *irreconcilables*, a group of sixteen senators with a wide range of opinions on many topics, opposed ratification of the Treaty of Versailles on any condition. Despite their diverse beliefs, the majority supported U.S. international leadership. They did not trust the League of Nations, however, and in no way could they support the United States

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29 Cooper, *Breaking the Heart of the World*, 3-5.

30 In most of the earlier historical literature on the irreconcilables, the group was seen as a monolithic group that stopped at nothing to ensure that the United States remained virtually isolated. Thus they were seen as opposed to the United States taking a world leadership position as stated by the terms of the Treaty of Versailles. For an example of a traditional interpretation see Robert James Maddox, *William E. Borah and American Foreign Policy* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1969), 70-71. However, later studies demonstrate that contrary to a monolithic group opposed to the United States taking a leadership position in the world, they were a diverse group in which many supported the United States shaping the world in its image. Ralph Stone’s *The Irreconcilables: The Fight Against the League of Nations* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 1970) sees the irreconcilables in such a light. He sees these Senators as a diverse group who varied from isolationists to internationalists who were appalled by the harshness of the Treaty of Versailles. Thomas Knock in *To End All Wars* (255-57) also demonstrates how many irreconcilables did not oppose the Treaty of Versailles on the basis of isolationism, but did so because of their international views. He points out that some opposed the League of Nations because: it threatened to strengthen imperialism with the inclusion of collective security, the terms of the treaty was too harsh on the defeated powers, or did not go far enough in the attempt to bring peace to the world.
joining the organization, because of the risks the collective security clauses of the League Covenant could bring for the nation. As Senator Albert Fall (R-NM) stated, “In my judgment the joining of the United States with the nations of Europe and of the world with whom she has nothing in common, the entrance of this country into all the broils and the quarrels and the disturbances and partaking in the selfish interests and disputes of Europe, would just so surely destroy this great Government of ours.” Fall and others feared that the League would destroy the United States by forcing it to defend the gains made by the victorious nations of the world and result in the United States defending the traditional world system of greed and militarism. Senator Hiram Johnson began the year of 1919 hoping that the peace treaty would include the destruction of German militarism and an international organization charged with maintaining world peace, but found himself severely disappointed by the proposed treaty. He worried that Wilson had created an international organization that would force the United States to defend the unjust gains of the world at Paris. With this viewpoint, Johnson insisted that the League was not an organization of peace, but instead one that would force the United States to use its money and men to police Europe, Asia, and Africa from never ending wars of self-interest. As Senator William Borah stated in 1921, “It is about time we realize what is going on in Europe in the way of perfidious betrayal of smaller nations and peoples by the dominant powers. The whole Versailles Treaty and the League of Nations was designed to give about 300,000,000 dominant peoples absolute control and dominancy
over about from 500,000,000 to 600,000,000 subject peoples. The whole scheme was military autocracy for the world.”

While many irreconcilables objected to the League of Nations Covenant as it was written in Paris because they feared the potential dangers posed by nations that subscribed to the old international system, many did support the United States taking a decisive role in reshaping the international system. Hiram Johnson, one of the major opponents of the League of Nations, stated that he theoretically supported the idea of an international body to bring peace to the world, even though he did not know how it could be done practically. He stated in December 1918, “It is an alluring prospect to contemplate that the great nations of the world will unite to prevent future wars; and then the argument that all this slaughter must not be in vain, and that from the lessons of prevention of future conflicts must be learned is quite persuasive.” Some years after the League fight, Borah stated “I should like to see our government lead out in a constructive policy in international affairs. I believe that we can be of tremendous service to the cause of peace without surrendering any of our traditional policies or entangling ourselves in

the political affairs of Europe. What the world needs now is not alliances and leagues but leadership, a faith, a policy, which puts behind us the hatred and vengeance of war.”

The reservationists were as diverse as the irreconcilables in their views, but they were a much larger and more powerful faction in the U.S. Senate. There were two primary groups of reservationists during the League fight, the strong reservationists and the mild reservationists. The strong reservationists sought to place amendments or harsh reservations on the Treaty of Versailles in order to protect American rights in the League of Nations. The mild reservationists sought to place only those reservations on the Treaty of Versailles that were needed to gain the two-thirds majority needed for ratification.

Some of the reservationists took their position in hopes of killing the treaty in the Senate while protecting themselves politically, because they believed Wilson would never accept reservations. Others were true advocates of the League who were pragmatic in

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33 Like the irreconcilables, historian’s views on the reservationists have changed. The traditional view of the reservationists was that the majority of the moderates on the treaty lacked effective leadership and direction, which allowed the irreconcilables dictate the debate. With the irreconcilables controlling the debate in the Senate, they were able to defeat the Treaty of Versailles. For an example see Ruhl F. Bartlett, *The League to Enforce Peace* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1944), 208-09. However, the view of the reservationists has changed. Lloyd Ambrosius in *Woodrow Wilson and the American Diplomatic Tradition* argues that the reservations acted in the attempt to protect American interests which might be threatened by the League of Nations. Herbert F. Margulies in the book *The Mild Reservationists and the League of Nations Controversy in the Senate* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1989) argues that while the mild reservationists were a diverse group, they all generally sought the ratification of the Treaty of Versailles. However they realized that the treaty was not likely to be ratified without reservations, thus they worked to place reservations on the treaty in order to reach a compromise between the extremists on the issue which would result in the United States ratifying the treaty. According to Margulies, this group of Senators did more than most to get the U.S. Senate to ratify the treaty.
understanding that some compromise had to be made in order to secure American membership in the League of Nations.\textsuperscript{34}

Senator Henry Cabot Lodge led the reservationist faction in the U.S. Senate, but while advocating reservations he also shared many of the irreconcilables’ ideas on the war and the League. Lodge believed that the United States entered World War I not for any selfish motive, but instead to break German militarism and violations of international law for all of humanity. While the United States was fighting for these ideals, the Europeans and other powers were fighting for their nations’ interests. As Lodge argued, “We disclose at every step secret treaties, furtive bargains behind closed doors, and the whole thing is nothing but an alliance with preparation for war instead of peace. There are flaunted in this treaty questions that will breed war in all sorts of places. My one desire, as you know, is to get the United States out of dangerous complications.” With the United States already fighting a war for humanity, it should not also have to enter an organization that could force it into a war on the grounds of keeping the peace, but in reality to protect all other nations’ territorial gains. With America’s morality, the nation should be free to decide for itself when and where to fight, not be forced by an unjust world to fight when the interests of humanity were not present.\textsuperscript{35}

\textsuperscript{34} Cooper, \textit{Breaking the Heart of the World}, 129-31; Margulies, \textit{The Mild Reservationists and the League of Nations}, 6-46.

Lodge believed that although the United States should be engaged in attempting to minimize wars throughout the world, the League of Nations Covenant as written in the Treaty of Versailles went too far in tying the United States to all of the world’s problems. Making the new organization even more dangerous to Lodge was his belief that it opened America’s internal policies to debate in the League, something that could threaten the country’s moral greatness. Thus, given its status as the leading promoter of liberty, peace, and freedom around the world, the nation had no choice but to protect itself for the world’s sake from being tied too closely to the world. If the United States did join the League of Nations as originally conceived, it would do so in the spirit of its idealism, but Lodge warned that “it is well to remember that we are dealing with nations every one of which has a direct individual interest to serve, and there is grave danger in unshared idealism.”

Wilsonians shared many of the beliefs held by the protectionists, but they reached a different conclusion concerning how the United States could best reform the international system. Wilsonians concurred that the rest of the world was pursuing dangerous nationalistic interests, while the United States was pressing for the transformation of the world system for the benefit of the whole of humanity. As Wilson stated, it was up to the United States to assist the world in accepting freedom because it “understands the laws of freedom by understanding the laws of service, and that mankind always confidently look to her as a friend, as a cooperator, as one who will stand shoulder to shoulder with free men everywhere to assert the right.” Unlike the protectionists,

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36 *Congressional Record*, vol. 58, pt. 4, 3783-84.
however, the Wilsonians believed that the League could be used by the United States to spread its ideals around the world. They argued that far from the nations of the world using the League of Nations to force the United States to defend their nationalistic policies, the United States could use the League for its own designs. Through the League of Nations, the United States could use its moral, economic, and military strength to spread its liberal-internationalist vision around the world.37

Many League supporters in the U.S. Senate felt that the United States had no choice but to involve itself in the League of Nations in order to bring peace to the world. Senator John Sharp Williams (D-MS) argued that the Europeans were fighting over the spoils of war during the peace conference. He believed that Americans rightfully resented these selfish European motives and thought it rational that Americans be tempted to remove themselves from the decadent world. Williams was convinced that if the United States isolated itself, it would remain powerful because of its financial, military, and geographic strengths. Yet, Americans needed to resist the lure of retreating back into isolationism. Instead, Williams claimed that the United States had to remain involved in world affairs by joining the League of Nations, in order to change the world for the better. Without U.S. involvement in the League of Nations, Williams asserted, Europe would be back to pre-World War I conditions and fighting over selfish interests, which eventually would spark another world war. As Williams’ ally in the Senate, Henry

Ashurst (D-AZ), put it, “Are we not the knight-errant among the nations of the earth? Who else more than America should enlighten the world?”

By the spring of 1920 the U.S. Senate was at a deadlock concerning the League of Nations because the irreconcilables and Wilsonians refused to vote for reservations, and the treaty therefore failed to win ratification on two separate occasions. The first attempt to ratify the treaty took place on November 19, 1919, when two versions of the treaty came up to a vote. On this day, the treaty with no changes and the treaty with reservations both failed to win the two-thirds majority needed to ratify the treaty. The treaty was again voted on March 19, 1920, when again a version with reservations failed to win enough votes for ratification. At this time, both sides decided to hold any further significant action upon the Treaty of Versailles until after the election of 1920, a decision that made the League of Nations one of the great issues of the presidential campaign.

38 Congressional Record, vol. 58, pt 1, 797; Congressional Record, vol. 58, pt. 2, 1447. In the speech by Ashurst, he was answering anti-league Senators who were declaring that the League of Nations would force the United States into policing Europe. He answers them in this speech by arguing that noble people like the Marquis Lafayette fought for people like Washington because it was the proper thing to do. With the position in which the United States was in, being the world’s foremost moral nation, the United States should be the champion for the poor people who are weak that cannot speak for themselves.

39 In attempt to protect the United States from the perceived dangers of the Treaty of Versailles, the protectionists proposed fourteen reservations be placed on the treaty before the U.S. Senate ratified the document. These reservations included the right of the United States to withdraw from the League of Nations at any time, the United States would not place sanctions on violators of Article X without the consent of the U.S. Congress, U.S. domestic issues would not be subject to discussion by the League, declaring U.S. objection to the Shantung award, the Monroe Doctrine would remain unchanged, amongst other issues. See Cooper, Breaking the Heart of the World, 225-33 and Knock, To End All Wars, 264-67.

The Campaign of 1920

The presidential election of 1920 represented the moment in which the American people had a chance to have a direct voice on the subject of the League of Nations. The American people had a choice between two visions of how the United States could transform the international system. The Democratic Party, with its presidential nominee Ohio Governor James M. Cox, campaigned to attach the United States to the League of Nations after the placement of mild reservations to the treaty. The Republican candidate, Senator Warren G. Harding of Ohio, offered an alternative to the Wilsonian vision. Harding’s alternative to Wilson’s League seemingly offered to the American people U.S. leadership in transforming the international system while protecting the world from the perceived dangers of the League of Nations. Harding proposed the creation of an “association of nations” that would keep the peace not with the threat of force, but with the use of legal-internationalist principles.\textsuperscript{41}

At the outset of the campaign, the Republican Party seemed to be at a disadvantage on the League issue due to the wide range of opinion within the party. Entering their national convention, influential Republicans could be found in all of the major factions of the League fight. Former President William Howard Taft favored U.S. membership in the League of Nations, Senator Henry Cabot Lodge pushed for reservations, and Senator William Borah wanted a complete rejection of the Treaty of Versailles. Each major faction pressed for its position to be adopted by the party’s

platform. The irreconcilables pressed for a plank calling for the outright rejection of the League and threatened to bolt the convention if the party’s plank in any way called for the adoption of the League. The reservationists entered the convention pressing for the adoption of the Treaty of Versailles with the Lodge Reservations. For two days the factions fought over the plank concerning the League of Nations, but soon a compromise was reached.42

The compromise plank of the Republican national platform endorsed U.S. participation in changing the international system on legal-internationalist principles. The plank accepted U.S. participation in efforts to preserve world peace, which included joining an international association. The party endorsed the nation’s entry into an international body that pursued the creation of a system of international laws, establish unbiased international courts, and initiated general international conferences when there was a threat for war. At the same time, the Republicans argued that this organization’s objectives could be accomplished without compromising the national independence of the United States, unlike the League of Nations Covenant as drafted in 1919. As the plank stated, “And we pledge the coming Republican administration to such agreements with the other nations of the world as shall meet the full duty of America to civilization and humanity, in accordance with American ideals, and without surrendering the right of the American people to exercise its judgment and its power in favor of justice and peace.”

42 Elihu Root to Henry Cabot Lodge, 14 May 1920, box 161, folio 26, Root MSS; Henry Cabot Lodge to Elihu Root, 17 May 1920, box 161, folio 26, Root MSS; David Pietrusza, 1920: The Year of the Six Presidents (New York, NY: Carroll and Graf, 2007), 210-12; Bagby, The Road to Normalcy, 79-84.
The author of this compromise plank was former Secretary of State Elihu Root, who was a prominent voice of the legal-internationalist movement.43

Legal-internationalism was the conceptual approach of American internationalists in the years preceding World War I. The advocates of legal-internationalism called for the creation of international laws and an impartial world court to settle international conflicts. Even though there had been advocates of the establishment of legal principles to secure peace for centuries, the movement grew dramatically in the 1890s. It was in this decade that many became encouraged by arbitration agreements that were then being reached by numerous nations. While many peace activists were thrilled by the apparent goodwill that was growing between the world powers with the establishment of such treaties, many saw a major problem with these agreements. For legalists, the major problem of these agreements was that the arbitrators appointed by signatory nations to settle the international issues were partisan and thus regularly unable to reach a fair conclusion. In order to overcome this glaring problem, legalists came to believe that only the establishment of international law and the creation of an international tribunal to rule on the codified law would be able to effectively settle international issues that threatened to erupt into violence. They conceded, however, that the development of international law was necessarily going to take a substantial period of time, because nations had to adhere to international agreements and precedents took time to be established.44

This movement lost favor during World War I, however, when international tribunals failed to prevent war from breaking out in 1914. The war forced many of its advocates to modify their views on internationalism. Most who favored legal-internationalism continued to advocate the creation of international laws and courts but also began to push for the creation of a world body that immediately met at the outset of an international crisis. This organization would be charged with bringing together all concerned parties to discuss their differences before resorting to war. Legalists were convinced that had European nations met prior to the outbreak of war, there was a great likelihood that the crisis would have been solved through discussion before the guns began to fire in August 1914. While legal-internationalsists favored an international body to discuss issues peacefully, they distrusted Wilson’s League of Nations. Legalists worried that a world organization was detrimental to individual nations because it would place far reaching limitations on national sovereignty. For the United States, the limitation on national sovereignty might force the nation to accept the dictates of the international body, at the risk of possibly compromising the nation’s vital interests.45

Instead of relying on individual arbitration agreements between nations, legal-internationalsists came to support the creation of an international court. They saw the establishment of such a body as essential to peace because the tribunal would be impartial and would follow the accepted principles of proper conduct between nations. Since

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44 David S. Patterson, “The United States and the Origins of the World Court,” Political Science Quarterly 91 (Summer, 1976), 279-81.

nations would all appoint justices, most of the jurists would be impartial in the dispute and thus would hear cases more dispassionately. The decisions reached by this court would therefore be based on international law, not political considerations.  

Elihu Root was one of the most forceful in arguing the legal-internationalist perspective during the League fight. Root saw great value in an international organization that mandated disputants to negotiate before they resorted to war, but he did not believe that the League of Nations as spelled out in the Treaty of Versailles was such an organization. First, he lamented that the League did not mandate arbitration between nations in an international dispute. Without mandatory arbitration, Root argued, international law became inconsequential, and the international system would end up in a state similar to the one that followed the failure of the Hague Tribunal in 1914.  

Another deficiency of the League of Nations, according to Root, was that it did not set up a procedure through which to codify international law, a process that could continually bring improvements to the international system. As Root stated, “Nothing had been done to provide for the reestablishment and strengthening of a system of arbitration or judicial decision upon questions of legal right. Nothing has been done towards providing for the

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46 Patterson, “The United States and the Origins of the World Court,” 279-81.

47 The Hague system began in 1899 when Tsar Nicholas II of Russia called a conference amongst all nations that had diplomatic representative in St. Petersburg in order to discuss disarmament and to seek agreements to reduce the risk of war. At the conference, where twenty six nations attended, created the Permanent Court of Arbitration. This court, better known as the Hague Tribunal, was made up of qualified panels of mediators to be used to settle international disputes. However, the organization was extremely weak, because it could only be used if all nations involved in the dispute agreed to submit the issue to the Tribunal. A second Hague conference was called by the Tsar in 1907, where forty four nations attempted to further the agreements made eight years earlier. In the area of an international court, little was done to improve the Hague Tribunal because of issues of how judges would be appointed and nations opposing obligatory arbitration. See, Walters, A History of the League of Nations, vol. 1, 1-14 and Warren F. Kuehl, Seeking World Order: The United States and International Organization to 1920 (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 1969).
revisions or development of international law. In these respects, principles maintained by the United States without variation for half a century are still ignored, and we are left with a program which rests the hope of the world for future peace in a government of men and not of laws, following the dictates of expediency, and not of right.⁴⁸

While the Republicans used Root’s ideas to create a compromise plank concerning the League of Nations, they also had to select a nominee for president who could appeal to the different factions of the party. By the time that the delegates had arrived at the convention in Chicago, there was no clear favorite to win the nomination. Former President Theodore Roosevelt had seemed to be a lock for the nomination until his death in January 1919. Once the popular ex-president passed away, the Republican nomination became a wide open race. The party ended up having to compromise on its presidential nominee as it had on the plank concerning the League of Nations. With the convention deadlocked, the Republicans nominated Ohio Senator Warren G. Harding.⁴⁹

Harding was in many ways a surprise pick for the Republicans in 1920, but he did have advantages going into national convention. He had been elected to the U.S. Senate in 1914 but had done very little in his position to gain national attention. While he lacked an impressive Senate record, he was a master of compromise politics and accordingly had made few political enemies. Despite a poor showing in the pre-convention primaries, he and his advisors secured commitments from numerous delegates to make Harding their


second or third choice at the convention. The Harding campaign’s electoral strategy, added to the senator’s already favorable reputation with the party, made him the logical compromise candidate for president for the Republican Party in 1920.\footnote{Murray, \textit{The Harding Era}, 14-15, 31-42; Bagby, \textit{The Road to Normalcy}, 82-96.}

A reservationist in the U.S. Senate during the League fight, Harding entered the 1920 campaign with serious concerns about the Treaty of Versailles. He accepted the Wilsonian view that the United States had entered World War I for the righteous objective of defending the national rights of all people against Prussian militarism. He also agreed with the Wilsonian premise that it was essential for the United States to be a leader in re-creating the international system. While the two men agreed on these issues, they differed widely on the League of Nations. Unlike Wilson, who saw the organization as the guarantor of peace, Harding saw the organization as having a better chance of spawning war than promoting international harmony. Instead of supporting Wilson’s League, Harding came to believe that an alternative organization should be created that internationalized the American principle of liberty.\footnote{Congressional Record, vol. 58, pt. 5, 5219-25; Warren G. Harding to F.F. Scobey, 27 September 1919, \textit{Warren G. Harding Papers}, vol. 21 (Columbus, Oh: Manuscripts Department Ohio Historical Society, 1969), microfilm, 1029-30 (Hereafter cited as Harding MSS); Francis Russell, \textit{The Shadow of Blooming Grove: Warren G. Harding in His Times} (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 1968), 324-25.}

Harding asserted that American exceptionalism was due to the nation’s steadfast defense of individual liberty, the hallmark of which was that government did not dictate a person’s destiny. Instead, Americans had an equal opportunity to pursue their life’s ambitions as long as they did not trample upon the rights of others in the process. Thus,
it was an individual’s ambition, talent, and industriousness that determined his or her fate in the United States. Harding believed it was the nation’s collective individualistic drive to succeed that generated the innovation and savvy necessary to bring the United States to the forefront of international power. As he declared, “America spurns every committal to the limits of mediocrity and bids every man to climb to the heights, and rewards him as he merits it. This is the essence of liberty and made us what we are.”

According to Harding, the U.S. style of government was essential to the existence of liberty. He contended that this fundamental principle flourished in the United States because civil liberty was the bedrock principle of the U.S. Constitution. As Harding stated, civil liberty was essential “for there can be no real human liberty without civil liberty and its guaranties.” The brilliance of this document was that it created a representative democracy, which allowed for the principle of majority rule while protecting Americans from the tyranny of the majority. While Harding extolled representative democracy, he saw direct democracy as one of the greatest threats to liberty. Harding warned that if all laws were enacted by the majority, the resulting mob rule would trample on the rights of the minority. Harding realized that the laws of the United States were imperfect, with some of the nation’s citizens not enjoying their full liberties. To ensure that liberty was continually expanded, the laws of the nation had to

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53 One example of Warren G. Harding belief that all Americans did not enjoy complete liberty concerned African-Americans. He saw that the nation did not protect the rights of African Americans and campaigned in support of granting this group their full Constitutional rights. In this cause he called on
be altered accordingly. The United States undertook this task through representative democracy. Under this system of governance, the people voiced their opinions through a rational electoral process. Harding deemed the process rational because while people elected their representatives, their choices were regularly limited to the candidates who were members of mainstream political parties. To win election, candidates had to win the support of not only the people but also of the party before they were nominated. By winning the support of both the people and the party, the chances were greatly improved that only rational men became the individuals charged with expanding and protecting individual liberty. Once elected by the majority of their constituents, the people’s representatives would enter into discussions and craft laws that implemented the majority’s desires without trampling upon the liberties of the minority.54

The Constitution further protected Americans’ liberty through the fundamental principle of equality under the law. If a law was passed or other individuals violated a person’s liberty, the person could seek relief from the judicial system. In the U.S. legal system, Harding argued, it was irrelevant how much wealth, power, or influence an individual had; no one was above the law. Harding stated that this principle was essential because “The government which surrenders to the conspiracies of an influential few or

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yields to the intimidation of the organized many does justice to neither and none, and
dims the torch of Americanism which must light our way to safety.”

Harding opposed the League of Nations Covenant as it was written in the Treaty
of Versailles because it violated the principle of liberty. He saw in the covenant an
attempt to destroy nationalism in the international system, which was equivalent to
abolishing individualism in the American government. It was nationalism that droves
peoples to seek freedom, rise to greatness, and pursue their ambitions. As Harding stated,
“In nationalism was centered all the hopes, all the confidence, all the aspirations of a
developing people. Nationalism has turned the retreating processions of the earth to the
onward march to accomplishment, and has been the very shield of democracy wherever
its banners were unfurled.” In the place of nationalism, Harding believed that the League
threatened to become an autocratic super-government, violating the principle of
representative democracy. With autocratic power, the League would violate the liberties
of individual nations, because it would not protect the rights of the minority. Harding
expressed concern that if the majority of the representatives in the League of Nations
voted in favor of forcing the United States to assume European war debts or send its
military to war, they would be able to do so over any objections raised by Americans. As
he stated, if the United States joined the League, “we have surrendered our own freedom
of action to a council whose members will represent the prejudices, ambitions, hatreds,
and jealousies of the Old World, or to the assembly, where we are outvoted 6 to 1 by

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55 Harding, America day, Vol. 238, Harding MSS, 1135-1141; Harding, “Speech of Senator Warren G.
Harding Delivered at the Waldorf Astoria,” 6 January 1920, Vol. 238, Harding MSS, 1210l.
Great Britain and her colonies, and we still remain a party to the racial, geographical, and inherited enmities of Europe and the Orient.”

In Harding’s perspective, the League of Nations also violated the principle of equality under the law. The primary victors of World War I had gained economically and territorially at the expense of the vanquished Central Powers. Under the League’s collective security clauses, all member nations including the United States would be sworn to defend these unjust gains. As Harding stated, “they [the victorious powers of World War I] wanted this Republic, with its resources—with its wealth of men and materials—to guarantee the changes they had wrought, and wanted the United States of America in their unselfishness to guarantee in perpetuity the selfishness of the Old World.” Thus, Harding believed, that the collective security clause of the League would violate the equality of all nations. In effect, the influential members of the League could manipulate the organizational system to compel its members to trample the rights of other nations. As Harding stated in the 1920 campaign, the League was an offensive and defensive alliance of the great powers that was “to impel their will upon the helpless people of the world.”

During the 1920 presidential campaign, Harding advocated the creation of an association of nations that offered to internationalize the principles of American liberty. The hallmark of this organization was to be based on legal-internationalist principles,

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56 Congressional Record, vol. 58, pt. 5, 5219-25; Warren G. Harding to F.F. Scobey, 27 September 1919, Harding MSS.

which included a variation of representative democracy and equality under the law. Representatives were to be appointed by all willing nations, and charged with codifying international law, thus giving voice to all of the people. In addition an international court would be charged with justly administering those laws. As Harding juxtaposed the League to his proposed association of nations, “The one is a judicial tribunal to be governed by fixed and definite principles of law administered without passion or prejudice. The other is an association of diplomats and politicians whose determinations are sure to be influenced by considerations of expediency and national selfishness. The difference is one [with] which Americans are familiar, the old and fundamental difference between a government of laws and government of men.”

While the Republicans had some dissention in their ranks concerning the League of Nations, the Democratic Party seemed to be united on the issue. Many of the Democratic elite continued to follow the uncompromising leadership of Woodrow Wilson on the League in 1920. This seemed to be clearly demonstrated with the vast majority of Democratic senators voting against the Treaty of Versailles with the inclusion of the Lodge Reservations in March. While Wilson continued to believe that the American people supported his position on the League of Nations, as the election year progressed, more of his allies came to question his uncompromising stance. Far from blindly supporting Wilson’s position on the League in 1920, the Democratic Party began to reject his stance on the Treaty of Versailles.

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By the early months of 1920, some of Wilson’s closest allies in the League fight began to advocate the acceptance of reservations in order secure ratification of the treaty. By early February, staunchly pro-League newspapers, such as *The New York Times*, were encouraging the president to accept the Lodge Reservations in order to secure U.S. membership in the League. In March, even Gilbert Hitchcock, Wilson’s point man in the Senate, suggested that Wilson submit “reservations of an interpretative character” in order to change the public’s opinion on the subject. As Hitchcock argued, if Wilson took the initiative to pursue such a course of action “it may result in ratification and if it does not, it will, at least, enormously improve our position before the country. It will put Lodge on the defensive and win back to us an immense public sentiment that favors action.”

When the Democrats met in San Francisco for their national convention, they adopted a platform that supported U.S. membership in the League of Nations, but the plank was not as strong as Wilson had wished. Wilson had submitted a plank endorsing the League Covenant as written in the Treaty of Versailles. The convention, however, rejected Wilson’s proposed plank and backed away from his uncompromising position. The plank that was adopted stated that the League held true to “previously expressed American ideals and so intimately related to the aspiration of civilized peoples everywhere.” For this reason, the party called for “the immediate ratification of the treaty

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60 Gilbert Hitchcock to Bainbridge Colby, 29 March 1920, box 2, folio 12, Colby MSS; Cooper, *Breaking the Heart of the World*, 321.
without reservations which would impair its essential integrity; but do not oppose the acceptance of any reservations making clearer or more specific the obligations of the United States to the league associates.” The plank continued by declaring that the United States had to join the League, because “Only by doing this may we hope to aid effectively in the restoration of order throughout the world and to take the place which we should assume in the front rank of spiritual, commercial and industrial advancement.” While the Democrats called for the United States to join the League of Nations in order to advance world civilization, they moved toward accepting some of the reservations that were proposed by the protectionists, though they were unclear on precisely what reservations they would accept.⁶¹

The man the Democrats chose to lead their presidential ticket was James M. Cox, who had won three terms as governor of Ohio. Cox had not been a vocal defender of the League of Nations prior to his nomination for president, but he soon became a leader in trying to get the United States to join the League. In his speeches leading up to the election, Cox gave support to Wilson and his attempts to end wars throughout the world with the creation of the League of Nations and attacked Senate Republicans for refusing to ratify the treaty. In addition he also criticized Harding’s proposal to revamp the international system through the creation of only an international court, which Cox described as insanity, asking why a proven failure would be given another chance. Cox cited the Hague Tribunal’s failure to prevent the outbreak of World War I or to bring the

belligerents to the peace table after war had broken out as proof that Harding’s vision was flawed. He argued that under this old order of international organization, millions of men died in World War I and unstable conditions were established throughout Europe after the major fighting had ended in 1918. Instead of relying on this defective approach, he declared that the United States had to join a new world organization that took action throughout the globe to prevent future wars. For this organization to be effective, all peace loving nations had to unite, with the United States acting as one of the key nations in order to achieve peace. To Cox, it was indefensible that the Republicans were holding up U.S. ratification of the treaty. He believed that the Treaty of Versailles had to be ratified so the nation could use its moral and military power to prevent the world from finding itself in another more destructive war.62

While taking issue with Harding’s association of nations proposal, Cox also moved away from Wilson’s position on the League. Just like Harding, Cox had to seek the support of the different factions on the League issue in the coming election. In order to gain support, Cox supported reservations on the treaty, but only those that clarified U.S. obligations in the organization. During the campaign, Cox proposed two reservations to the Treaty of Versailles. The first stipulated that the United States would act in accordance with the U.S. Constitution, the second that the United States would

62 James Cox, speech, 4 July 1920, box 2, folio 14, Cox MSS; James Cox, speech, 3 September 1920, box 2, folio 18, Cox MSS; James Cox, speech, 4 September 1920, box 2, folio 19, Cox MSS; Bagby, The Road to Normalcy, 54-79, 74-5; Kuehl and Dunn, Keeping the Covenant, 6-8.
only cooperate with the League if it adhered to its stated objective of working toward peace and goodwill among nations.  

When the election was held in November 1920, Warren G. Harding won a landslide victory over James Cox, 16,181,289 votes to 8,141,750. The electoral votes were just as lopsided, with Harding winning 404 to 127. To make matters worse for the Democrats, the Republicans gained a 172 seat majority in the House of Representatives and a 22 vote majority in the Senate. Although the results of the election clearly showed a preference for the Republican Party in 1920, this does not mean that the American people rejected the idea of U.S. leadership in an international organization to further the cause of peace. Instead of being the renewal of U.S. isolationism, as some earlier historians claimed, the election instead was a victory of legal-internationalism.

Conclusion

By the close of 1920, both the U.S. Senate and the American people had voted to reject the Treaty of Versailles and with it the League of Nations. The outcome of the League fight demonstrated that there was a consensus in the United States that the country should remake the world’s international system. The dispute, however, also demonstrated that Americans had serious concerns with the League of Nations. The concern that Americans had about the League of Nations was that once in operation it

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63 James Cox, speech, 23 April 1920, box 2, folio 13, Cox MSS; Bagby, The Road to Normalcy, 54-79, 134-46; Cooper, Breaking the Heart of the World, 388-90.

64 Bagby, The Road to Normalcy, 159; Kuehl and K. Dunn, Keeping the Covenant, 32.
would not be an institution of peace, but another vehicle for the world to use to further the
traditional nationalist international system. To many Americans, the world had not yet learned the futility of traditional foreign policies and thus would resist following the lead of the United States in creating the *pax-Americana* international system.\(^{65}\)

In the election of 1920, the American people clearly demonstrated their desire to transform the international system, while at the same time protecting the nation from an unrepentant world. Warren G. Harding campaigned for the creation of an alternative organization to the League of Nations, one based on legal-internationalism. While Harding was victorious in the election, his administration faced serious obstacles in implementing its vision. When the new administration took office it believed that it faced opposition not only from unrepentant nations that sought to continue the old nationalist international system but also from the various factions of the League fight within the United States that were not convinced of the wisdom of pursuing legal-internationalist policies to transform the prevailing system. The administration knew that it faced hostility to its plans from Wilsonians who wished the United States to join the League of Nations and from irreconcilables who were suspicious of any move that might be construed as an attempt to enter the League. The Harding administration realized it had to advocate policies that could both convince the world to adopt U.S. principles and

\(^{65}\) For examples of these arguments see Hiram Johnson to Hiram Johnson Jr., and Archibald Johnson, 1 August 1919, *Johnson Letters*, vol. 3; Hiram Johnson to Hiram Johnson Jr., 24 January 1919, *Johnson Letters*, vol. 3; *Congressional Record*, vol. 58, pt. 1, 797; *Congressional Record*, vol. 58, pt. 2, 2058; Hiram Johnson to Hiram Johnson Jr., and Archibald Johnson, 1 August 1919, *Johnson Letters*, vol. 3; Hiram Johnson to Hiram Johnson Jr., 24 January 1919, *Johnson Letters*, vol. 3; *Congressional Record*, vol. 58, pt. 1, 797; *Congressional Record*, vol. 58, pt. 2, 2058.
secure the support of Americans who held divergent opinions on the matter. The administration attempted to solve this dilemma by focusing much of its attention on first reshaping the international system of the Western Hemisphere.66

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Chapter 2:

Charles Evans Hughes, Soft Paternalism, and Latin America

As Warren G. Harding assumed the presidency in 1921, he had a general vision to transform the international system based on the concept of liberty, but he had no specific plan to realize this objective. Instead of personally crafting his administration’s approach to alter the international paradigm, he relied on Secretary of State Charles Evans Hughes to formulate the precise strategy. Hughes shared Harding’s legal-internationalist perspective, and the two men formed an excellent working relationship. Hughes described their relationship by writing, “I did not go to him with a statement of difficulties and ask him what should be done, but supplemented my statements of the facts in particular cases by concrete proposals upon which he could act at once, and to which he almost invariably gave his approval. Our relations were of the happiest sort.”¹

As secretary of state, Hughes concluded that the administration could only be successful in establishing a *pax-Americana* system by winning the support of three distinct groups: the American people; foreign governments; and humanity in general. Without the support of all three, any American attempt to reform the international system

was doomed to failure. Hughes reasoned that Wilson’s hard paternalistic strategy, where he aimed to induce the world to accept peace or face a collective military or economic assault by the members of the League of Nations, had failed to acquire the needed support amongst foreigners. Furthermore, Wilson’s threat of electoral ramifications aimed toward reluctant U.S. senators had hardened their stance against the League. Alternatively, Hughes surmised that only a soft paternalistic approach that advocated minimal agreements had the ability to win the approval of all three distinct groups. This tactic was designed to progressively move humanity toward freely accepting the principles of liberty and the rule of law as the hallmarks of the international system.²

Much of the administration’s efforts to implement this soft paternalist approach centered in Latin America. Domestically, Hughes concluded that the administration could tap into the widespread American support for the reshaping of the international system by concluding peace agreement with the countries of the region. He deduced that the long history of U.S. involvement in the region would lessen any Senate opposition to the ratification of agreements that were exclusively between the United States and its southern neighbors. Hughes was also confident that he would be able to win Latin American support for the administration’s vision because of the perceived racial characteristics of the people of the region. He recognized that Latin Americans traditionally settled their disputes peacefully and regularly resorted to war when all

peaceful options had been exhausted. Furthermore, American racial views saw Latin Americans as inferior to people of Western European descent but simultaneously open to outside assistance in improving their societies. With this supposed racial characteristic, Hughes believed that the Latin American people would support the administration’s designs in order to reduce the possibility of future wars in the Western Hemisphere.

An Alternative Approach

As the Harding administration took power, it faced numerous obstacles to establishing the *pax-Americana* system. It inherited a domestic situation in which the American population was deeply divided on how to proceed in reforming the world. The great powers showed little enthusiasm for an alternative organization being created to replace the League of Nations. Even more disheartening was that those nations were seemingly operating under the same nationalistic approach as they had before the outbreak of World War I. When examining the views of humanity in general, it could be clearly seen that although the world desired peace, people were already willingly taking up arms in order to achieve their nation’s goals. The obvious conclusion of the administration was that it had no choice but to alter the U.S. foreign policy approach in order to effectively reshape the world.³

While Hughes concurred with Wilson that the United States should lead the world to peace, he believed that Wilson had blundered by utilizing a hard paternalistic approach

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to achieve this commendable goal. When employing a hard paternalistic strategy, the
authority endeavors to compel individuals to adopt a desired behavior. Hughes believed
that Wilson had utilized this method in both the domestic and foreign realms, which
predictably resulted in humanity being no closer to realizing world peace than had been
the case before the outbreak of World War I. In the foreign realm, the Covenant of the
League of Nations sought to coerce humanity to settle all international disputes
peacefully, or face the risk of a collective economic or military response from its
members. Domestically, Wilson had attempted to compel the U.S. Senate to accept the
League of Nations Covenant as written by threatening political repercussions against
those who opposed joining the organization. With these miscalculations, Hughes
believed that the world had further entrenched itself in the nationalist system, and
simultaneously, the U.S. Senate was suspicious of any peace agreement because of their
concern that it was a back door attempt to enter the League.4

Hughes pointed to the global realities of 1921 as evidence of the failure of
Wilson’s peace policy. Article X and Article XVI of the League’s Covenant were
designed to immediately alter humanity’s behavior in the realm of foreign relations. All
disputes were to be settled peacefully, and nations that failed to live up to that obligation

faced the threat of a collective military or economic response.\(^5\) By 1921, in spite of the existence of the League of Nations, Poland and the Soviet Union were engaged in a desperate war and simultaneously outside powers were threatening the newly created state of Armenia.\(^6\) Hughes maintained that this result was predictable because the League’s Covenant did not fundamentally alter the mindset of humanity. Nations were still acting in the style of the old nationalist system, and their citizens were willing to take up arms to further their country’s ambition. As Hughes argued, “in the field of conflicting national policies, and what are deemed to be essential interests, when the smoldering fires of old grievances have been fanned into a flame by a passionate sense of immediate injury, or the imagination of peoples is dominated by apprehension of present

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5 Article X of the Covenant of the League of Nations stated, “The Members of the League undertake to respect and preserve as against external aggression the territorial integrity and existing political independence of all Members of the League. In case of any such aggression or in case of any threat or danger of such aggression the Council shall advise upon the means by which this obligation shall be fulfilled. Article XVI stated, “Should any Member of the League resort to war in disregard of its covenants under Articles 12, 13 or 15, it shall ipso facto be deemed to have committed an act of war against all other Members of the League, which hereby undertake immediately to subject it to the severance of all trade or financial relations, the prohibition of all intercourse between their nationals and the nationals of the covenant-breaking State, and the prevention of all financial, commercial or personal intercourse between the nationals of the covenant-breaking State and the nationals of any other State, whether a Member of the League or not. “Treaty of Peace with Germany,” in FRUS, The Paris Peace Conference, 1919, vol.13, 83, 88.

6 A reconstituted Poland sought to regain its historic boarders, and thus attacked the Ukraine, Lithuania, and Belarus in 1919 in attempt to take the territory by force. Soviet forces responded by attacking and driving Polish forces to the outskirts of Warsaw, before the Polish military won a stunning victory. In Late 1920, the two nations signed an armistice and the war came to an end. Following end of World War I the world was also concerned about the Armenian people. Since the 1890s, the Turkish people had conducted genocidal campaigns against the Armenians, and following the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in the war gave the Armenians an opening and declared their independence in 1918. However, the Russians and the Turkish people opposed Armenian independence and fighting quickly broke out. When the new Armenian government seemed bound to defeat, they agreed to surrender to the Soviet Union, when they began sending in troops in late 1920. They agreed to surrender to the Soviets in order to get away from the Turkish rule. In both cases, the League of Nations were concerned with the developments, but no real action was taken by the new body to secure peace. See, Macmillan, Paris 1919, 207-228, 377-380; Orlando Figes, A People’s Tragedy: The Russian Revolution, 1891-1924 (New York, NY: Penguin, 1996), 696-703, 713.
danger to national safety, or by what is believed to be an assault upon national honor, what force is to control the outbreak [of war]?” While Hughes believed that collective security would not stop people from resorting to war to secure their interests, he also concluded that the scheme had another major flaw. The lack of a forceful response by the League of Nations to international crises demonstrated that national interests were diverse, and thus a collective response to any situation would be near impossible. As Hughes stated, “All contrivances for maintaining peace by economic pressure, as well as by military force, depend upon the sentiment which will apply the pressure and direct the force when the test comes. Such arrangements are likely to fail when they are most needed, because national interests are diverse and unanimity of action under stress of crises involving conflicts of opinion is well-nigh impossible.”

Hughes theorized that only a soft paternalistic approach could successfully alter humanity’s behavior during an international dispute. When employing a soft paternalistic approach, the authority endeavors to reshape human behavior by advancing measured proposals that people would predictably accept. Thus, the authority would be able to modify the subjects’ conduct using their own freewill. This approach was essential, because he argued that nobody could be forced to reject war, instead they must freely accept peace. He concluded that humanity had deemed war as an essential option to defend core interests from an outside threat, and thus it could not be simply outlawed. As Hughes stated, “The outlawry of war necessarily implies a self-imposed restraint, and

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free peoples, jealous of their national safety, of their freedom of opportunity, of the rights and privileges they deem essential to their well-being, will not forego the only sanction at their command in extreme exigencies.” Alternatively, Hughes believed in order for humanity to reject war they must accept that peaceful means of defending their core interests was superior to resorting to armed conflict. Therefore, by making minimal proposals, which people would be willing to accept, a system could be created and progressively built upon. Hughes concluded that the proper method to achieve this desired outcome was the codification of international law and the creation of an impartial tribunal to apply that law. When people realized the court was ruling on international disputes by applying the accepted international law without prejudice, humanity would come to accept its rulings as just and thus begin to freely move away from war. The legal-internationalist system that Hughes advocated echoed Harding’s call for the American governmental principles that allowed for people to enjoy liberty.8

Like in the United States, where laws were created by a body chosen by its constituents, Hughes argued that international law needed to be created by experts appointed to conferences charged with undertaking this difficult process by the national governments that decided to participate. This method would ensure that all nations would have a voice in the process. However, the pitfalls of direct democracy would be eliminated, because of the utilization of experts in the actual legislative process. Thus, the likelihood of these conferences creating rational laws would be dramatically

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increased. When these conferences reached an agreement on a statute, the proposal would go back to the nations that must accept to the new legislation before it took effect. Hughes held that once all nations pledged their support for the proposed agreement, it would become a principle that people would feel bound to uphold and support because it had been accepted by humanity as a whole.  

Hughes also believed that it was essential that an impartial international tribunal be created that would guarantee the principle of equality of nations under the law. He argued that this essential principle did not exist in the League, because there would be a drastic difference in how its collective security measures would be applied to the great and lesser powers. When a lesser nation threatened the peace, the great powers would think very little about using military or economic force in order to stop the aggression. If the crisis included a great power, however, a collective response would be difficult to obtain because of the necessary sacrifice every nation knew it would have to undertake to halt the aggression. But an impartial court that based its rulings on a fair interpretation of accepted international statutes would be able to ensure that all nations would be equal under the law. Once nations came to see that the decisions of the court were made impartially, people would gradually begin to accept the rulings of the court. Hughes argued that eventually the majority of international disputes would be settled through this process, because people would realize that the court’s rulings were based on the laws that they had freely accepted. As Harding stated, “As legal principles and rules are supported

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9 Hughes, Pathway of Peace, 8-15; Charles Evans Hughes to John Daniels, 9 December 1924, vol. 17, Hughes MSS, 250; Charles Evans Hughes to the Editor of the Newark Evening News, 26 October 1922, vol. 27, Hughes MSS, 372; Hughes, Our Relations to the Nations of the Western Hemisphere, 11-14.
by general acceptance, we may look with confidence for the general support of opinion in their application and vindication through impartial tribunals. The difficulty here is not the acceptance of the theory of judicial settlement, but in establishing entire confidence in the impartiality of tribunals and their freedom from political influence.”

When looking at the international landscape, Hughes concluded that any attempt to immediately create of a formal association of nations would end in failure. Harding’s proposal to create a new peace organization received no interest from the international community, because it had just created the League of Nations and the organization was seen as having a chance to succeed. This was evident in 1921, when the British and the French declared their intention to remain in the League of Nations. Even though Hughes favored the creation of an association of nations, going so far as having a draft plan written, he decided not to try and force the administration’s vision onto the world. Instead of pushing for the creation of a new organization, he decided to begin to progressively nudge the world to his vision. He concentrated on concluding agreements that were acceptable to foreign nations and humanity as a whole. This strategy is evident by examining the famous Washington Conference of 1921-1922. At this conference the

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11 During the preparation for the Washington Conference of 1921-1922, Hughes met with Chandler Anderson, who was a former councilor for the U.S. State Department and had been a member of many American negotiation teams and been heavily involved in international arbitrations. During these discussions, Hughes called on Anderson to make some preparations for an alternative organization of peace to the League of Nations, in case the conference reached a point in which the nations in attendance were willing to seriously discuss the idea of creating an alternative to the League of Nations. Such a plan was constructed by Anderson, but never acted upon by Hughes. See, Chandler Anderson, 28 October 1921, The Papers of Chandler P. Anderson, vol. 2, Library of Congress, Washington D.C., Manuscript Division, microfilm (Hereafter cited as Anderson MSS).
United States reached agreements with the major powers of the world to begin the process of naval disarmament and got them to pledge to refrain from resorting to war in the Pacific region before meeting with the other regional powers in the hope of reaching a peaceful solution to any dispute.\textsuperscript{12} The administration felt it had achieved a major success, not only by getting foreign nations to move toward its vision but also by gaining universal praise for the U.S. led movement to lessen international tensions. This perceived triumph of the soft paternalistic strategy only encouraged Hughes to increase the administration’s efforts to slowly implement its proposed vision.\textsuperscript{13}

\textsuperscript{12} The Washington Conference of 1921-1922 is an example of the Harding administration attempting to get agreements designed to both move the world to the administration’s legal-internationalist vision as well as gaining ratification from the U.S. Senate. The main focus of the world’s attention was placed in the naval disarmament talks, which people from around the world were longing for, but Hughes also hoped to win approval for portions of the administration’s plan for world peace. The Four-Power Treaty was able to abrogate the Anglo-Japanese alliance and replace it with a regional agreement. This treaty was between the four great powers of the Pacific, which included the United States, Great Britain, France, and Japan. In this treaty, these nations agreed to respect each other’s possessions in the region, and agreed to consult with each other if a dispute arose between the powers concerning the Pacific region before resorting to war. The treaty also called for a conference to be held between the signatories and an outside power if the region was threatened by war. Though there was opposition, enough “Protectionists” agreed to the treaty and it was ratified by a vote of 67 to 27. The Five Power Treaty was an agreement between the United States, Great Britain, Japan, Italy, and France called for the scrapping of thousands of tons of capital ships, and set a cap and a ratio in which the navies of the powers involved could have in terms of battleships. In this naval disarmament treaty, the nations involved agreed to set caps on the tonnage of capital ships in their naval fleets and agreed to a ten year moratorium on further construction of these capital ships. This agreement was hailed around the country, as well as the world, as a great step in helping limit future wars. The signatory nations of the Nine Power Treaty agreed in the document to respect the territorial integrity and the open door principle in China. This treaty was a diplomatic victory for the United State, with the agreement being the first international agreement accepting the U.S. principle of the open door first advanced by John Hay in 1899. See, “Treaty Between the United States of America, the British Empire, France, and Japan, Signed at Washington,” 13 December 1921, \textit{FRUS}, 1922, vol. 1, 33-37; Charles Evans Hughes to Oscar W. Underwood, 11 March 1922, \textit{FRUS}, 1922, vol. 1, 48-50; \textit{Congressional Record}, vol. 62, pt. 4, 4158-58; \textit{Congressional Record}, vol. 62, pt. 5, 4497; \textit{Congressional Record}, vol. 62, pt. 5, 4708-09; \textit{Congressional Record}, vol. 62, pt. 5, 4718-19; John Chalmers Vinson, \textit{The Parchment Peace: The United States Senate and the Washington Conference, 1921-1922} (Athens: The University of Georgia); Thomas H. Buckley, \textit{The United States and the Washington Conference, 1921-1922} (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1970); Margot Louria, \textit{Triumph and Downfall: America’s Pursuit of Peace and Prosperity, 1921-1933} (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001).

\textsuperscript{13} A. Lawrence Lowell to Charles Evans Hughes, 24 June 1922, Cambridge MA, Vol. 144, Harding MSS, 687; Chandler Anderson, 26 November 1921, vol. 2, Anderson MSS; Eugene P. Trani and David L.
Hughes also saw fault in Wilson’s hard paternalistic approach to gaining domestic approval for the League of Nations. The administration believed that one of Wilson’s greatest mistakes during the League fight was attempting to compel the U.S. Senate to ratify the Treaty of Versailles without reservations. Wilson sought to place political pressure upon reluctant senators in order to secure their vote in favor of the League. One such attempt occurred in 1919, when Wilson had embarked on a nationwide speaking tour in order to gain American support for the organization. Wilson hoped that increasing public support for the scheme would intensify political pressure on skeptical senators to relent to the president’s desire. Before the trip, Hughes informed Wilson that all he had to do to secure ratification was to agree to a reservation on Article X of the League Covenant. Wilson rejected Hughes’s advice and went ahead with the trip. The tour was a disaster for Wilson, which resulted in little movement in American views on the scheme while adding stress that likely helped cause his stroke. As Harding remarked on Wilson’s failed tour “The only perceptible effect of his campaign in the Senate has been to strengthen the opposition to his dictation.” Hughes and Harding both concluded


14 As it became clear to Wilson that he was facing serious opposition in the U.S. Senate for the ratification of the Treaty of Versailles, he decided to embark on a speaking tour that was to commence on September 3, 1919. The speaking tour was scheduled to last four weeks, and was designed to regain American support for the League of Nations, thereby improving the chances that the Treaty of Versailles would be accepted without reservations by the U.S. Senate. However, the speaking tour was not successful in moving many Americans on the issue. During Wilson’s speaking tour, the opponents of the treaty attacked the treaty in speeches in congress and some engaged in their own speaking engagements in their home states. These attacks gained as much publicity as the president’s speeches, and thus, Wilson did not gain the public’s support as he had hoped. The president’s attempts to get the treaty ratified without reservations took a serious blow when he suffered a massive stroke, that led the president to be ineffectual during the critical weeks leading up to the first vote on the treaty in November 1919. For more information concerning the speaking tour, see Cooper, Breaking the Heart of the World, 152-200.
that Wilson’s attempt to force the Senate to accept the treaty with no reservations led that body to reject the Treaty of Versailles and made it suspicious of any U.S. attempt to enter into agreements to begin to transform the international system.\textsuperscript{15}

The result of Wilson’s hard-line approach was that Americans were deeply divided concerning how the United States should remake the world, and each major faction aggressively sought to move the Harding administration to adopt its position. The two most troublesome domestic factions for the administration were the irreconcilables and the internationalists. The irreconcilables opposed the United States involving itself in any international agreement that restricted U.S. freedom of action, while the internationalists sought to get the administration to support U.S. adherence to the League of Nations or to the formation of the association of nations. In the days following his election, Harding gave cause for both sides to be encouraged and discouraged about his ultimate plans. Just two days after his electoral victory, Harding attempted to reassure the irreconcilables by declaring that the United States would not join the League of Nations under any circumstances. His cabinet choices, however, gave hope to the internationalists, as they included Herbert Hoover as secretary of commerce and Hughes as secretary of state. Both men had been reservationists during the League fight and had signed the “Manifesto of the Thirty-One,” which called upon the American people to vote for Harding as the most practical method of bringing the United States into the League of

\textsuperscript{15} Warren G. Harding to F.F. Scobey, 27 September 1919, Vol. 21, Harding MSS, 1029-31; Hughes, \textit{Autobiographical Notes}, 212-18; Charles Evans Hughes, 24 July 1919, vol. 121, Hughes MSS, 406-09; William Short to William Howard Taft, 12 January 1918, Taft MSS.
Nations. While Harding sent messages to both factions, throughout his presidency these factions kept the pressure on the administration in order to get the administration to adopt their viewpoint.

From the moment that Harding became president-elect, the irreconcilables were constantly on guard against any attempt to bring the United States into the League of Nations. Senator William Borah (R-ID) voiced such a concern when he wrote, “I think it is necessary for us again to be active and vigilant in regard to this matter [the League of Nations]. Having failed to enter the front door and having received the open condemnation of the people, the plan seems to be now to enter the back door. While professing to not entangle ourselves, we are entangling ourselves in the most serious way in all European affairs and we are entangling ourselves in European affairs at their worst.” The irreconcilables’ uncompromising position was made clear to Harding when he broached the subject of the United States joining the League if he allowed the Senate to remove all of the objectionable clauses of the Covenant. The irreconcilables

16 “The Manifesto of the Thirty-One” was a document was signed by thirty-one prominent internationalist Republicans and released to the public in October, 1920. The manifesto argued that the election of Warren G. Harding was the surest course of action that internationalists could take in bringing the United States into the League of Nations. They reasoned that the election of Harding meant that the president would quickly accept the reservations that the U.S. Senate insisted on would be accepted, and thus in a short time the United States would be a member of the League of Nations. See; New York Times, October 15, 1920; Cooper, Breaking the Heart of the World, 393-95; Ambrosius, Woodrow Wilson and the American Diplomatic Tradition, 282-85.

responded by declaring that any organization that was dedicated to settling international disputes would necessarily have powers like the League of Nations, which were necessary to compel the world to settle disputes peacefully. Thus, any attempt to join the League or create some alternative organization would be wholly unacceptable in the eyes of this faction. With the realization that the Senate would block any administration effort to join a formal international organization dedicated to securing peace, it quickly decided to back away from any such proposal. As Hughes stated, “when I took office, I found that the opposition to the League had become more determined than ever and that there was no prospect of obtaining ratification, whatever reservations we might propose. I was informed that if the Treaty were sent to the Senate, no matter with what recommendations as to reservations, there would be a prolonged and most bitter fight, with no prospect of ultimate success on our part, while the antagonisms aroused would seriously threaten the efforts of the Administration in other helpful directions.”

Harding shared Hughes’s view on the matter when he entered the presidency in 1921. In a speech to Congress shortly after his inauguration, he announced his continued support for the creation of an association of nations, but he took a different stance in private. During Harding’s discussion with the members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee concerning this speech, he attempted to calm the fears of the irreconcilables

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on the committee. Senator Hiram Johnson recounted the conversation and stated that Harding explained to the committee that his support for the creation of an association of nations was only tentative, and that he wanted to avoid all difficulties with the Senate. Johnson responded to the president’s message by writing that it “was so much better upon the League and the Peace Resolution than I expected that I was delighted with it.” He went on to state, “I thought that I could see he intended ultimately to send the treaty back to us, and that he would do some sort of monkeying with an Association of Nations. As to the latter, he minimized it and pooh-poohed it saying it was a nebulous thing at best, and far in the future.”

Simultaneously, the Harding administration was attempting to appease the internationalists. The supporters of the League attempted to put pressure on Harding to move the United States into a world peace organization throughout his presidency. After Harding’s landslide victory in the 1920 election, many League supporters in the United States began to contend that the election results had little to do with the issue of U.S. membership in the League of Nations. Instead, they began to assert that the real culprit for the defeat of James Cox was the high cost of living after the war, the economic downturn of the nation, and the other social problems resulting from the war. They attempted to place moral pressure on the administration by insisting that Europe had

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remained unstable following the conclusion of World War I as a direct result of U.S. non-

Throughout the administration’s time in office, the internationalists attempted to
get the administration to begin forming an alternative peace organization to the League of
Nations. Henry Fletcher, a high ranking U.S. diplomat and personal friend of Harding,
for example, in 1922 sent the president a draft plan for a “World Association of States”
created by the Committee of the Institute of International Law. In his reply to Fletcher,
Harding wrote that “I have always believed that such an organization might be made
possible and that great good could come of it without granting to it the super-authority
which was strongly opposed in the anti-league fight in the Senate. I do not think,
however, that the psychological moment has arrived in this country to promote such an
enterprise.”\footnote{Warren G. Harding to Henry Fletcher, 6 September 1922, Box 1, Folio 2, \textit{Papers of Henry Prather Fletcher}, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C., (Hereafter cited as Fletcher MSS).}

League advocates attempted to gain the support of the administration by pressing
Hughes and Hoover to advocate for their position, and also campaigned for pro-League
politicians. It soon became clear, however, that neither Hoover nor Hughes would be a
staunch supporter of the internationalists’ cause within the administration. Despite
repeated entreaties from numerous internationalists both refused to come out publicly in
favor of such a position. Thwarted in their attempts to work within the administration the
supporters of U.S. membership in the international peace organization then attempted to
place their backers in Congress in the 1922 mid-term elections. This effort was no more successful than the campaign to influence the administration, but the pro-League faction kept up its efforts.22

Hughes believed a soft paternalistic approach would dramatically increase the chances that the U.S. Senate would approve the administration’s attempts to reshape the world. He was aware that not advocating U.S. membership in a formal peace organization would lead to disaffection among the internationalists and possibly cause trouble for the administration. Simultaneously, he knew that any attempt to conclude a peace agreement with the world might arouse the opposition of the irreconcilables in the Senate. With the domestic hurdles clearly in sight, Hughes utilized a soft paternalistic strategy in order to gain support for his program. The administration halted any calls for the United States joining any formal organization to assuage the irreconcilables. At the same time, he attempted to placate the internationalists by pointing to the successes the administration was having in moving the world toward peace. As Hughes wrote to A. Lawrence Lowell, the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the World Peace Foundation who called on the administration to begin pushing for the creation of an association of nations, “A vague reference to an Association will not, in my judgment, aid us, and I think it is much better to have the actual situation understood. We have been dealing with matters in a practical way and have accomplished a great deal. If there [are]

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those who think that they should renew a barren controversy, that is their right. Nothing
good will come of it, and very likely it will stand in the way of much that might
otherwise be accomplished.”²³

By the time Hughes was writing to Lowell, he had already begun to implement
his soft paternalistic approach to reshaping the international system, getting both foreign
and domestic support for his proposals. One of the most famous of the “practical”
accomplishments that Hughes referred to in his letter to Lowell was the Washington
Conference. The agreements reached at the conference, which were designed to begin
the process of reforming the international system, were all ratified by the U.S. Senate.²⁴
While the Washington Conference has gained the lion’s share of the attention of
historians, the majority of the administration’s efforts to begin to reshape the
international system were being done in Latin America, where Hughes saw the greatest
opportunity to create the pax-Americana international system.

²³ Charles Evans Hughes to A. Lawrence Lowell, 20 July 1922, Vol. 4, Hughes MSS, 129-130; A.
Lawrence Lowell to Charles Evans Hughes, 24 June 1922, Cambridge MA, Vol. 144, Harding MSS, 687;
Charles Evans Hughes to Bruce Bliven, 20 November 1922, vol. 9, Hughes MSS, 588.

²⁴ The Four-Power Treaty set up an alternative regional peace system to the League of Nations in the
Pacific was ratified by a vote of 67 to 27. The Five Power Treaty, which called for naval disarmament,
won ratification by a vote of 74 to 1. The Nine Power Treaty that internationalized the open door principle
in China and the agreement was ratified in the Senate by a vote of 66 to 0. See, “Treaty Between the
United States of America, the British Empire, France, and Japan, Signed at Washington,” 13 December
1921, FRUS, 1922, vol. 1, 33-37; Charles Evans Hughes to Oscar W. Underwood, 11 March 1922, FRUS,
1922, vol. 1, 48-50; Congressional Record, vol. 62, pt. 4, 4158-58; Congressional Record, vol. 62, pt. 5,
4497; Congressional Record, vol. 62, pt. 5, 4708-09; Congressional Record, vol. 62, pt. 5, 4718-19; John
Chalmers Vinson, The Parchment Peace: The United States Senate and the Washington Conference, 1921-
1922 (Athens: The University of Georgia); Thomas H. Buckley, The United States and the Washington
Conference, 1921-1922 (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1970); Margot Louria, Triumph
and Downfall: America’s Pursuit of Peace and Prosperity, 1921-1933 (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press,
2001).
Long History, Limited Opposition

Hughes considered Latin America an ideal location to begin the U.S. led effort to remake the international system. First, the administration believed that the likelihood of the U.S. Senate ratifying peace agreements with the nations of the region would be dramatically increased because of the long history of U.S. involvement there. Second, and equally as important, the administration’s racial views led it to believe that Latin Americans would be open to adopt a U.S. vision for peace. Specifically, because members of the administration, like most Americans, considered Latin Americans inferior to those of Western European descent they saw them as willing to accept the instruction of the superior races in order to improve their society. Additionally, the administration believed that the tradition of Latin Americans making every effort to settle their international disagreements peacefully increased the likelihood that they would accept the administration’s peace plans.25

The United States had a long history of involvement in Latin American affairs dating back to the early 1800s when the nations of the region revolted against Spanish rule. By the 1820s, the United States had concluded that it was in its best interest to support the independence of those nations and declared its intention to ensure that they remained free from European rule. This stance was made public when President James Monroe pronounced the Monroe Doctrine in 1823 declaring that the Western Hemisphere was closed to all further colonization by outside powers, which should refrain from

involving themselves in intra-American affairs. Any foreign attempt to compromise the political integrity of a Latin American nation would meet with U.S. military resistance. In addition, the United States pledged that it would abstain itself from purely European matters. This set up a policy in which the United States believed the old and new worlds should remain politically separate and uninvolved in each other’s disputes. While the United States boldly threatened Europe with repercussions if it tried to increase its influence in the region, the United States refrained from involving itself in the internal affairs of Latin America until late in the nineteenth century.  

By the end of the nineteenth century, U.S. involvement in Latin America increased dramatically. In 1889, the United States held the First International Conference on American States, generally referred to as the Pan American Conference. The United States hoped that its leadership in the Pan American movement would result in increased U.S. prestige and economic power in the region. Within a decade of calling the First Pan American Conference, the United States began to intervene directly into the internal affairs of its southern neighbors. In 1898, the United States declared war on Spain ostensibly to help the Cuban people gain their independence. Its altruism did not last long, however, and the United States refused to remove its military forces until Cuba placed the Platt Amendment into its constitution. This amendment forbade the Cuban government from transferring any of its territory to another nation, prohibited it from going into foreign debt, which might invite foreign intervention, leased Guantanamo Bay

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to the United States for use as a naval base, and gave the United States the right to intervene militarily in the island whenever it deemed necessary. During the time that the amendment was in force, the United States regularly intervened in Cuba and dictated much of the nation’s governmental policy.27

The United States became even more aggressive in Latin America after the pronouncement of the Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine in 1904. In his message to Congress, President Theodore Roosevelt announced that the United States had the right to intervene into any Latin American nation that found its political integrity threatened by an outside hemispheric power. Roosevelt claimed that the United States had no design of expanding territorially in the area, but instead was only undertaking to help these nations of the region to become “stable, orderly, and prosperous.” From 1904-1921, the United States intervened militarily in the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Nicaragua, and Mexico. The principles enshrined in the Monroe Doctrine and the Roosevelt Corollary had become so entrenched that Americans invoked them when debating the question of U.S. membership in the League of Nations.28


Protectionists worried that because the Covenant of the League of Nations stated that all international disputes would be subject to League action, including intra-American crises, European nations would utilize the League to interfere with regional affairs. In their eyes, this would allow European interference in Latin America, which would violate the purpose of the Monroe Doctrine. As Henry Cabot Lodge argued, nations such as Great Britain were already beginning to put their own interpretation onto the doctrine, which threatened to dramatically alter the purpose of the statement and result in an increase of European influence in the region. In this way, Latin American nations could potentially come under the domination of Europe, and thus threaten to spread the immorality of the old world to these countries. As David Jayne Hill argued, the “vital elements of the Monroe Doctrine are wholly abolished by Articles X and XI, which expressly implicate the United States in European wars and bind the European Powers to intervene in American affairs.”

Quickly, Wilson and his supporters knew that for Americans to support entering the League of Nations, the issue of European influence rising in Latin America because of the League had to be calmed. Wilson believed that he had ended the controversy when

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he convinced the Versailles conference to place Article XXI in the League’s Covenant, stating, “Nothing in this Covenant shall be deemed to affect the validity of international engagements, such as treaties of arbitration or regional understandings like the Monroe doctrine, for securing the maintenance of peace.” While Wilson and other League supporters believed that this article settled the dispute over the Monroe Doctrine, opponents of the League were not satisfied. They continued to argue that instead of protecting the meaning of the doctrine, Article XXI turned it into a world principle. In other words, inserting the Monroe Doctrine in the Covenant of the League of Nations opened it up to foreign interpretation. In this way, other world powers had to potential to interpret the doctrine differently than the United States did, and thus could seek to block action the United States deemed necessary to protect the Latin American region. As a result, protectionists sought to get the U.S. Senate to adopt a reservation clarifying that the United States was the only nation that could interpret and enforce the Monroe Doctrine.30

The supporters of the League of Nations agreed that the Monroe Doctrine had to be protected, but they believed that the League did more than any development to strengthen the doctrine. Wilson and his supporters insisted that in Article XXI, the world recognized the Monroe Doctrine for the very first time, thus making it an international

30 Treaty of Peace with Germany, FRUS, 1919, vol.13, 92; Congressional Record, vol. 58, pt. 1, 729-730; Congressional Record, vol. 58, pt. 2, 2074; Congressional Record, vol. 58, pt. 9, 8781-83; Lodge, Senate and League of Nations, 175; “Letter of Eilhu Root on First Draft, Proposed Covenant of League of Nations”, 29 March 1919, Root MSS, Box 192, Folio 1, Root argued that the United States was contemplating joining a League of Nations to help maintain the peace in Europe. However, he felt that the nations of North and South America attempted to work out their problems peacefully and thus they did not need the help of the European nations in the League of Nations solve intra-American disputes see Congressional Record, Vol. 58, Part 1, 1743; Congressional Record, vol. 58, pt. 1, 729-30; Congressional Record, vol. 58, pt. 2, 1548-49.
principle that was to be defended by the entire world. Thus, the League ensured that the entire world would pledge to accept and defend any outside attempt to gain influence in the region. Supporters saw this collective force as an asset, especially if a powerful nation turned its eyes toward Latin America, as it meant that the United States could seek the aid of the other members of the League of Nations to defeat the threat.³¹

With the controversy increasing in intensity, some prominent advocates of the League began to call on Wilson to accept the reservation in order to clarify that the United States was the only nation that controlled the doctrine. Former president William Howard Taft had advocated for the creation of a League of Nations throughout World War I and had supported the ratification of the treaty after Wilson introduced the treaty to the Senate in the summer of 1919. Once he saw the opposition to the treaty in the Senate, however, he began to advocate limited interpretations in order to ease American concerns about the League. In a letter to Senator Gilbert Hitchcock (D-NE), Wilson’s point man for the treaty in the Senate, Taft advocated that the Monroe Doctrine be clearly defined in order to get Americans to support joining the League of Nations. He suggested to Hitchcock that the United States should define the doctrine as giving the United States the sole right to “prevent any attempt by European or non-American nations, whether by war, purchase, voluntary transfer or intrigue, to make new or additional territorial acquisitions, to acquire new or additional strategical [sic] footholds, to establish or further

the establishment of monarchical or non-democratic governments, or to secure new or additional political control in such Hemisphere.”

The debate concerning how the League of Nations would affect the Monroe Doctrine demonstrated to Hughes that Americans supported U.S. activity in Latin America. With both sides supporting U.S. efforts to ensure that the Monroe Doctrine continued to be honored, Hughes could be reasonably be sure that any agreement reached with the Latin American nations to create a regional peace system would win the approval of the U.S. Senate. Hughes could also expect that any opposition to his plans would be reduced because of American racial views. Americans perceived that Latin Americans were racially inferior vis-à-vis peoples of Western European descent. Thus, Americans felt that those people needed U.S. instruction in order to be able to improve their society. Furthermore, Hughes believed that the Latin American people would welcome this help because their redeeming quality was that they had seemingly been willing to accept U.S. instruction in recent years.


It was clear to Hughes that Latin Americans needed to be instructed on how to better manage their nations, and it was incumbent on the United States to help its southern neighbors in this task. During his time as secretary of state, Hughes believed one nation that was in dire need of U.S. instruction was Cuba. Since forcing Cuba to place the Platt Amendment into its constitution, the United States had regularly involved itself into the internal affairs of the newly independent nation. In 1920, a new era of U.S. intervention had begun when Wilson appointed Major General Enoch H. Crowder as his personal representative to Cuba. Crowder’s original charge was to help draft a new Cuban electoral law that was to limit the political chaos that arose after the 1906 and 1916 elections. Wilson was determined to prevent another revolt from breaking out in Cuba, and thus he demanded that Cuban President Mario Garcia Menocal invite Crowder to undertake drafting this new law. The law that Crowder drafted was approved by the Cuban government, but it did little to curb the corruption associated with the 1920 Cuban election. The man who was declared the winner of this disputed presidential election was Alfredo Zayas. The result of yet another questionable election in Cuba was a renewed threat of a revolt and a new economic crisis arising on the island. Crowder’s mission changed as a result of political and economic chaos in Cuba, and he remained in the nation as the Special Representative near the Cuban Government until 1927, during which time he was charged with helping the Cuban government to stabilize its economic and political situation.34

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When discussing Crowder’s mission to Cuba, Hughes declared that he supported Crowder’s assignment for the altruistic objective of improving Cuba’s society. He declared that Crowder was one of the most capable officers in the U.S. military, and his only desire was to help Cuba to reform itself. Thus, Harding defended his actions as an honest attempt to bring stability to the country by aiding it in creating a national budget and drafting legislation to reform its financial affairs. This was an essential task for the United States to undertake, because as Hughes argued, there would be disastrous consequences if the Cuban government could not begin operating within its means. While discussing the Cuban situation, Hughes also noted that the Cuban government was grateful for Crowder’s help in stabilizing the nation. Hughes and others in the administration continually believed that Latin American governments were accepting of U.S. guidance, which encouraged him to believe that they would also follow U.S. direction in creating an alternative system to the League of Nations.35

Hughes was of the opinion that Latin Americans would be open to following the lead of the United States not only because they accepted U.S. guidance but also because they traditionally attempted to work out their differences peacefully. Many Americans, including Hughes, held that Latin America’s entry into the League of Nations was primarily the result of the idealism of the people. Americans believed that while Latin American nations had disputes with their neighbors, they rarely resorted to war in order

to settle them. Instead, nations in the region preferred to settle their disputes peacefully, primarily through negotiation, mediation, or arbitration and seemingly only resorted to war when all other means of redress were exhausted. Many Latin Americans shared this view, arguing that they would be an asset to the League to make these principles universal around the world.³⁶

The Harding administration felt that Latin Americans were an ideal people to begin to nudge toward accepting the U.S.-sponsored alternative to the League of Nations, and that by doing so would simultaneously be able to help stabilize the region. As Hughes stated, “If anywhere in the world men can dwell together in peace and secure the benefits of peace it is in the western hemisphere and here the United States has its greatest opportunity to exhibit a wise practicality without departure from the liberal ideals upon which its prestige and moral influence must ultimately depend.” The region held so much importance to Hughes that he advocated for a reform of who should be appointed U.S. diplomats to the area. He argued to Harding that the U.S. representatives should be able to speak Spanish, know Latin American history, and understand the issues present in the region. As he stated, “our relations with Latin America are so important that I believe especial attention should be given to the education and general bearing of our representatives in these countries.”³⁷ The necessity of the United States putting in

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competent men into these positions was deemed essential because the State Department believed:

In order to rectify a situation which if persisted in is merely courting disaster—and I do not exaggerate in using the word “disaster” for our relations in the Caribbean are most delicate, are watched by all, criticized by many, are capable under the right sort of handling of leading to constructive work which will increase the prestige of the United States and take the ground from under the professional anti-American propagandists who are continually harping at our misunderstood and so-called imperialistic policy, a criticism which if unfounded as regards the intention of the Department is often given weight to by the unauthorized action of inexperienced and incompetent diplomatic representatives.38

When considering the likelihood of limited opposition emanating from the U.S. Senate, the apparent willingness of Latin Americans to accept U.S. guidance, and the history of Latin Americans working out their differences peacefully, the region seemed to Hughes as an ideal location to begin the process of creating the pax-Americana international system. The region offered one more advantage for Hughes, which was that the United States and Latin America already had an organization in existence that could be utilized to get the region’s nations to accept his vision.


38 Francis White to Joseph Grew, 2 July 1924, box 5, folio 21, Francis White Papers, Herbert Hoover Presidential Library, West Branch, Iowa (Hereafter cited as White MSS).
Pan Americanism

Hughes envisioned an international organization that would be built gradually through the codification of international law and the creation of an impartial tribunal to secure peace. The most effective manner in which to begin building an alternative peace organization, however, was not on the global level, but instead regionally. Hughes argued that regions had similar interests that could be used to foster cooperation. He believed that the United States and the nations of the Western Hemisphere had a desire to work for peace and sought to limit foreign interest in the region. The natural avenue to take advantage of these common interests was to work within the Pan American system.39

Pan Americanism had its origins during the Latin American independence movement of the early nineteenth century. Simón Bolivar is generally credited with creating of this movement when he called for the newly independent nations to form a confederation of sovereign states in order to present a common defense to foreign threats and expand their economic relationships. Henry Clay, secretary of state under President John Quincy Adams, advocated for the United States to send representatives to the 1826 Panama Conference in order to expand U.S. influence in the region. While the U.S. Congress approved sending representatives to the conference, authorization came too late for a U.S. delegation to arrive in time to participate in the gathering. After this abortive

39 Hughes, Pathway, 164-169.
event, the United States did not pursue Pan Americanism with any fervor until the end of the nineteenth century.  

It was James Blaine who revived U.S. interest in the Pan American movement. In his brief time as secretary of state under President James Garfield, he began advocating for the United States to involve itself in the Pan American movement, with the hope of creating an opportunity for the nation to expand economic relations in the region and curb European supremacy in the area. Blaine did not get far with his plan because he was replaced as secretary of state after Garfield’s assassination in 1881, but he renewed his quest to get the United States involved in Pan Americanism when he was again appointed secretary of state by President Benjamin Harrison in 1889. When he returned to office, he inherited the Cleveland administration’s preliminary plans for an Inter-American conference. Blaine supported the calling of the First Pan American Conference in 1889 in order to fulfill his vision of a new Pan American movement. Although Blaine was able to bring the nations of the Western Hemisphere together in Washington, he was ultimately disappointed in the results of this conference. While Blaine failed to get much accomplished at this conference, an agreement was reached by the participants that established what became the Pan American Union. The Union was developed throughout succeeding Pan American Conferences, with its original function to further economic cooperation between the countries of the Western Hemisphere.  

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Woodrow Wilson began the transformation of the Pan American Union in order to further integrate the region economically and diplomatically. His administration attempted to employ the organization to get the nations of the Western Hemisphere to move further away from European influences by working as a cohesive unit. The administration knew that World War I had left an economic void in Latin America. Before World War I, Great Britain was the economic leader in the region, with other European nations such as France and Germany also having substantial financial interests in Latin America. The war, however, had prevented those nations from continuing their economic dominance in the region, which the administration hoped to exploit. For example, Wilson utilized the Pan American Union to organize economic discussions between the members of the organization such as the Pan American Commercial Conference of 1915. Wilson also believed the union was an avenue for the administration to begin creating a regional peace system that would become a model for the world to adopt after the conclusion of the war. The administration attempted to get the Latin American nations to agree to conclude a Pan American agreement in which all the nations of the hemisphere would guarantee the territorial integrity of all countries in the region, agree to settle all disputes peacefully, and limit the size of their militaries. This proposed treaty, Wilson hoped, “might turn out to be the psychological moment, and the … serve in part to show the European peoples a way to secure peace, when this war is over.” The plan failed to get broad acceptance because many Latin Americans mistrusted

the intentions of the United States. One such nation that held this concern was Chile, which opposed the treaty because “it bound Chile to a particular form of government, it limited its sovereignty, and gave the US the right to interfere and intervene in the internal affairs of other American republics.”

Hughes decided to continue Wilson’s attempt to expand the Pan American movement because he saw an opportunity to begin creating a regional system of international cooperation. He argued that “the essential basis of Pan-American cooperation is peace, and hence we lose no opportunity to promote the amicable settlement of all differences that could be the cause of strife.” While Hughes shared Wilson’s interest in the movement, he believed the administration had created Latin American mistrust by constantly intervening in the region. Beginning in 1916, Hughes argued that Wilson’s decisions to intervene into Latin America had provoked resentment throughout the region, which dramatically reduced the likelihood of the United States being able to win the necessary support to establish an effective peace movement. To overcome this obstacle he wanted the United States to liquidate any ongoing intervention when it could be ensured that the country would not fall into complete chaos when the United States withdrew, in the hope of regaining Latin American trust. By improving relations with its

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southern neighbors, the United States could utilize the Pan American movement to build
a system that not only sought to prevent regional conflict but could also help those
countries become politically stable.43

While criticizing Wilson’s interventionism, Hughes clearly declared that the
United States retained the right to involve itself in the internal affairs of Latin America.
He felt that it was incumbent on the United States to ensure the protection of the Panama
Canal, American lives and property, and foreign nationals in times of crisis in Latin
America. In addition, he made clear that he would adhere to the Monroe Doctrine, which
he argued contained two primary principles. First, it prohibited “any non-American
action encroaching upon the political independence of American States under any guise.”
Second, it was opposed “to the acquisition in any manner of the control of additional
territory in this hemisphere by any non-American power.” Thus, Hughes believed that if
a non-American power infringed upon the independence of any American state, the
United States would act. Yet Hughes was quick to deny that the United States was
attempting to establish a protectorate over Latin America. To calm Latin American fears,
Hughes argued, “We [the United States] covet no territory; we seek no conquest; the
liberty we cherish for ourselves we desire for others; and we assert no rights for ourselves
that we do not accord to others. We sincerely desire to see throughout this hemisphere an
abiding peace, the reign of justice, and the diffusion of the blessings of a beneficent co-
operation. It is this desire which forms the basis of the Pan American sentiment.”

43 Hughes, Pathway, 164-169; Hughes, Autobiographical Notes, 263-64; Charles Evans Hughes, Our
Relations to the Nations of the Western Hemisphere (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1928), 18-
19.
Hughes, though, began calling for the doctrine to change in nature and sought to get the nations of the Pan American Union to agree to defend the doctrine as well. He hoped that through a common defense, Latin American opposition to the doctrine would be limited while achieving the same result of keeping the hemisphere free from European domination.

By limiting U.S. interventions into Latin America and attempting to explain the conditions in which the United States reserved the right to intervene in the region, Hughes sought to gain more support from Latin Americans in order to foster the conditions necessary to expand the activities of the Pan American Union. In order to accomplish his goal he sought to use the Pan American movement to get the nations of the region to act in solidarity with the United States. This solidarity would allow the United States to continue pushing its peace vision, while at the same time improving the image of the United States throughout Latin America that the region’s nations would follow the United States instead of turning to the European-dominated League of Nations. The hope was that Pan-Americanism would become an example for the world to emulate. This objective was supported by others in the Pan American movement. For instance, in a speech to the Pan American Union on December 30, 1920, M. de Oliveira Lima said there was already an example of a league of nations, which was the Pan American Union. He said it was successful “because it was founded on the theory of equality; it has tried to act according to justice and it has for its aims peace and prosperity.

44 Hughes, *Pathway*, 113-41; Leo S. Rowe, “Inter-American Problems (Monroe Doctrine),” 31 October 1927, Box 21, Folio 1, in Leo Stanton Rowe papers, Manuscript Division, Columbus Memorial Library, Organization of American States, Washington D.C. (Hereafter cited as Rowe MSS).
for all the countries of the New World. We must only bear in mind that practice does not always correspond to theory and that human justice is far from perfection. Our Pan American league may, however, stand as a model.\textsuperscript{45}

Hughes attempted to foster Latin American support for the expansion of the activities of the Pan American Union because it offered an existing organization to utilize in order to create the alternative vision for peace based on national liberty and the rule of law the administration sought. Hughes considered the Pan American Union essential, because while it did not possess any political functions, it was the key to organizing conferences of the representatives of the organization’s members. It also was influential in disseminating information and developing the regional cooperation that were essential for nations to arrive at agreements. In short, Hughes hoped to create a regional system that continually held conferences, arranged for conciliation, and allowed for judicious settlement of intra-American disputes. As Hughes stated in 1923: “The conference is for legislative functions. Conciliation is to promote amicable settlement of controversies, especially those that cannot be determined by the interpretation of treaties and the application of principles of international law. Judicial settlement is to determine disputes where legal principles may be applied.” Thus, Hughes’s aim was to create the regional machinery that the administration considered to be the key to establishing liberty in the United States. All nations would be represented and have an equal say in the drafting of agreements that were to establish the rules to guide intra-American affairs. In addition, when rational discussions were not able to settle any dispute that might arise, he

envisioned a Pan American process of settling the disputes peacefully through an impartial ruling of some kind of tribunal. Thus, all nations would have their arguments heard and settled on the basis of equality of law of all nations of the Pan American Union.46

Conclusion

When the Harding administration took power in 1921, the new president allowed Secretary of State Charles Evans Hughes to take the lead in creating the specific policies that were to reform the international system. Hughes ultimately decided on a soft paternalistic approach to gain international acceptance for a legal-internationalist system based on the principles of justice and liberty. While the administration began concluding international agreements with other regions of the world, it saw Latin America as a particularly important area in which to focus its attention. Hughes believed that by working with the region he would be able to limit domestic opposition to U.S. leadership in reforming the international system. He also anticipated that the Latin American nations would be willing to support a U.S. peace movement because of their tradition of settling their international disputes peacefully. Finally, Hughes was optimistic that he would be able to gain Latin American nations’ support for the movement because they had shown themselves to be open to U.S. instruction in the past. He believed that if he regained their trust by limiting U.S. interventions into Latin America, he would be able to

46 Hughes, Western Hemisphere, 113.
use the Pan American Union to begin laying the groundwork for the establishment of the

\textit{pax-Americana} international system.
Chapter 3:

Hughes and the Pan American Alternative

During the first years of the 1920s, the Harding administration endeavored to establish a *pax-Americana* system in the Western Hemisphere characterized by utilizing soft paternalistic tactics to nudge the Latin Americans away from the League of Nations and toward its own legal-internationalist approach. The administration knew, however, that Latin Americans mistrusted the United States because of its past military interventions into various Caribbean and Central American nations. Consequently, it adopted three primary strategies to win Latin American support for its vision. First, it sought to improve U.S.-Latin American relations by attempting to atone for the overbearing policies of the past. Second, it simultaneously utilized regional movements, most prominently the Pan American Union, to create agreements designed to gain Latin American acceptance of its legal-internationalist vision. Third, it continually agreed to mediate long-standing Latin American boundary disputes in order to demonstrate the effectiveness of its peace vision.

It became apparent that the Harding administration had to commence this strategy immediately, because Latin America was increasingly becoming involved in the League of Nations. By the early 1920s Latin American individuals and nations were securing leadership positions in the organization: Dr. Antonio Sanchez de Bustamante of Cuba
was appointed a member of the World Court; Agustin Edwards of Chile won election as
the president of the League’s Assembly in 1922; and Brazil was selected as a member of
the Council of the League. While Secretary of State Hughes believed that the overriding
reason for Latin American support of the League of Nations was to spread the region’s
ideals of peace, he deemed the organization a possible obstacle to the administration’s
vision given the aggressive U.S. policy toward Latin America following the
pronouncement of the Roosevelt Corollary. After the creation of the League, many Latin
Americans saw the League as a vehicle for protecting their region from interference by
the “colossus of the north.” As a result, many Americans were concerned that the
countries of Latin America would vote as a block in the League, which might thwart the
U.S. mission to uplift the “backward” people of the region.¹

In addition, Hughes was concerned that Europeans were attempting to use the
League in order to gain influence in Latin America. He was convinced that there was an
obvious effort to entangle the Latin American people into the workings of the League of
Nations, which could thwart his attempt to reshape the Western Hemisphere’s regional
system. He maintained, “It is apparent that a special effort has been made on the part of
the European powers to bring about close political relations with the Latin American
States, and representative men of Latin America have been brought into more intimate
contact with the leading figures of European diplomacy.” As secretary of state, Hughes

¹ Congressional Record, vol. 58, pt. 1, 693; Congressional Record, vol. 58, pt. 6, 5718-22;
Dale Owen to Robert LaFollette, Letter, 16 October 1920, Box 86, Folio 21, LaFollette MSS; Manuel
Ugarte, “Latin America After the War,” Living Age Vol. 310 (2 July 1921), 14-19; “A,” “Two Years of
American Foreign Policy,” Foreign Affairs 15 March 1923, Vol. 1, 5; Congressional Record, vol. 58, pt. 1,
693; Congressional Record, vol. 58, pt. 6, 5718-22; Kelchner, Latin American Relations with the League,
1-10, 115-19.
attempted to separate Latin America from the League of Nations in part to keep the hemisphere free of European influence with the hope of gaining regional acceptance for the U.S. vision for peace. Thus, upon entering office, the Harding administration attempted to drive a wedge between Latin America and the League of Nations in order to remove this potentially fatal obstacle from blocking the creation of a *pax-Americana* international system.²

Simultaneously as the administration was attempting to prevent the League from gaining influence in Latin America, the United States began its attempts to defuse long-standing intra-hemispheric disputes. By 1921, there were numerous boundary controversies festering in the region that threatened to erupt into war, which might derail any attempt of the United States to reshape the region’s international system. The administration responded by offering to mediate these quarrels for three primary reasons. First, it wanted to demonstrate the effectiveness of settling conflicts by utilizing legal-internationalist principles. Second, if Latin American nations accepted the U.S. peace vision, then they would become hesitant to turn to the League of Nations for assistance. Finally, the administration hoped that other Latin American nations would come to support the U.S. position, thus beginning the process of getting them to accept the superiority of its peace vision.

In addition, the administration sought to improve the relations with its southern neighbors. Hughes realized that years of resentment toward the United States had built

² Hughes, *Our Relations to the Nations of the Western Hemisphere*, 1-2; Department of State, Office of the Secretary, “Memorandum of an Interview with the Charge D’ Affairs,” 24 September 1924, vol. 121, Hughes MSS, 586; Kelchner, *Latin American Relations with the League*, 115-19.
up in Latin America due to the nation’s use of military intervention. To overcome this mistrust, the administration began the process of liquidating the ongoing interventions in the Caribbean. The hope was that this would convince Latin Americans that the United States had implemented a new regional policy that would treat them as equals, and not nations that could be dictated to.

In each of the administration’s primary strategies to gain Latin American acceptance of the *pax-Americana* system it endeavored to use soft paternalistic methods. In each case, the State Department did not insist that Latin Americans follow its suggestions, but instead framed the issue in a manner that would convince them that it was proposing a just course of action. If Latin Americans adopted the administration’s position freely, then it theorized that they would not only agree to the position in principle but actually follow these tenets during times of crisis. With this belief, Hughes implemented this strategy to begin building the foundation of the administration’s *pax-Americana* system. He would utilize the Pan American movement to conclude a treaty that he hoped would be the initial basis of a regional system based on legal-internationalist principles.

Panama and Costa Rica

From the start, the Harding administration was forced to deal with numerous crises concerning Panama. In his first days in office, Hughes had to immediately take action to prevent a full-scale border war from breaking out between Panama and Costa
Rica. The administration felt it had no choice but to respond quickly, not only to protect the strategic Panama Canal Zone but also to prevent the League of Nations from involving itself in the boundary dispute. Through its actions, the administration sought to demonstrate its impartiality in helping these nations to reach a peaceful settlement by utilizing legal-internationalist principles.

Since the building of the Panama Canal, Panama had been a major concern for the United States. The vital importance of this nation to the United States was clear in the terms of the Hay-Bunau-Varilla Treaty of 1903, which granted U.S. control of the Canal Zone, established its right to defend this waterway, and effectively made Panama a protectorate of the United States. When the dispute between Panama and Costa Rica intensified, it was widely held throughout Latin America that the U.S. special relationship with Panama would inevitably lead the United States to force Costa Rica to accept Panama’s position in their dispute. The administration, however, utilized the crisis to demonstrate that the United States would promote peaceful decisions based on international law and arbitral rulings without prejudice.  

There had been two attempts to peacefully settle the territorial dispute between Panama and Costa Rica before the Harding administration took office. The first was an arbitration that occurred before Panama gained its independence from Colombia. Colombia and Costa Rica had turned to French President Emile Loubet to arbitrate the rightful border between the nations. In 1900, Loubet announced his decision on the

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matter, but parts of the decision were rejected because it awarded territory to Costa Rica that it had not claimed. In 1910 another attempt was made to settle the matter, when Costa Rica and Panama asked Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court Edward D. White to arbitrate the dispute. White announced his ruling in 1914, which also did not quell the dispute. The major point of contention that Panama and Costa Rica had with the White Award was the Coto district on the Pacific Ocean. White’s ruling that the district was Costa Rican territory generated opposition in Panama, which refused to withdraw from the area. With both sides claiming control of this sparsely populated area, the dispute became a flashpoint for violence. In February 1921, violence erupted when Costa Rican forces occupied the town of Neuvo de Coto, which led both nations to send reinforcements into the area. While military action was limited to skirmishes, war hysteria swept both countries, fueling nationalistic upwelling and culminating in mob attacks on the consulates of both nations.

The eruption of fighting between Panama and Costa Rica occurred during the final days of the Wilson administration, which responded to the mounting crisis by calling for both sides to resist armed conflict and advocating acceptance of the White

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4 The White Award, issued September 12, 1914, ruled that the Panama-Costa Rica border was as follows, “starting at the mouth of the Sixaola River in the Atlantic, follows the thalweg of that river, upstream, until it reaches the Yorquin, or Zhorquin River; thence along the thalweg of the Yorquin River to that one of its headwaters which is nearest to the divide which is the north limit of the drainage area of the Changuinola, or Tilorio River; thence up the thalweg which contains said headwater to said divide; thence along said divide to the divide which separates waters running to the Atlantic from the running to the Pacific; thence along said Atlantic-Pacific divide to the point near the ninth degree of north latitude ‘beyond Cerro Pando’...and that line is hereby decreed and established as the proper boundary.” See “Opinion and Decision of Edward Douglass White, Chief Justice of the United States, Acting in the Capacity of Arbitrator as Provided in the Treaty Aforesaid,” 12 September 1914, FRUS, 1914, 1000-15.

5 Bainbridge Colby to William Jennings Price, 28 February 1921, FRUS vol. 1 1921, 175-176; Grieb, The Latin American Policy of Harding, 17-20.
Award. Secretary of State Bainbridge Colby wrote that, “It is the opinion of the Department that both Panama and Costa Rica should desist from hostile demonstrations or armed activities, and thus afford an opportunity for a discussion and agreement as to the manner in which the terms of Chief Justice White’s decision shall be applied, paying due regard to any contentions that may be advanced by either party bearing upon the subject.” When the crisis continued to grow, the Wilson administration went further by reminding Panama that it had assured the United States it would be consulted before any declaration of war. Colby went on to state that a declaration of war concerning this controversy “would be inadmissible” in the eyes of the United States because two arbitral awards had been issued to settle the matter. Instead, he called on both sides to withdraw their troops from the disputed area and offered the good offices of the United States in order to resolve the disagreement. 6

Hughes’s initial actions concerning the Costa Rican-Panamanian dispute sought to calm the situation peacefully while removing any possibility of the League of Nations getting involved in the isthmus at the request of either Panama or Costa Rica. Upon taking office, Hughes appealed to both nations to immediately cease all hostilities and called on them to abide by the White Award. He argued that since both nations agreed to accept the outcome of that arbitration in the Porras-Anderson Treaty, 7 it was incumbent

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6 Bainbridge Colby to William Jennings Price, 28 February 1921, FRUS, 1921, v. 1, 175-76; Bainbridge Colby to Price, 3 March 1921, FRUS, 1921, v. 1, 177-78; Bainbridge Colby to Thruston, 3 March 1921, FRUS, 1921, v. 1, 178-79.

7 In the Porras-Anderson Treaty, signed September 27, 1910, Costa Rica and Panama agreed to appoint Chief Justice Edward White as the arbitration of the boundary dispute between the two nations. Article VII of this agreement stated, “The award, whatever it is, shall be held as a perfect and compulsory treaty between the high contracting parties. Both high contracting parties bind themselves to the faithful
on them to live up to their international obligations and accept the ruling unless both agreed to reopen the matter.\(^8\)

While Costa Rica quickly accepted Hughes’s statements as a vindication of its position, Panama was severely disappointed by the administration’s stance. Costa Rica, due to White ruling that the Coto District was its territory, believed that Hughes’s pronouncements endorsed its claim to the area. Panama, however, countered that because Costa Rica had attacked Panamanian troops, under the terms of the Hay–Bunau Varilla Treaty the United States was obligated to defend Panama’s territory. Hughes denied that the United States was required to condone Panama’s rejection of a legally binding agreement and informed the Panamanian government that while the administration had no desire to turn its back on Panama, before the United States would come to its defense it had to “observe faithfully its international obligations. The guaranty given to the Republic of Panama by the United States,” he maintained, was “obviously conditioned upon that performance.”\(^9\)

Disappointed by the Harding administration’s response, Panama confirmed the fear by appealing to the League of Nations for assistance. The League had, in fact, set up

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an investigative committee in order to examine the conflict after violence erupted in 1921 between Costa Rica and Panama. The administration believed that the likelihood of the League directly involving itself in the dispute increased dramatically when Panama made its appeal, a move that brought immediate concern from Americans because the U.S. position in Latin America was sure to be diminished severely if the organization took action on the matter. In addition, if the League was able to settle the dispute peacefully, a regional precedent would be set for Latin American nations to turn to the League instead of the United States for assistance in settling their squabbles.10

Following Panama’s appeal, the administration moved to prevent the possibility of the League involving itself in the boundary dispute. Hughes did not demand that the League reject Panama’s petition but instead only announced that the United States would not be able to support its involvement in the controversy. Because the members of the League still hoped that the United States would eventually join the organization, they did not wish to inflame American public opinion by seemingly violating the Monroe Doctrine. Hughes’s warning thus proved effective, and the League rejected Panama’s appeal. Panama, however, continued to push for League intervention, arguing in July that the rightful place for the dispute to be decided was in the League of Nations because both countries were members of that organization. Panama insisted that Article XIII of

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the League’s Covenant, which stated that all disputed arbitral awards and treaties should be submitted to the organization for interpretation, mandated that the League accept its appeal. Hughes responded by repeating the legal argument that awards and treaties could not be altered without the consent of both parties.  

After being rejected by the League of Nations again, in desperation, Panama sent special envoys throughout Latin America seeking support. Even though Panama made a significant effort to gain Latin American backing to oppose the White Award, these attempts were ultimately futile. Hughes’s repeated statements concerning Panama’s legal responsibility to accept the award succeeded in preventing Latin American support for Panama’s position. Thus faced with a dramatic lack of international support, Panama eventually concluded that its only viable option was to agree to the administration’s stance.  

The Harding administration believed it accomplished a great deal in winning support for its legal-internationalist vision through its actions in the Panamanian-Costa Rican border dispute. Although this area was of an extreme strategic importance to the United States, Washington proved to Latin Americans that it would refrain from launching a U.S. military intervention to calm the situation. Instead, the administration put forward legal arguments to convince the two nations to respect international

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agreements. While advancing U.S. ideas, the administration was also able to prevent direct League action in the Western Hemisphere, thereby removing any chance for the organization to set a precedent of Latin America relying on it to settle hemispheric disputes. While these factors were critical to the administration’s efforts, the most important outcome of the crisis was demonstrating to Latin Americans that the United States could be trusted to settle disputes on the concept of equality under the law. By agreeing with Costa Rica’s claims and applying a rational legal argument, the United States demonstrated that it would refrain from making decisions based solely on which nation had better relations with it. As Hughes later contended, the U.S. action in the dispute “was a demonstration to Central America, and to the other countries of Latin America as well, of our impartiality and our desire to see all controversies settled amicably and judicial determinations upheld.”

Hughes believed that his stance successfully defused the Panamanian-Costa Rican boundary dispute, but he quickly realized that he faced serious consequences in Panama because of his stance. While Hughes desired to settle the crisis on the basis of what he considered the rule of law, the manner that Hughes adopted to defuse the situation led many in Panama to seek revenge on the United States for its lack of support during the crisis. Following the conclusion of the affair, Panama began to persecute American citizens and businesses. One of the most alarming developments for Hughes was Panamanian resistance to the suggestions of Americans working with their government to stabilize its finances, organizing the police force, and build internal improvements. In

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13 Hughes, Autobiographical Notes, 267.
addition, Panama began to appoint officials who were deemed to be anti-American to important posts. The most noteworthy case was that of Ricardo Alfaro, whom Hughes described as “clever, adroit, but untrustworthy, and intensely anti-America,” as minister to the United States.\(^\text{14}\)

By 1922, Hughes was attempting to mend relations with Panama not only to ensure that it accepted U.S. help in improving its society but also to advance the administration’s efforts to improve its relations with Latin America. Hughes encouraged Harding to accept some Panamanian demands that were not in the direct interest of the United States but would improve the chances of the Panamanians accepting U.S. leadership. Regarding Panama’s proposal to name Ricardo Alfaro as its minister to the United States, Hughes argued to Harding that if “we were to refuse to receive him as Minister, it would tend to aggravate a delicate situation in Panama and might make a permanent enemy of the United States in a country where it is distinctly to our advantage to have strong friends. On the other hand, in receiving him, he should be pleased, and the chances are that after living some time in Washington his feelings would undergo a change and we would be able to make of him a friend of the United States.”\(^\text{15}\)

Hughes also sought to improve U.S.-Panamanian relations by beginning the process of abrogating the Taft agreement of 1904 that allowed the United States to


\(^{15}\) Charles Evans Hughes to Warren G. Harding, 21 August 1922, Vol. 153, Harding MSS; Charles Evans Hughes to Warren G. Harding, 10 July 1922, Vol. 153, Harding MSS.
control the locations where the workers building the Panama Canal lived during its
collection. After the construction was completed, the United States did not relinquish
its control of these areas, which led many Panamanians to resent the United States. In
order to improve the U.S. image, Hughes advocated for abrogating this agreement. After
he convinced the president to introduce the proposal to the U.S. Congress, that body went
on to vote in favor of abrogating the agreement. Panamanians, however, were not
completely satisfied by the abrogation, and instead insisted that the two nations conclude
a new treaty. Hughes began the negotiations for a new treaty, which was finally ratified
in 1926 after a long and difficult negotiation. The effect of these negotiations quickly
became apparent, when Panamanian hostility decreased dramatically after the treaty’s
conclusion.\textsuperscript{16}

Panama and Colombia

Strained U.S. relations with Panama also threatened to derail another Harding
administration effort to improve U.S.-Latin American relations, the Colombian Treaty of
Peace and Friendship, which was signed to atone for U.S. actions during the Panamanian
Revolution of 1903. The administration realized, however, that Panama’s hostility
toward the United States because of the outcome of the Costa Rican boundary dispute

\textsuperscript{16} Sumner Welles to Franklin Roosevelt, 15 March 1928, box 148, folio 8, \textit{Sumner Wells Papers}, Franklin
D. Roosevelt Presidential Library, Hyde Park, New York (Hereafter cited as Wells MSS); Charles Evans
Hughes to Warren G. Harding, 21 August 1922, Vol. 153, Harding MSS; Warren G. Harding to Hughes, 22
August 1922, Vol. 153, Harding MSS; Charles Evans Hughes to Calvin Coolidge, 15 October 1923, FRUS,
vol. 2, 1923, 675-76; Charles Evans Hughes to John Glover South, 18 October 1923, FRUS, vol. 2, 676-77;
John Glover South to Charles Evans Hughes, 17 November 1923, FRUS, vol. 1, 1923, 678-79; Treaty
Between the United States of America and the Republic of Panama, 28 July 1926, FRUS, vol. 2, 1926, 833-
49; Grieb, \textit{The Latin American Policy}, 27-29.
was threatening to derail the agreement. The treaty not only dealt with direct U.S.-
Colombian issues but also called on the United States to take steps to bring about regular
diplomatic relations between Colombia and Panama and to aid those nations in settling
all their disputes “in accordance with recognized principles of law and precedent.”

The Colombian Treaty was designed to improve relations with Colombia by
atoning for U.S. actions during the Panamanian revolution of 1903. In 1902, the
Theodore Roosevelt administration began negotiations with Colombia to gain control of a
strip of territory through Colombia’s province of Panama in which to build an isthmian
canal. In January 1903, representatives from the United States and Colombia signed the
Hay-Herran Treaty. The terms of the treaty stated that the United States would pay
Colombia $10 million and $250,000 per year for a renewable hundred year lease on a ten
kilometer wide zone to build a canal. The Hay-Herran Treaty was ratified by the U.S.
Senate but rejected by the Colombian Senate in 1903. The powerful interests that wished
for the United States to gain control of an isthmian canal, who included the Roosevelt
administration and Panamanians who wanted the canal built for financial gain, would not
accept this defeat. Instead, they conspired to find another method of concluding the
agreement. On November 3, 1903, Panama declared its independence, which it won after
the U.S. Navy prevented Colombian troops from landing in Panama. The U.S. State
Department gave de facto recognition of Panama on November 5 and began negotiations
with it for the Canal Zone. The Hay-Bunau-Varilla treaty was quickly signed, giving the

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17 Treaty Between the United States of America and the Republic of Colombia for the Settlement of their
Differences Arising Out of the Events Which Took Place on the Isthmus of Panama in November 1903,
Vol. 1, FRUS, 1914, 163-64.
United States complete control in perpetuity of a ten mile canal zone, for $10 million up
front and an annual payment of $250,000.\textsuperscript{18}

If the Roosevelt administration won control of the Canal Zone by taking such
action, in the process it destroyed U.S.-Colombian relations. In an attempt to rectify the
situation, the Wilson administration negotiated the Colombian Treaty in 1914. Article I
of the treaty stated that the United States sincerely “regret[ted] that anything should have
occurred to interrupt or to mar the relations of cordial friendship that had so long
subsisted between the two nations.” The treaty also stated that the United States would
pay Colombia $25 million. In return, Colombia “accept[ted] this declaration in the full
assurance that every obstacle to the restoration of complete harmony between the two
countries will thus disappear.” This agreement also called for the United States to make a
concerted effort to help normalize Colombia’s relations with Panama. Colombia quickly
ratified the agreement, but there was serious opposition to the treaty in the U.S. Senate.
Many Republican senators objected, because they believed that the treaty was
“apologizing” for Roosevelt’s actions, and thus tarnishing the reputation of both the
nation and the former president. As a result, the full Senate had not voted on the treaty
by the time Harding assumed the presidency.\textsuperscript{19}

Once in office the Harding administration threw its support behind ratification of
the Colombian Treaty, hoping that if the United States atoned for the Panamanian affair,

\textsuperscript{18} Charles Evans Hughes to Warren G. Harding, 21 August 1922, Vol. 153, Harding MSS; Charles Evans
Hughes to Warren G. Harding, 10 July 1922, Vol. 153, Harding MSS; Healy, Drive to Hegemony, 82-90.

\textsuperscript{19} Treaty Between the United States of America and the Republic of Colombia for the Settlement of their
Differences Arising Out of the Events Which Took Place on the Isthmus of Panama in November 1903,
Vol. 1, FRUS, 1914, 163-64; Grieb, Harding’s Latin American Policy, 28-29.
Latin Americans would begin to trust the United States and thus be more likely to accept U.S. leadership. While the ratification was seen as essential for its designs of reshaping the hemisphere’s peace process, the administration had to overcome the objections of the U.S. Senate. Rather than demanding that the Senate ratify the agreement, the administration instead supported an altered version of the treaty. Harding advocated removing the statement of “regret” from the treaty and emphasizing the treaty’s importance for improving U.S. relations with its southern neighbors, moves that led many Republican senators to halt their opposition to the treaty. One of the harshest critics of the treaty in the Senate before 1921 was Henry Cabot Lodge. While Lodge did not support the treaty during the Wilson presidency, once Harding championed the agreement he came to support the plan. In March 1921, Lodge stated “it seems very important not only to [get] rid of the trouble which is caused by the present situation, the recognition of Panama by Colombia, but also because of the effect of our actions upon South America generally, where our relations, especially our trade relations, are in sore need of improvement.”

Even as the Colombian Treaty gained support from some in the Senate, others continued to oppose it. Some claimed that the only reason for the treaty was to help Americans gain oil concessions in Colombia. Other opponents remained convinced that the treaty would dishonor the actions of Roosevelt and the United States. One of the most vocal opponents of the treaty was Senator William Borah, who considered the treaty

a Colombian attempt to blackmail the United States. He complained, “Not only does it pay Colombia $25,000,000 but it gives her extraordinary rights in the use of the Canal, which are worth very much more than $25,000,000, and which are discriminatory against other South American countries. This Treaty will put the brand of shame upon our country and of dishonor upon the name of Roosevelt.”

While the administration failed to remove all opposition to the treaty, its decision to support an altered version of the treaty generated enough support to ratify the agreement. On April 20, 1921, by a vote of 69 to 19, the Senate ratified the treaty with Colombia. Immediately there were letters of congratulations from Americans in the United States who were seeking to expand U.S. influence in Latin America. Leo S. Rowe, the director of the Pan American Union, wrote to Undersecretary of State Henry Fletcher, “I feel that the action on the ratification of the Colombian Treaty is due in large measure to your efforts, and want to take an early opportunity to congratulate you on the outcome. The elimination of this irritating question means a real step in the development of closer relations with the Republics of the American Continent.” This administration victory was accomplished not by demanding that the Senate ratify the agreement, but by finding a way for reluctant senators to freely accept it.

21 William Borah to M.E. Morrow, Letter, 19 March 1921, Box 90, Folio 20, Borah MSS; William Borah to Thomas A. Latta, Letter, 4 March 1921, Box 90, Folio 20, Borah MSS; William Borah to A.H. Vandenberg, Letter, 17 March 1921, Box 90, Folio 20, Borah MSS; Hiram Johnson to Archibald W. Johnson, Letter, 12 March 1921, vol. 3, Johnson Letters; Robert LaFollette Sr, “Achievements of the Harding Administration,” 1923, Box 200, Folio 1, LaFollette MSS.

22 Leo S. Rowe to Henry Fletcher, Letter, 21 April 1921, Box 8, Folio 7, Fletcher MSS; Grieb, Harding’s Latin American Policy, 28-32.
Before the terms of the Colombian Treaty could be fully implemented, however, the United States had to gain Panama’s support for the normalization of relations with Colombia. When commencing with the effort in 1922, Harding believed the United States had no choice but to convince Panama to make the proper choice in its foreign policy. As he declared to Hughes, “I realize very well that this is none of our affair and that it may be unseemly to venture to advise the Government of Panama. However, so long as we play the role of big brother, I suppose we shall have errands of this sort to perform.” The most difficult obstacle that the administration had to overcome to normalize relations was to gain Panamanian acceptance of the border between the two countries. The government of Panama was resistant to conclude an agreement with Colombia concerning the border because it feared that an uproar would accompany any such accord. Hughes, however, pressed that the rightful border between the two nations was the line established in the Law of New Granada of June 9, 1855, which was the line that was contained in the Colombian Treaty. Hughes continually cited legal reasons for the boundary the United States recognized but refrained from attempting to force Panama to accept it. Instead of demanding Panama’s acceptance, he decided to entered into long negotiations to convince Panama to agree to the proposed boundary. The diplomatic exchange continued until 1924, when the United States and Panama initially agreed to the treaty that abrogated the Taft Agreement of 1904. Soon thereafter, Panama agreed to the boundary as proposed in the Colombian Treaty and concluded a treaty with Colombia firmly establishing this line.23

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23 Warren G. Harding to Charles Evans Hughes, 26 October 1922, vol. 27, Hughes MSS, 371; Process-
The Harding administration’s soft paternalistic strategy to settle long-standing American crises is clearly demonstrated by examining U.S. actions toward Panama. Throughout its time in office, the administration attempted to show its good faith and impartiality in applying its definition of the rule of law in the region. By justifying its actions through international law, the administration was able to settle two boundary disputes that involved Panama while simultaneously improving the image of the United States throughout Latin America.

The Tacna-Arica Dispute

Just as the Harding administration was attempting to keep the peace between Panama and Costa Rica, the Tacna-Arica boundary dispute was intensifying. This long-standing dispute between Peru, Chile, and Bolivia over the two provinces of Tacna and Arica was threatening to turn violent by 1921. For nearly half a century, the provinces were a potential flashpoint for a regional war in South America. The dispute arose out of the War of the Pacific, 1879-1883, which pitted Chile against the allied forces of Bolivia and Peru. The Chileans won a convincing victory in the war, and under the terms of the Treaty of Ancon of 1883 Chile gained possession of the Peruvian provinces of Tacna and Arica. The treaty stated, however, that after a period of ten years, a plebiscite would be held to determine permanent control of the territory. The plebiscite called for in the

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Verbal of a Meeting between the Secretary of State, The Colombian Minister, and the Panaman Minister,” 8 May 1924; vol. 1, 1924, 287-90; “Memorandum by the Secretary of State of a Conversation with the Panaman Minister,” 2 June 1923, vol. 1, FRUS, 1923, 337-40; Charles Evans Hughes to Alfaro, 23 August 1923, vol. 2, FRUS, 1923, 348-50; Grieb, The Latin American Policy, 31-35.
treaty was never held, and as a consequence Chile, Peru, and Bolivia each claimed
correctful control of the territory by the turn of the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{24}

The provinces of Tacna and Arica at first glance do not seem candidates for an
international conflict, but Chile, Peru, and Bolivia all came to believe that they were vital
to their respective national interests. The provinces consisted mainly of desert lands, had
only 39,000 inhabitants, and were relatively small in size. While limited in their
population and size, they were attractive to Peru, Chile, and Bolivia for four distinct
reasons. First the provinces had significant deposits of nitrates, which added greatly to
the national income of the government in control of the territory. Second, for Bolivia
they offered a direct outlet to the sea. Third, Chile saw the territory as a buffer region to
its mineral rich Province of Tarapaca. And finally, Peru believed that regaining the
provinces would prove that Chile was morally wrong for acquiring then in 1883.\textsuperscript{25}

The United States had made sporadic attempts to mediate the dispute from the
outbreak of the War of the Pacific in 1879 to 1920, but had not made a concerted effort to
get deeply involved. The U.S. attitude toward the dispute changed dramatically after the
League of Nations began to function. In the spring of 1920, the Wilson administration


learned that Bolivia and Peru had submitted the Tacna-Arica controversy to the Council of the League of Nations. With this knowledge, Wilson was faced with a dilemma, he could either to stand on principle and allow those nations to take the dispute to the League or he could consider the political ramifications and prevent the controversy from being heard by the League. Wilson realized that many Americans would view League involvement in the issue as proof that Europeans were attempting to use the organization to dominate Latin America, thus violating the Monroe Doctrine. He concluded that if the League involved itself in the dispute, the resulting American outrage would create another obstacle to overcome to achieve U.S. ratification of the Treaty of Versailles. Even though he wanted the League to involve itself in the dispute in order to demonstrate the organization’s value, he pushed the League to reject Bolivia’s and Peru’s petitions. The Council of the League of Nations agreed to Wilson’s requests, hoping to ease the fears of the U.S. Senate in order to promote ratification of the Treaty of Versailles, and thus the dispute remained a possible flashpoint. By the time the Harding administration took office, the dispute was threatening to erupt.26

It was clear to the Harding administration in 1921 that the situation was exceedingly dangerous to both the peace of South America as well as U.S. efforts to

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move Latin Americans toward Washington’s vision of peace. A major concern for the administration was the renewed effort to involve the League of Nations in the dispute, something it wanted to prevent at all cost. As with the Panamanian-Costa Rican boundary dispute, the administration believed that if it succeeded in getting the Latin Americans to reject the League and instead rely on the United States to help settle the dispute, U.S. regional goals would be advanced. The overall objective of the administration was to demonstrate that Latin Americans could rely on the United States to defuse dangerous international situations by applying the concept of the rule of law, thus enhancing Latin American support for the administration’s *pax-Americana* vision.  

In order to further its goal, it was imperative that the administration prevent any renewed movement to involve the League of Nations in the dispute. In its first year in office, the administration knew of the possibility of Bolivia or Peru turning to the League for assistance. Bolivia seemed on the verge of appealing to the League for an examination of its 1904 treaty with Chile in the hope that the organization would rule in its favor and thus give it an outlet to the sea. Peru also announced its intention to renew its attempt to get the League to examine the Treaty of Ancon if it could not find a suitable nation to mediate the issue. The situation became even more pressing with the realization that tensions were rising dramatically. As Frederick A. Sterling, the U.S. chargé

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Hughes began to endeavor to dissuade the League of Nations from getting involved in the Tacna-Arica dispute. As with the Panamanian-Costa Rican boundary dispute, the administration was able to prevent League involvement in the issue without having to take any serious action. The League realized that the United States opposed its involvement in the region, and again the leaders of the organization hoped that refraining from taking action would make it more likely that the United States would someday join the League. Concerning Bolivia and Peru, the Harding administration responded to their advances toward the League with a statement saying that it could not support the organization getting involved in the matter. Seeing no other options available to them, with the League rejecting their petitions, Bolivia and Peru informed the administration that they were withdrawing their appeals and instead began to call for the United States to take up the matter. The administration, however, took a different tactic concerning Chile. When Peru began to threaten to appeal to the League of Nations, some Chileans began considering withdrawing from the organization, fearful that it was not worth the risk of being a member of the League if there was a possibility the organization could threaten their possession of Tacna and Arica. Hughes responded to these threats by arguing that

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such a move would seem to the world as nothing more than as Chile’s attempt to prevent a peaceful settlement of the dispute. Instead, the State Department argued that Chile should remain in the League, not so the organization could involve itself in the controversy, but instead as a way to convince its citizens that taking the matter to the United States for mediation was its best option. As Hughes wrote, “the mere fact of Chile’s membership in the League could be used by the liberal minded men of Chile as an argument against the jingoes for the prompt settlement of this old question and as argument also that they should accept the mediation of the friendly powers of America now rather than wait to be hailed before the League of Nations.” Ultimately these diplomatic moves got Peru, Chile, and Bolivia to turn to the United States for a just settlement of the controversy.29

By late 1921, the administration began its move to get Peru and Chile to utilize the United States in an effort to peacefully settle the dispute. By October 1921, the United States was assuring Chile that the United States was willing to do all that it could to find a peaceful settlement to the matter. Their efforts were rewarded in late 1921, when Chile indicated its desire for U.S. mediation of the dispute and requested that the Harding administration inquire whether the Peruvian government would accept the holding of a plebiscite as the Treaty of Ancon stipulated. Peru indicated by December

29 Charles Evans Hughes to F.A. Pezet, 17 September 1921, vol. 1, FRUS, 1922, 241-42; F. A. Pezet to Charles Evans Hughes, 15 September 1921, FRUS, vol. 1, 1922, 240-41; Department of State, Office of the Secretary, “Memorandum of an Interview with the Bolivian Ambassador,” 15 September 1921, vol. 121, Hughes MSS, 541-42; Henry Fletcher, “Memorandum by the Under Secretary of State,” vol. 1, FRUS, 1921, 244-45; Frederick Sterling to Charles Evans Hughes, 13 December 1921, vol. 1, FRUS, 1921, 248; Department of State: Office of the Under Secretary, “Conversation Between the Chilean Ambassador and the Under Secretary of State,” 9 July 1921, vol. 121, Hughes MSS, 621-24; Samuel Abbot Maginnis to Charles Evans Hughes, 3 December, vol. 4, Internal Affairs of Peru, 194; Griebl, The Latin American Policy of Warren G. Harding, 158-59.
that it would also accept U.S. aid in settling the long-standing dispute. The administration’s first action was to ensure that both sides saw the United States as completely neutral in the matter. Instead of the United States immediately proposing a settlement, it instead called for the two nations to make another attempt to find a solution to the dispute through direct negotiations, demonstrating thereby that the United States was working for peace in the Western Hemisphere without dictating its terms.³⁰

Although Chile and Peru did attempt direct negotiations, once again they could not agree on a solution to the Tacna-Arica issue, and they thus turned to the United States for mediation, which both offered the United States an opportunity and presented it with a problem. With a renewed impasse in the dispute, the Harding administration agreed to the Chilean and Peruvian request to mediate their negotiations in January 1922. When the administration announced its willingness to mediate, political leaders and the general public in those nations praised the U.S. decision. While the administration invited representatives from Peru and Chile to negotiate in Washington in an attempt to settle the Tacna-Arica dispute, it refused to allow Bolivia to participate, fearing that its participation would end all chances of a successful mediation. To overcome the immediate objections from Bolivia, Hughes argued that the mediation specifically concerned the Treaty of Ancon, to which only Peru and Chile were parties. Thus, the administration explained its decision by using legal principles to justify Bolivia’s exclusion from this round of negotiations. As Hughes wrote to Bolivian President

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Bautista Saavedra, “the inclusion of Bolivia in the discussion of the questions at issue between the Governments of Peru and Chile is a matter for the exclusive consideration of the two Governments concerned.” With this view, Hughes argued that the only way for Bolivia to be included in the talks was if the two signatory powers, Peru and Chile, agreed to extend it an invitation to participate.31

The U.S. mediation between Peru and Chile over Tacna-Arica opened in Washington on May 15, 1922. In order to ensure that the United States was not seen as dictating to those nations, the administration made it clear to the press that only Peru and Chile were officially negotiating at the conference. While there was hope that the two nations would be able to resolve their differences in Washington, by the middle of June the talks had reached a deadlock. Hughes attempted to keep the situation quiet in the press because “this was a situation of delicate character and that in order to preserve our capacity for help later it was in the nature of things undesirable that [the U.S. government] should say anything now. If [it] did, [its] remarks would be telegraphed all over South America and in the end we should get nowhere.” Within a month of the opening of the conference Leo S. Rowe, the director of the Pan American Union, noted, “If no progress can be made it is altogether likely the two ambassadors will lay the situation before the Secretary of State with a view of securing the good offices of this

government in arranging a settlement.” On July 20, 1922, the two nations did agree to send the dispute to arbitration, to be decided by the president of the United States, a decision that both governments ratified in early 1923.32

While Harding was officially the arbiter of the dispute, Hughes took the lead in the arbitration and immediately received advice on how best to settle the issue. Henry Fletcher, who had been instrumental in initiating the discussions between Chile and Peru, advised that the only way for the issue to be permanently settled was to split the two disputed provinces. He suggested that instead of the winner take all vote called for in the Treaty of Ancon, Hughes find a way to rule that a separate plebiscite be held in each province that would allow Tacna to return to Peruvian control while Arica could remain in Chile’s hands. Fletcher argued that if this approach was taken, “the sting would be taken out of it forever.” Another benefit of this approach was that neither nation would have to make the monetary payment to the loser of the plebiscite that was called for in the Treaty of Ancon, which would take away another possible obstacle. Despite its possible benefits, however, Hughes saw a glaring flaw in Fletcher’s reasoning. In order to advance the idea that international agreements had to be respected, the terms of the Treaty of Ancon needed to be carried out as written. Thus, Hughes decided that only a winner take all format would advance his legal-internationalist perspective.33

Fletcher also advised Hughes to insist that Chile and Peru resume normal diplomatic relations before handing down his decision. He argued that if either one of the parties was not satisfied with Hughes’s ruling, it could block implementation simply by not resuming diplomatic relations with the other. Hughes considered this proposal, but came to the conclusion that much could go wrong if the United States insisted on the reestablishment of diplomatic relations. Hughes conferred with Leo S. Rowe, director of the Pan American Union, on the issue, and he agreed. Thus, Hughes notified Fletcher that, “Latin America is looking to the President for an absolutely impartial determination of the controversy on its merits and . . . whatever difficulties may follow the President’s Award, they will be less and it will command greater respect if we do not make [a] political suggestion before the Award is handed down.”

The U.S. ruling concerning the Question of the Pacific was not handed down until Calvin Coolidge had assumed the presidency after Harding’s death. While the president was officially the judge, Hughes was the primary author of this 1925 decision. In it, Hughes ruled that a plebiscite should be held to decide final ownership of the territory in a winner take all format as stipulated by the Treaty of Ancon. In addition, an arbitration commission made up of a Chilean, a Peruvian, and an American representative would draw up the rules and procedures of the plebiscite. Once the decision was handed down, the administration received praise from many people concerned with the issue. The administration believed that the United States had solved the long-standing dispute and

33 Henry Fletcher to Charles Evans Hughes, 20 September 1922, Box 9, Folio 6, Fletcher MSS.

34 Henry Fletcher to Charles Evans Hughes, 27 January 1925, Box 12, Folio 2, Fletcher MSS; Charles Evans Hughes to Henry Fletcher, Letter, 2 March 1925, Box 12, Folio 4, Fletcher MSS.
congratulated itself on its success in contributing to this seemingly popular award. The plebiscite ran into major problems, however, and was a constant source of concern for the United States throughout the presidency of Calvin Coolidge. Nevertheless, Hughes himself believed that a major step was taken in making practical strides in creating the *pax-Americana* system because the world was almost universal in its praise of the U.S. action in the matter. Hughes was pleased with the outcome at the time, but he knew that the administration had many troublesome issues that still awaited U.S. attention. This included the attempt to improve U.S.-Latin American relations by dealing with the country’s interventions into two Caribbean nations.  

The Dominican Republic and Haiti

Upon assuming office, the administration realized that the active U.S. military interventions into the Caribbean nations of the Dominican Republic and Haiti were negatively affecting U.S.-Latin American relations. Hughes recognized that the ongoing operations in those two nations must be dealt with in order to gain the support needed for the creation of a *pax-Americana* system. As Sumner Welles, the chief of the Latin American Division of the Department of State, stated later, “These unjustifiable interventions, carried out in the years prior to 1917, when Wilson was gravely

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preoccupied with the problems arising from the First World War, at once alienated the sympathies of the other American nations and fatally undermined their confidence in the sincerity of Wilson himself.” During the 1920 campaign, Harding also objected to the Wilson administration’s actions in those two nations, declaring that he would never exert the presidency to use “unwarranted interference in the domestic affairs of the little Republics of the Western Hemisphere.” Once in office, the administration began the process of terminating these interventions as soon as possible. This did not mean an immediate withdrawal of U.S. troops, however, but instead involved ensuring that when the pull out did take place, those nations’ peace, security, and economic stability would be protected. Thus, to blunt protests that withdrawal was not proceeding quickly enough, Hughes argued that the process would be completed as soon as the United States complied with its international obligations. After examining the situation, the administration believed that the occupation of the Dominican Republic could proceed immediately.36

The United States first intervened into the affairs of the Dominican Republic in 1905. At the time, the Roosevelt administration feared that the political and economic chaos in that nation was risking European intervention. The threat of such intervention seemed plausible because the Dominicans were at risk of defaulting on their loan payments to the nations of the Continent. According to international law, those nations had the right to occupy the country and force the repayment of the Dominican debt. As a result, the administration forced the Dominicans to relinquish control of their customs

receivership to the United States in order to ensure that the nation’s foreign debt was serviced. The United States further involved itself in the Dominican Republic in 1916, when Wilson landed Marines there to quell political and economic disarray. When the Harding administration assumed office, it believed that the occupation could be brought to a conclusion.  

On June 14, 1921, Hughes announced the plan to terminate the military occupation of the Dominican Republic but only after he was assured that the nation would be stable once the Marines exited the country. The administration’s goal was to liquidate the occupation in order to improve relations with Latin America yet avoid charges that the U.S. intervention directly led to further political chaos after U.S. troops left. Hughes announced in his 1921 plan for withdrawal, “It is the desire of the Government of the United States to assure itself before its withdrawal is accomplished that the independence and territorial integrity of the Dominican Republic, the maintenance of public order, and the security of life and property, will be adequately safeguarded, and to turn over the administration of the Dominican Republic to a responsible Dominican Government duly established in accordance with the existing Constitution and laws.” Thus, the administration’s original plan called for the election of congress and a president. While the political process was taking place, the United States would train local security forces and formulate mechanisms to guarantee that the nation

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would continue servicing its foreign debt. Hughes predicted that with Dominican assistance, the process could be accomplished within eight months.\textsuperscript{38}

Dominican objections thwarted the administration’s short timetable. The Dominicans’ resistance stemmed primarily from lack of trust in the United States, which seems perfectly logical because of the deep resentment the Dominicans harbored against the United States due to its intervention into their nation. By the beginning of 1922, U.S. officials’ inability to secure Dominican support for their plan of withdrawal was not only hampering the political and economic situation in that small nation but also raising doubts throughout Latin America that its statements were sincere. This situation led Sumner Welles, the chief of the Latin American Division of the U.S. State Department, to state that, “It appears to me that this Government cannot permit this condition of uncertainty to continue.”\textsuperscript{39}

With the original plan facing serious opposition, the administration decided not to force its acceptance, but instead proposed an alternative agreement. After meeting with political leaders of the Dominican Republic, an agreement was reached that was acceptable to both parties on June 30, 1922. Under this plan, a provisional government would be created to take over the executive departments of the government from the military government, but the Dominicans had to agree not to remove anyone from their positions without due cause. Dominican National Police would immediately take over


peace keeping, while American forces would remain in three places in the nation to ensure law and order until the transition was complete. The provisional government would then call for an election, and once seated this government would ratify the acts of the military government. Once this process was complete, U.S. troops would be withdrawn.  

Hughes appointed Sumner Welles to oversee the transition from the military occupation to the new Dominican government. Welles’s toughest task was to prevent a dispute between the Dominican leaders and the U.S. military governor that would cause the agreement to fall apart. When the U.S. Department of the Navy, which was in charge of the occupation forces, attempted to alter the new agreement, Hughes immediately moved to block the changes, arguing to the president that any change not accepted by both parties would break the legally binding agreement. Harding was convinced by Hughes’s arguments and concluded that allowing the changes would be detrimental for the nation’s international position. Thus, he ordered that the U.S. military governor of the Dominican Republic make no changes to the agreement without Welles’s approval.  

With the agreement secured, the United States ended its occupation of the Dominican Republic in 1924. Hughes believed that the U.S. withdrawal from that nation had the desired effect of improving the image of the United States. When the agreement was moving forward in 1923, Hughes reported to Harding that “The feeling in the Dominican Republic towards the Government of the United States appears to have

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changed very materially since the installation of the Provisional Government, and all classes now apparently for the first time believe that the United States is sincerely desirous of promoting the welfare and prosperity of the Dominican people with no ulterior designs which might impair the sovereignty of the Dominican Republic. There has been a very noticeable lack of the old hostility and anti-American propaganda which a year or more ago was actively instigated by Dominican representatives abroad.”

Although the liquidation of the U.S. military occupation of the Dominican Republic did not go as smoothly as the administration wished, it eventually had the desired affect.\(^{42}\)

While the Harding administration sought to end the occupation of the Dominican Republic, it did not believe that the occupation of Haiti could be liquidated immediately. As in the Dominican Republic, the Wilson administration had intervened in Haiti in 1915 in order to prevent that nation’s complete social and political collapse. When the Harding administration took office in 1921, it believed it would be inhumane for the United States to immediately abandon the occupation. As Hughes argued, the United States “cannot leave Haiti at the present time, and I conceive it to be the duty of the administration to do its utmost to perfect the methods of administration and to make our occupation of the greatest benefit to the inhabitants of Haiti.” This sentiment was echoed by others in the administration as well. On a stop in Haiti, Secretary of the Navy Edwin Demby reported to Harding that “The mere thought of withdrawing from Haiti is repulsive to any sane person who knows conditions there. It would be absolutely brutal to turn the Haitians over to their own control at this time. Whatever the white man’s

burden in that particular country we must bear it indefinitely in my opinion. In the meantime the many plans for Haiti’s betterment materially and in an educational way will go forward.”

The State Department concluded that before the United States could consider leaving Haiti, it had to vastly improve the conditions of that nation. This included ensuring that necessary internal improvements were completed, that the nation’s finances were put on a stable footing, and that improvements were made in the Haitian educational system. Thus, the administration concluded that the U.S. mission in that nation was to “help the Haitian people establish a democratic, stable and constitutional government.” This had to be done, because if the occupation was concluded prematurely, then Haiti would find itself in a period of anarchy that would result in the deaths of numerous Haitians. In order to achieve the goal of uplifting the Haitian people so they could survive without U.S. help, the administration appointed a new military governor, John H. Russell, whose mission was to oversee training an effective police force, secure the floating of a loan to stabilize the nation’s finances, improve the nation’s educational system, complete internal improvement projects, and make the necessary governmental reforms.

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While the administration did not believe that it could withdraw from Haiti for humanitarian reasons, it attempted to lessen the diplomatic repercussions of this decision by arguing that the United States was forced to remain in order to fulfill its international obligations. On September 16, 1915, the United States and Haiti signed a treaty that permitted U.S. officials to assume control of the most important positions in Haiti’s government in order to stabilize its political system and finances and develop its economy. Article XVI stated, “The present treaty shall remain in full force and virtue for the term of ten years, to be counted from the day of exchange of ratifications, and further for another term of ten years if, for specific reasons presented by either of the high contracting parties, the purpose of this treaty has not been fully accomplished.” This article allowed Hughes to make public pronouncements that he desired a U.S. withdrawal from Haiti, but that the United States had a legal obligation to continue the intervention. As he stated in 1923, “Conditions in Haiti have not yet permitted the withdrawal of American forces, as there is general agreement that such a withdrawal would be the occasion for revolution and bloodshed. The government of the United States desires to effect a withdrawal as soon as this can be done consistently with the obligations it has assumed.”

Instead of attempting to liquidate the occupation, the administration began the process of training Haitians to take eventual control of their government in order to blunt both foreign and domestic criticism of the occupation. Thus, U.S. policy was the gradual

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transferring of power from U.S. officials to Haitians by overseeing their assumption of these positions. Simultaneously, the administration reduced the size of the Marine force in Haiti and began to transfer the role of policing the nation to the Haitian police force. The resulting appointment of Haitians to positions of power and reduction of U.S. troop levels by a third led to diminished criticism emanating from Latin American and American sources. The most influential source of domestic criticism was the U.S. Congress. A congressional commission began to investigate the intervention due to a growing protest against the U.S. presence in Haiti. By 1923, the commission had issued a report that approved of the administration’s handling of the situation by beginning the process of liquidating the intervention.46

The Harding administration sought to improve U.S. relations with Latin American nations throughout its time in office. It generally sought to end old Latin American grievances with the United States by ending military interventions in the Dominican Republic and beginning the process in Haiti. The administration did not, however, renounce the U.S. “right” to intervene in Latin American nations. While resisting the temptation to intervene in Latin America, it believed that there were times when such action was the only humanitarian way to bring peace to the region. Intervention was only to be a last resort, but it was still an option that administration officials believed the United States possessed in dire situations. This belief is demonstrated in the Haitian situation, where the administration attempted to back up this “right” by arguing that according to international law it was unable to liquidate the occupation. This stance

would ultimately be the primary undoing of Hughes’s soft paternalistic approach in the Western Hemisphere by continuing to drive Latin American suspicion of U.S. motives in the region. The administration, however, was not fully aware of the consequences of its actions and believed that it was making great headway in its efforts to reform diplomatic dealings in the hemisphere. Thus, it continued its approach to securing peace by utilizing its legal-internationalist vision in Central America as well.

Central American Affairs

The Harding administration also saw an opportunity to spread the ideals of the *pax-Americana* system by seeking to improve the political situation in Central America. Given their proximity to the Panama Canal, these nations were strategically important for the United States. As a result, the United States regularly intervened in them when political instability arose, predictably producing a strong anti-American feeling in the area by 1921. The Harding administration attempted to redress this situation by using diplomacy to demonstrate that the United States sought not to dictate to the Central American nations, but instead to help them improve their political situation, thereby removing the threat of these nations moving toward the League of Nations to protect themselves from the United States while simultaneously getting them to accept the administration’s vision. As Francis White of the Latin American Division of the Department of State argued, “As our one object in dealing with Central America, aside from the current business of protecting American interests, is to help the Central
American countries to get into a position where they can manage their own affairs in a way which will not invite European interference or expose American interest to injury from revolutions, I think that we should do what we can to help along this progress of constitutional development.\textsuperscript{47}

Throughout much of the early twentieth century, the United States constantly intervened in Central America. U.S. military interventions in Honduras and Nicaragua led the Central Americans to seek protection from the United States. When the League of Nations was created, El Salvador hoped to place international pressure on the United States to renounce the Roosevelt Corollary when it asked the organization to clarify Article XXI of its Covenant.\textsuperscript{48} Prevailing anti-U.S. attitudes led many Americans to worry about a renewed movement to create the Central American Union. The Wilson administration feared that this movement to unite Costa Rica, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Guatemala would lead anti-American leaders to assume power in the area. As a result, they would seek the assistance of other powers to attack U.S. interests in the area. The U.S. concern became more immediate when, on January 19, 1921, representatives of El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Costa Rica formally signed the Central American Union Pact.\textsuperscript{49}

\textsuperscript{47} Dana Munro to Francis White, Memorandum, 17 November 1924, Box 8, Folio 20, in Francis White Papers, Herbert Hoover Presidential Library, West Branch, Iowa (Hereafter cited as White MSS); Chandler Anderson, Diary, 12 March 1921, Anderson MSS.

\textsuperscript{48} Article XXI was inserted into the Covenant of the League of Nations in the hope of overcoming the concerns of the U.S. Senate that the League would destroy the Monroe Doctrine.

\textsuperscript{49} Jordan Stabler, Memorandum, 26 October 1918, in Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs of Central America, vol. 3, Microfilm, Washington: The National Archives National Archives and Records Service, 1967, 151; Jordan Stabler, Memorandum, 26 October 1918, vol. 3, Internal...
While Wilson publicly opposed the creation of the Central American Union, the Harding administration saw an opportunity to exploit it. Guided by traditional U.S. assumptions of Latin American inferiority, officials in the State Department believed that the union was doomed to failure. “The background of centuries of obedience to law and settlement of political disputes by compromise, which makes it possible to operate a federal government in the United States, is entirely lacking in Central America. There is little reason to expect that a federal constitution should be scrupulously observed when the existing state constitutions are continually and openly disregarded,” the department argued. Despite its belief that the plan would fail, however, the administration argued that U.S. support for it would generate pro-U.S. sentiments among the Central American nations. Once the union failed, the goodwill generated by U.S. support would allow the administration an opportunity to spread American principles into the area. The members of the Department of State considered this a real possibility, “provided that the United States is prepared, in case the Union fails, to exert its influence to prevent a restoration of the old vicious military system.”

While most in the State Department did not believe that the Central American Union could succeed, those who thought it might believed it could be utilized to secure

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Affairs of Central America, 152; Frank Polk to Alyey A. Adee, Telegram, 10 October 1918, vol. 3, Internal Affairs of Central America, 9; Frank Polk to Amlegation Panama, Telegram, 11 October 1918, vol. 3, Internal Affairs of Central America, 11; Walter C. Thurston to Charles Evans Hughes, 20 June 1921, vol. 4, Internal Affairs of Central America, 128-130; Walter C. Thurston to Henry Fletcher, Telegram, 16 January 1921, vol. 1, FRUS 1921, 144-45; Walter C. Thurston to Henry Fletcher, Telegram, 19 January 1921, vol. 1, FRUS 1921, 145; Benjamin Jefferson to Charles Evans Hughes, 1 August 1921, vol. 4, Internal Affairs of Central America, 592-605.

U.S. goals. Sumner Wells encouraged Hughes to publicly support the union in order to help the United States stabilize the governance of the area, limit regional militarism, and prevent the likelihood of outside interests gaining influence. He argued that the liberal element in Central America had long favored the creation of the union, and that its constitution would be set up in a way that would reduce the likelihood of dictators gaining control of the new federation. Thus, a rational system of governance would be established that hopefully would spread the respect of the rule of law. Simultaneously, as democracy flourished, the militarism of the area would be dramatically reduced. With no need for these five nations to maintain standing armies to defend themselves against each other, the chances for conflict would be reduced. Finally, he recognized that the supporters of the union in Central America were desirous of U.S. support and were likely to reciprocate by satisfactorily servicing the region’s foreign debt. As Welles argued, “we should receive positive assurances that the financial obligations of the new Union would be met in a manner satisfactory to this Government, in order to prevent the possibility of European intervention in Central American affairs, before the new Federation is officially recognized by the United States.”

Hughes concluded that the United States should give qualified public support for the creation of the Central American Union. He advised Harding that the United States should recognize the Central American Union only if it gave assurances “from the Federal Council of the new Central American Republic, that the financial obligations of

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the component States will be met and that its political relations with the United States will be close and friendly.” Harding accepted Hughes’s position, saying, “I can see no good reason why the Government of the United States should not give its cordial assent to this union, provided, of course, the safeguards covered in your letter, and the memorandum accompanying it, are provided for.” Thus, in June 1921, the administration stated publicly that if the union was created, the administration would be pleased with the outcome. While the administration began to make public pronouncements that favored the creation of the union, it made sure not to formally recognize the union in case the plan fell apart.52

The Harding administration came to see its cautious approach to the process of recognizing the Central American Federation as appropriate. On December 5, 1921, a coup in Guatemala put General José Maria Orellana into power. Orellana opposed the creation of a Central American Union, and once in power he insisted that his nation would not enter the federation. Without Guatemala, the largest nation involved in the union, the new federation could not succeed. In an attempt to save the movement, El Salvador and Honduras threatened military action to save the unionist movement. By avoiding extending diplomatic recognition, the Harding administration saved itself from

having to withdraw it, which allowed it flexibility to respond to the developing crisis in a manner that furthered U.S. interests in the area.\textsuperscript{53}

Once Honduras and El Salvador threatened to attack Guatemala in order to secure the Central American Union, Hughes concluded that the United States had to take an active role in securing peace in the region. Dana Munro of the Latin American Division of the Department of State reported that if the United States did not respond to the threats, El Salvador and Honduras would take that as permission to commence with their military operation. Thus, it was essential for the administration to make an announcement, because Munro believed, “All of these countries are looking to us for action which will prevent a general Central American War.” Hughes broke the U.S. silence on the issue soon after he received Munro’s communication. His announcement did not threaten U.S. intervention, but instead announced that, “Any Government which made such an attempt [a military attack] would incur the heaviest responsibility for embroiling Central America in a war which would discredit Central America in the eyes of the civilized world.”\textsuperscript{54}

By late 1922, the situation in Central America was disintegrating, and the administration made an effort to calm the situation by promoting previous agreements reached between the Central American republics. The administration feared that the governments of Central America were on the verge of resorting to their traditional


methods of influencing the political affairs of the other governments of the area. The United States held that these nations had a tendency to aid revolutions to topple leaders that were deemed unfriendly to their own interests. This exact scenario was seemingly occurring again by mid-1922, when it appeared that the nations of El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Guatemala were on the verge of revolution. Hughes concluded that the proper U.S. course was to call a regional conference. The ultimate goal of this conference was to restate the terms of the Central American treaties of 1907, which established the now defunct Central American Court, a pledge of non-interference in each other’s territory, and a promise not to aid revolutionaries operating in their territory.\footnote{Dana Munro, Memorandum, 1922, vol. 6, \textit{Internal Affairs of Central America}, 170-86; Dana Munro to Henry Fletcher, Memorandum, 14 December 1921, vol. 6, \textit{Internal Affairs of Central America}, 202-04; Grieb, \textit{Latin American Policy of Warren G. Harding}, 49-51.}

With conditions worsening in Central America, the Harding administration waited until a Central American nation requested its assistance to stabilize the situation before it took any further action. That occurred when President Diego Manuel Chamorro of Nicaragua proposed that a conference be held on the U.S.S. \textit{Tacoma} in an attempt to calm the situation. Hughes responded that “this Government will gladly place a war vessel at their disposal as a neutral meeting ground, and will also be glad to have the American Ministers to Nicaragua and Honduras present as observers, and to off their good offices, if requested, with a view to tranquillizing the situation in Central America.” To assure the nations involved that the United States wanted their leaders to come without fear of being deposed while they were attending the conference, he announced that the United
States would “look with displeasure and disapproval upon any revolutionary movements which may take place during the course of [the] conference.”

On August 19-20, 1922, the presidents of Honduras, Nicaragua, and El Salvador and representatives of the United States met aboard the U.S.S. *Tacoma* in an attempt to calm the situation in Central America. At first, the conference seemed to be going nowhere, but Montgomery Schuyler, U.S. minister to Honduras, was eventually able to get the three presidents to agree to respect the 1907 agreements. Ultimately, the three Central American nations made eight agreements on board the U.S.S. *Tacoma*. First, they declared that the General Treaty of Peace and Amity that was signed in Washington in 1907 between the Central American republics was still in force. In the next three agreements, dealing with revolutionary activity in Central America, three nations agreed not to let revolutionaries use their territory for attacks on other Central American nations, promised to suppress revolutionary attacks launched from their territory, and pledged not to allow revolutionaries join their army. The powers also agreed to call a conference of all five Central American nations to discuss “free trade, unification of currency, unification of the tariff systems, ways of communication and other measures guaranteed by treaties aiming to draw them closer to one another.” They also backed a proposal that called for all Central American disputes to be submitted to arbitration, especially

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Hughes had resisted calls from members of the State Department for a Central American conference during the previous year, but the conditions in Central America led him to conclude that the United States had no other choice but to call such a conference. He felt that it was up to the “United States Government to take some steps looking to the establishment of more peaceful and stable relations among them [the Central American Republics].” Harding agreed and authorized the calling of a Central American Conference to be held in Washington in December 1922. By November 11, all five nations of Central America had replied favorably to attending the conference. In the note confirming that all had accepted the invitation, Hughes stated, “You may say that the government and people of the United States are hopeful that this Conference will be another step in promoting friendly relations between the countries concerned and are desirous of rendering every service to bring about this happy result. You may also say that this government would be glad to participate in the Conference itself through duly appointed delegates, or to give its friendly aid outside the actual deliberations of the Conference, as the governments concerned may desire.” Hughes wanted to make sure
that the United States was helping these nations to exist peacefully without making it seem that the United States was dictating to them.\textsuperscript{58}

While Hughes did not want to make it appear that the United States was dictating to the Central American nations at the Washington Conference of 1922, the United States did seek to use its influence in order to get those nations to follow its vision for a peaceful hemisphere. In order to achieve this vision, U.S. officials hoped that those nations could accept three different ideas at the conference. First, they hoped a treaty could be concluded that would make the General Treaty of Peace and Amity of 1907 effective. Second, they hoped for Central American disarmament in order to “set an example to the world and above all the powers of this hemisphere.” Finally, the conference was to work on a plan to create a Central American tribunal to arbitrate disputes between the nations that could not be settled through direct diplomatic methods. These goals contained the U.S. plan to spread \textit{pax-Americana} ideals to the region. Military disarmament would dramatically reduce the political instability of the region by eliminating the threat of military conflict while simultaneously reducing expenditures, thereby helping the region’s economic situation. The other two points were seen as a way to bring political stability and settle international disputes rationally and without resorting to violence. By discussing these issues, President Harding argued the “conference [promised] to be a very important step towards the promoting of friendly Pan-American relations.”\textsuperscript{59}

The Conference on Central American Affairs opened in Washington, D.C. on December 4, 1922, with a speech by Charles Evans Hughes that attempted to reassure the Central American Republics that the United States was at the conference to help them find peace, but not to dictate to them. He said, “The Government of the United States has no ambition to gratify at your expense, no policy which runs counter to your national aspirations, and no purpose save to promote the interests of peace and to assist you, in such manner as you may welcome, to solve your problems to your own proper advantage. The interest of the United States is found in the peace of this hemisphere and in the conservation of your interests.” While the U.S. delegation refrained from direct participation in the talks, allowing the Central American nations to carry the discussion, the United States was an extremely influential part of the conference. It set the agenda and privately “advised” the Central American delegates on the U.S. vision.  

When the conference closed on February 7, 1923, Hughes felt that it had been a success, securing much of what the United States desired without having to publicly involve it in the affairs of Central America. The most important agreement of the conference was the General Treaty of Peace and Amity between the five Central American governments. This treaty stated that disputes between the powers would be


60 U.S. Department of State, Conference on Central American Affairs, 22; For examples of the U.S. advising the Central American Republics during the Central American Conference, see Kelly to Charles Evans Hughes, 17 January 1922, vol. 10, Internal Affairs of Central America, 269-71; Grieb, Harding’s Latin American Policy, 52-56.
sent to a Central American Tribunal for arbitration, that no government would be recognized if it came to power through unconstitutional means, and that no Central American nation would interfere with the internal affairs of another. Another agreement reached at the conference was the Convention for the Limitation of Armaments, which limited the size of the army and National Guard of the Central American nations for five years. A third major agreement was the Convention for the Establishment of Free Trade freeing most goods being sold between the Central American states from tariffs. The United States was not formally involved in any of the agreements. It did pledge not to recognize a government that came to power illegally, but it remained outside of the formal agreement to avoid making it look like the United States not forcing any of these agreements down the throat of the Central American nations. While the United States pledged that it would not recognize an illegal government, it did not promise to take any other action. This non-recognition pledge would, however, carry an unofficial threat. Before U.S. banks loaned money to foreign governments, they would seek guidance from the State Department. If a government was not recognized by the U.S. government, the department would advise the bank not to issue the loan, resulting in economic hardship for the unlawful regime. Thus, the United States achieved most of its major objectives at the conference. It attempted to keep political stability with the threat of non-recognition; sought to bring the Central American nations together economically through free trade;

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61 It was agreed that size of the army would be as follows: Guatemala 5,200; El Salvador 4,200; Honduras 2,500; Nicaragua 2,500; Costa Rica 2,000. Also no state was to have more than ten military aircraft, or no poisonous gasses.
and got those nations to rely on the United States and not the League of Nations to settle their international disputes. 62

5th Pan American Conference

After seemingly successful efforts to improve relations with its southern neighbors and finding peaceful resolutions to regional crises, the Harding administration saw an opportunity in the Fifth Pan American Conference to advocate the initial formal agreement that was to be the basis for the \textit{pax-Americana} system in the Western Hemisphere. To achieve this goal, the administration used diplomacy to block League participation in the conference. With the League out of the picture, the U.S. delegates were able to gain Latin American acceptance of their proposals for the establishment of an alternative peace system in the Western Hemisphere.

During the planning for the Pan American Conference, many Latin Americans who supported the League hoped to use the gathering to expand the organization’s influence in the hemisphere. For example, the chairman of the conference, Agustín Edwards, was also the president of the Assembly of the League of Nations, and he sought to use the conference to extend Latin American power in the organization by arranging the region’s nations into a solid voting block in the League in order to increase their power while simultaneously seeking to gain U.S. acceptance of the organization. While the administration was concerned about these efforts, the threat reached new heights

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when the League requested permission to send a representative to the conference.
Hughes responded that the conference was designed to discuss hemispheric issues, and thus no outside interests should be represented. He argued, “the Fifth Pan American Conference at Santiago is not to be a European Conference, or a World Conference, but a Conference of American Republics. It will meet in the view that the Republics of this Hemisphere have certain interests in common which are distinctively American and in respect of which it is desirable that they should confer.” Thus, while the administration did not demand that the League not be represented, Hughes’s statement carried enough weight for the proposal to be dropped. 63

While the Harding administration reacted negatively toward the League of Nations sending a representative to the Pan American Conference, it also had to react to a Uruguayan proposal to create an American League of Nations. The plan was modeled upon the League itself, and Uruguay sought to tie the new body to the existing organization. The plan provided for a high council, an assembly, and a secretariat and called for the “intensification of friendship among American and non-American nations; the settlement of American international conflict by arbitration, investigation committees, or by the friendly mediation of other countries; measures to keep the peace; and to prevent the colonization in the hemisphere.” It also contained a proposal to prevent colonization in the Western Hemisphere that amounted to the internationalization of the

Monroe Doctrine. The Uruguayan document stated that the Monroe Doctrine was “somewhat vexatious to the dignity of other American countries. Therefore if that formula is useful and just, the natural thing [is] for it to be adopted by all, so that all may place themselves under its protection or invoke it in defense of some sister country.”

The Harding administration shared many of the goals of this proposal, especially the peaceful resolution of conflicts and all Latin American nations declaring they would defend the Monroe Doctrine, but it did object to other portions. Hughes welcomed Latin American nations supporting the Monroe Doctrine, noting: “We should not regard it as in any way impinging upon our independence if . . . American States, should announce that [they] would resist any attempt of any non-American power to encroach upon the political independence of American States under any guise or to acquire control of additional territory in this hemisphere. Nor should we have ground for objection if any of these States said that it reserved the right to oppose such measures when and as it saw fit. We should welcome the establishment by all the American Republics of this principle.”

While the administration felt that there was much to support in the proposal, the fact that the new organization would be formed within the League of Nations forced it to reject the proposal. Hughes knew that any proposal that hinted at the United States joining the League of Nations would be quickly defeated by the U.S. Senate. Instead, the administration felt that the best way to move the world to the vision of peace was to work in practical means. Hughes thus made it clear that the proposal could not be accepted by

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the United States but stopped short of insisting that the topic not be formally proposed at the conference. Given the U.S. rejection, Uruguay did not press the issue, and Washington’s non-dictatorial stance accomplished its desired effect by easing the hard feelings toward the U.S. position on the subject.65

The administration was happy that it was able to exclude the League from the conference, but it knew that the U.S. delegation had to be selected carefully in order to effectively press for its proposals to be accepted. Hughes realized that the delegates had to support the administration’s plans, be acceptable to the Latin Americans, and be able to reduce American opposition to any agreements reached. The administration chose Henry Fletcher to be the chairman of the U.S. delegation to the conference, which would accomplish two of these objectives. With Hughes resistant to personally going to Chile for the conference, he knew that Fletcher would faithfully press his vision. Fletcher had served as Hughes’s undersecretary of state and was a close personal friend of Warren G. Harding. In addition, Fletcher was also very popular with many Latin Americans because of his past dealings with these nations. The administration also selected Dr. Leo S. Rowe, director of the Pan American Union, who was also popular and well known in Latin America. To help with the ratification of any treaties coming out of the conference,

the administration also appointed Republican Senator Frank Kellogg and Democrat Atlee Pomerene.  

When the conference opened in March 1923, Hughes had Fletcher read a statement on his behalf. In this message Hughes stated, “The conviction which has led to these gatherings is that of a distinct community of interests among the Republics of this hemisphere. It is no prejudice to other interests wisely to conserve our own. These Republics, each appropriately safeguarding its sovereignty and independence, voice the sentiment which is the essence of pan-Americanism—the sentiment of mutual beneficial cooperation.” In this message, he wished to convey that the United States did not seek to block Latin American activity in the League, but instead advocated the benefits of the Pan American movement. In this vein, Hughes stated that he wished for American cooperation for the establishment of good will, peace, and prosperity.

The majority of the conference was dedicated to the traditional matters of previous Pan American Conferences. There were discussions on how to promote commerce between the nations, resolve economic problems, and improve education, hygiene, and the Pan American Union. These topics were certainly of interest to the

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United States, but the Harding administration also desired to begin laying the formal groundwork for acceptance of its peace vision. Thus, the conference also discussed disarmament, the codification of American international law, and how to solve hemispheric disputes without resorting to war.\(^{68}\)

While the United States refused to consider an American League of Nations it did agree to the Treaty to Avoid or Prevent Conflicts between the American States, better known as the Gondra Treaty. The treaty was named after its sponsor, Dr. Manuel Gondra, a delegate of Paraguay, and set up a system for resolving intra-American disputes peacefully by working within the Pan American system. The treaty stated that if a dispute arose between American nations that could not be settled through direct diplomacy, the issue had to be submitted to one of two commissions of investigation, located in Montevideo and Washington, D.C. Each commission was to contain five members, who would issue a report that was agreed upon by a majority of members. Once the report was issued, the nations involved in the dispute were to attempt to negotiate a peaceful settlement based on the decision. If a peaceful settlement could not be reached within six months after the issuance of the report, the nations were free to “recover entire liberty of action to proceed as their interests may dictate in the question dealt with in the investigation.” Thus, the Gondra Treaty allowed for the peaceful resolution of intra-American disputes without taking away freedom of action from governments in cases where they felt their vital interests were concerned. Hughes was therefore able to conclude an agreement that avoided the major problem he saw in the

collective security clause of the League of Nations—that it took away a nation’s liberty to
defend its core interests. Under the Gondra Treaty, a nation knew that if a satisfactory
agreement was not reached within six months, it would be free to take whatever action it
deemed necessary. As a result, nations would be more likely to negotiate with the
impartial decision as a guide, thereby reducing the likelihood that the dispute would end
in war.⁶⁹

The administration was successful not only in getting the delegates to accept the
treaty but also gaining the support of the governments of the Western Hemisphere.
Eventually all nations of the Pan American Union save Argentina adhered to the
agreement. Just as important, the agreement did not garner a firestorm of criticism from
domestic sources. Not only was there not an uproar in the press, but the protectionists in
the United States did not raise any objections to the treaty. Thus, a formal agreement was
concluded that began to set up a process to peacefully settle any intra-American disputes;
it was quickly ratified by the U.S. Senate.⁷⁰

Although the Gondra Treaty would prevent most intra-American wars, the United
States also attempted to get an agreement to codify American international law, which
was essential to Hughes’s peace plans. Each of the American states would appoint two
delegates who would meet at Rio de Janeiro in 1925 to begin this process. The

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agreement reached recommended that the delegates remember that “in the domain of
International Law, the codification should be gradual and progressive.” Again this
agreement echoed Hughes’s views concerning international law, specifically the concept
that the gradual process of creating international law would eventually lead people to
accept the law and follow its principles, thus reducing the chances of war. As Hughes
argued, once nations had agreed to a law through free and rational discussions, they
would recognize “its restraints although self-imposed, which safeguards the
independence, the equality, and the proper jurisdiction and privileges of the members of
the family of nations and assures the sanctity of international engagements—this
upholding of correlative rights and obligations—is of vital importance not simply with
respect to these rights and obligations in themselves but in producing the will to peace.”
When Hughes addressed the opening of the conference to work on the codification of
American international law, he stated, “We feel that, thanks to American initiative, we
are on the threshold of accomplishment in the most important endeavor of the human race
to lift itself out of the savagery of strife into the domain of law breathing the spirit of
amity and justice.”

The conferees also agreed to reform the Pan American Union. By the 1920s, the
membership of the Pan American Union had become an issue of contention for many
Latin Americans. First, because the representatives of Latin American nations in the
union were their diplomats stationed in Washington, D.C., that meant that if the United
States failed to recognize a government in Latin America, then that nation would not

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71 U.S. Department of State, Report of the Delegates of the United States to the Fifth international
Conference of American States, 131-32; Hughes, Pathway to Peace, 6-19, 173.
have a representative in the union. Second, it had become a point of contention that the chairman of the Pan American Union was the secretary of state of the United States. To deal with these issues, changes were made to the Pan American Union. To ensure that all Latin American nations were represented, if a nation was not recognized by the United States, then that government would be able to send a special envoy to ensure that it would be heard in the union. Second, the chairman of the Pan American Union would henceforth be elected by the union’s representatives.72

It was hoped that these changes in the Pan American Union at the Fifth Pan American Conference would bring the nations of the Western Hemisphere closer. And indeed, by the close of the conference, the Pan American Union saw itself as more than an organization designed to promote commerce between the nations of the Western Hemisphere, as it was when first established as the International Bureau of American Republics. After the conference, the Pan American Union saw itself as having an expanded role. It was still to work to increase commerce between the nations of America, but it was also to promote closer cultural ties, foster better public health and hygiene, and keep the treaties adopted at the Pan American Conferences. The union also saw itself as having an important role in bringing the nations together through cooperation through the union. As Leo S. Rowe, director of the Pan American Union, stated, “Not only is the spirit of mutual helpfulness thus fostered, but the essential community of interests and problems is strongly emphasized. In no case is any attempt made, either to bring pressure to bear or to use compulsion in securing action. Through

constant united action, however, a continental ‘spirit de Corps’ is gradually developed which is of incalculable value, even in the settlement of purely political questions pending between the republics. The established habit of united action has gradually developed a viewpoint, under which any question pending between two or more republics assumes a continental character and importance.”\(^73\)

With the agreements reached, the Harding administration felt that it had achieved its objectives at the Fifth International Conference of American States. The U.S. delegation saw itself as being successful in bringing the Latin American nations closer to the U.S. vision for a peaceful hemisphere. And it was encouraged when it heard positive assessments from others. Cesar Zumita, a Venezuelan delegate, for example stated, “We are either on the eve of another dark age, or we are facing a great new epoch in human history. A united America can bring this new epoch into the world. The government at Washington has the power to say whether we will have this American Unity, with its consequent blessings, or whether we will have the divisive and ruinous elements of Europe enter this continent, with the consequent wrecking of civilization.” Leo S. Rowe reported to Hughes that “the net results of the Conference are important and make a real step forward in the development of Pan Americanism.”\(^74\)

\(^73\) Leo S. Rowe, “Pan American Union, Its Organization, Scope of Activities and Significance in International Relations,” Speech, 1925, Box 13, Folio 1, Rowe MSS.

\(^74\) Zumita quoted in Inman, Inter-American Conferences, 100; Leo S. Rowe to Charles Evans Hughes, Letter, 4 May 1923, Vol. 43, Hughes MSS, 697; Leo S. Rowe to Charles Evans Hughes, Letter, 30 March 1923, vol. 43, Hughes MSS, 694.
Conclusion

When the Harding administration took office in 1921 it found U.S.-Latin American relations at a low point after years of U.S. interventions into the Caribbean and Central American regions. Just as problematic for the United States was that many Latin Americans supported the League of Nations in order to protect themselves from the United States. The administration had the task of improving its relations with its southern neighbors in the hope of gaining their support for the administration’s pax-Americana vision. As a result, the Harding administration ended the U.S. intervention into Santo Domingo while at the same time resisting new interventions when crises arose. It used conferences, arbitration, and diplomacy to attempt to show that the United States was the leader of promoting peace in Latin America. These actions not only brought the United States into a more favorable light in Latin America they also moved the Latin American nations closer to the U.S. vision of creating a regional system instead of having those nations look to a European-dominated League of Nations.

By using a soft paternalistic approach the Harding administration made significant headway in moving the nations of the Western Hemisphere toward accepting its proposals by 1923, but Latin Americans still did not fully trust the United States. While Latin Americans were receptive to many of the administration’s plans, they still doubted that the United States had truly moved away from interventionism into the region. Events would reveal that this mistrust was justified as U.S. government leaders drew from Hughes’s example of finding legal arguments to justify the United States remaining
in Haiti, a decision that ultimately led to a Latin American backlash against the United States. Thus, Hughes’s soft paternalistic approach to move Latin America toward the U.S. vision of peace unraveled because of this legal-internationalist viewpoint. This fact would be evident during the Coolidge administration, when the United States began to intervene in the region once again.
Chapter 4

Successes and Difficulties during the Coolidge Administration

By the summer of 1923, the Harding administration had initiated the process of attempting to remake the international system of the Western Hemisphere. By employing a soft paternalistic strategy, the United States prevented the League of Nations from involving itself in intra-American disputes, began to improve U.S.-Latin American relations, and utilized conferences to commence building an alternative peace system in the hemisphere. This era came to a sudden end with Warren G. Harding’s death on August 2, 1923, and succession by Calvin Coolidge. The new president did not have an overriding interest in foreign affairs and therefore relied heavily on his secretaries of state to construct the administration’s foreign policy. As president he would have two men serve in this position: Charles Evans Hughes and Frank B. Kellogg.

Hughes and Kellogg sought to continue Hughes’s approach to nudge Latin America toward the envisioned pax-Americana system, but they knew serious obstacles remained in their way. While the Harding administration had initiated the process of reforming the Western Hemisphere’s international system, the United States still faced a continued threat from the League of Nations, ongoing intra-American disputes, and Latin American mistrust of the United States, all of which threatened to derail the administration’s designs. The United States had been able to limit League involvement
in regional crises during the Harding administration’s time in office, but the organization was still attempting to involve itself in the affairs of the Western Hemisphere. In addition, the United States had begun to mediate long-standing boundary disputes, but some of these questions were yet to be definitely settled, such as the Tacna-Arica controversy. Finally, the Harding administration had begun the U.S. attempt to improve its relations with Latin Americans by beginning to liquidate its interventions in the Caribbean. Many people of the region, however, were still not convinced that the United States had adequately altered its policy toward Latin America because it had not renounced its “right” to intervene into the region.

In order to confront these threats, the Coolidge administration attempted to continue Hughes’s soft paternalistic strategy. The administration believed that by continuing to improve U.S.-Latin American relations, attempting to settle disputes by applying legal principles, and proposing to enhance the terms of existing peace agreements it would be able to continue the progression toward creating a pax-Americana system in the hemisphere. The Coolidge administration believed that as long it continued to justify its proposals and actions in legal terms, not only would Latin Americans come to accept U.S. policies, they would also adopt a legal-internationalist mindset as well.

Although the administration attempted to utilize a soft paternalistic strategy, it concluded that it was not always possible to employ this approach, such as when conditions necessitated a new intervention in Nicaragua to prevent the possibility of radical or foreign interests imperiling the U.S. peace vision. The administration endeavored to justify this intervention by citing international law, but its defense did little
to calm the resulting outrage. This confirmed to numerous Latin Americans that the United States could not be trusted, and thus U.S.-Latin American relations were again strained. While the administration knew that it had suffered a setback, it believed that its defensive strategy allowed it to conclude further regional peace agreements during its time in office.

The Coolidge Administration’s Foreign Relations Team

When Warren G. Harding died suddenly on August 2, 1923, Calvin Coolidge assumed the presidency. As president, Coolidge decided to continue the U.S. attempt to reform the international system in the Western Hemisphere. Like Harding, the new president allowed his secretary of state to formulate the nation’s foreign policy and he primarily only approved or rejected decisions. This style of leadership made the secretary of state essential to the creation of an effective foreign policy. Coolidge inherited the services of Hughes, who remained in this position until March 1925. After Hughes’s resignation, Coolidge chose former Minnesota Senator Frank B. Kellogg to assume this position. When the president selected Kellogg, he ensured that the man responsible for the formulation of the administration’s foreign policy was a firm believer in legal-internationalism.

Coolidge assumed the presidency with virtually no experience in foreign policy, but he did support reforming the international system based on American ideals. He considered war abhorrent because it wasted human life, unsettled societies, and was
financially ruinous. Consequently, he supported U.S. attempts to create methods of settling international disputes peacefully.\(^1\) As Coolidge stated,

> We are attempting to make our contribution to the peace of the world, not in any sensational or spectacular way but by the application of practical, workable, seasoned methods and an appeal to the common sense of mankind. We do not rely upon the threat of force in our international relations or in our attempt to maintain our position in the world. We have seen force tried, but the more people study its results the more they must be convinced that on the whole it has failed. Conditions sometimes arise where it seems that an appeal to arms is inevitable, but such conflicts decide very little. In the end it is necessary to make an appeal to reason, and until adjustments are reached by covenants which harmonize with the prevailing sense of [a] just [settlement, then a] final solution has not been found.\(^2\)

Coolidge’s support of the United States crafting agreements designed to find peaceful solutions to international disputes led him to endorse the strategy of utilizing the Pan American movement to spread legal-internationalist principles to the Western Hemisphere. He felt this was possible because the nations of the hemisphere had common interests that the United States could exploit to create such agreements. With this perspective, Coolidge advocated direct U.S. negotiations with Latin American nations, active participation in the Pan American Union, and utilization of various Pan American conferences to persuade the nations of the region to accept U.S. peace proposals.\(^3\)

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While Coolidge approved of the effort to reshape the Western Hemisphere’s international system, he relied on his secretaries of state to design the specific policies to achieve this undertaking. This leadership style permitted Hughes to continue utilizing his soft paternalistic strategy to convince Latin Americans to adopt the principles of the envisioned *pax-Americana* system during the first year and a half of Coolidge’s presidency. Hughes, however, wished to return to private life and resigned as secretary of state effective on March 4, 1925. Hughes was succeeded by Frank B. Kellogg, a former senator and the U.S. ambassador to Great Britain at the time of his appointment. Hughes had recommended Kellogg to succeed him because Kellogg was aware of the workings of the department, but more importantly because of his steadfast support of legal principles as the basis of a reformed international system. 

Kellogg shared with Hughes a common background and view of how the United States should proceed with its foreign policy. His experience as a prominent lawyer led him to champion the adoption of legal-internationalist principles across the global system. As Kellogg stated, “I am a great believer in the extension of arbitration, and the judicial settlement of disputes between nations.” With this mindset, he was encouraged when the United States took a leadership role in advocating legal principles designed to diminish the likelihood of war. Consequently, Kellogg continued to seek to create an alternative to the League of Nations in the Western Hemisphere by utilizing the Pan American movement. He was optimistic that the movement, by codifying American international law and arbitrating regional differences, would eventually demonstrate the

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ability to settle all intense intra-American quarrels peacefully. Kellogg believed that once humanity recognized the hemisphere’s success the world would emulate these agreements. As Kellogg proclaimed, “With each year the high mission entrusted to the American Republics becomes more and more evident. In a world which has so recently been rent asunder by strife, America is called upon to give an example of unity which will set a new standard in international affairs.”

Kellogg believed that a crucial element to firmly establishing pax-Americana principles into the Western Hemisphere was to block the League of Nations from expanding its influence in the region. A reservationist during the League fight, by the time that he became secretary of state, Kellogg had ceased advocating for U.S. membership due to Europe’s dominance of the organization. Kellogg felt that with membership in the League, the United States would have been tied to European nationalistic principles, the result of which would have been the loss of U.S. freedom of action to spread its vision of peace. The concern of the Europeans using the League as a way to promote their nationalistic goals led Kellogg to continue blocking the organization’s activity in Latin America. It was evident to many Americans that the League of Nations was attempting to impede U.S. efforts to create an alternative peace system in order to expand Europe’s involvement in the region. Leo S. Rowe, the director of the Pan American Union, warned Kellogg that the League was preying on Latin Americans who were anti-American in order to drive the region to the organization. It

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was believed that when the League offered to protect Latin Americans from the United States, it was threatening U.S. leadership in the region. Rowe held that this effort was evident, stating, “During the last two years there is increasing evidence of a concerted attempt on the part of the League of Nations to draw the Latin American countries closer to the League and if possible to isolate the United States. The purpose of the League to cut into the Pan American movement is indicated by the fact that whenever a movement is made to bring about Pan American cooperation on [a] specific topic the League immediately enters the same field.”

In order to counter the League’s efforts, Kellogg attempted to convince Latin Americans of the superiority of the U.S. peace vision. His efforts included not only direct diplomacy with Latin American leaders but also appeals to influential members of their society to support U.S. goals. One group that Kellogg targeted were Latin American journalists, who had the power to influence a great number of people through their reporting. Realizing this fact, Kellogg made a concerted effort to convince them that the Pan American movement offered the best opportunity to establish an effective peace system and called on them to play up the movement to their readers. In his remarks to the First Pan American Congress of Journalists, Kellogg stated,

> During recent years the progress toward the settlement of Inter-American disputes, inherited from the colonial period, has been so rapid that we may well look forward,-and in not a distant future,-to a situation unparalleled in the history of the world, a situation in which every major dispute has been settled by the

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orderly processes of mediation and arbitration. Although this marks a great step forward in international relations it does not by any means completely fulfill America’s mission. The settlement of these disputes means the elimination of causes of international irritation but in addition thereto we must build up the positive process of international cooperation. In this constructive work we must look to you, gentlemen of the press of the Americas, to instruct the public opinion of your respective countries in order that there may be a constant and increasingly insistent demand for larger and wider cooperation between the Republics of the American Continent in the solution of their common problems.7

In order to gain Latin American support for the administration’s efforts to further establish the pax-Americana vision, he attempted to convince regional nations that they were on an equal footing with the United States in such a system. With his legal background, Kellogg believed that the only way for a legal system to be effective was if it was based on both the principles of the rule of law and equality under the law. While these principles were seen as essential for the establishment of a legal-internationalist system, he also hoped to convince Latin Americans to accept these ideas. He believed that if Latin Americans felt that they were not just subject to U.S. dictates, the chances of gaining their support would increase. As Kellogg stated at the opening of the Third Pan American Commercial Conference, “We [the United States] are seeking no special privileges and we desire nothing that we are not willing reciprocally to grant to our sister republics. We are anxious that this hemisphere shall give to the world an example of orderly progress, of mutual respect for rights, and that there shall also be a mutual

fulfillment of obligations. It is only on such a basis that real and permanent progress can be assured."\(^8\)

The Coolidge administration’s foreign policy team agreed on the principle that the United States should continue to endeavor to establish the principles of the \textit{pax-Americana} system. With this view, Hughes’s policy of gaining Latin American support through employing a soft paternalistic strategy continued during the administration’s time in office. Eventually, however, the fear of radicalism and European intervention led the administration to make exceptions to this policy. The administration’s decision to launch new interventions into Latin America would spark immediate outrage throughout the region, thus hindering U.S. efforts to effectively establish its peace vision in the Western Hemisphere.

\textbf{Isle of Pines}

Before Hughes resigned as secretary of state, he continued to utilize soft paternalistic tactics to nudge Latin America toward the United States, which included an effort to improve U.S. relations with the region by attempting to resolve long-standing disputes such as the Isle of Pines controversy. The small island off the southern coast of Cuba was a point of contention between the United States and Cuba. The dispute over ownership of the island began with the signing of the Treaty of Paris of 1898, which officially ended the Spanish-American War. With the Teller Amendment forbidding the

\(^8\) Frank B. Kellogg, “Welcome on Behalf of the Governing Board of the Pan American Union by the Chairman man of the Board,” 2 May 1927, vol. 25, Kellogg MSS, 435-36; Louria, Triumph and Downfall, 93.
United States from taking direct possession of Cuba, many U.S. imperialists began to argue that the Isle of Pines was not a part of Cuba and that under the terms of the Treaty of Paris it therefore became U.S. territory. They cited Article II of the treaty, which stated, “Spain cedes to the United States the island of Porto Rico and other islands now under Spanish sovereignty in the West Indies, and the island of Guam in the Marianas or Ladrones,” to buttress their position, arguing that the Isle of Pines was one of the “other islands” referred to in the treaty. In their minds the United States was thus free to annex the island without violating the Teller Amendment.9

Americans not only made legal claims on the Isle of Pines but almost immediately after the conclusion of the Spanish-American War began to move to the island. With the promise of U.S. control, many Americans sought to exploit its mineral deposits, fertile land, and possibility of American tourism. With the potential of financial success, Americans began to settle and establish American communities throughout the island. These settlers had little doubt that the United States would eventually take full possession of the island and recognize their possessions. They became even more assured of U.S. ownership of the island when rumors spread that a U.S. naval base would be constructed on the island to protect the sea lanes of a future isthmian canal, a view supported by Article VI of the Platt Amendment. This article stated, “That the Isle of Pines shall be omitted from the proposed constitutional boundaries of Cuba, the title thereto being left to future adjustment by treaty.” This article was included in the Platt Amendment in case

the island could be used as a naval base, but the U.S. government did not pursue taking full possession of the island after it concluded that it was not a practical location for such an outpost.\textsuperscript{10}

Many U.S. imperialists were convinced that the Roosevelt administration would formally annex the island, but this would not be the case. In 1904, the administration concluded a treaty with Cuba that gave up all U.S. claims to the Isle of Pines. In return, Cuba pledged to respect the property rights of the Americans citizens who moved to the island and put them on an equal footing with all other foreigners living in Cuba. While the administration concluded this treaty, the U.S. Senate refused to ratify the agreement. When the treaty was still being debated, the U.S. Supreme Court issued a ruling on the matter. In 1907, the case \textit{Pearcy v. Stranahan}, which focused on the issue of tariff duties on cigars arriving in the United States from the Isle of Pines, had made its way to the Supreme Court. In its ruling, the Supreme Court concluded that the Treaty of Paris did not grant the United States possession of the island and declared Cuba its rightful owner. As the court ruled, “all the world knew that it was an integral part of Cuba, and in view of the language of the joint resolution of April 20, 1898, it seems clear that the Isle of Pines was not supposed to be one of the ‘other islands’ ceded by Article II.”\textsuperscript{11}


While two of the three branches of the U.S. government agreed that the Isle of Pines was a Cuban possession, the issue remained in doubt when Hughes became the secretary of state in 1921. The increase in American population on the island from 300 in 1903 to 10,000 in 1923 brought the issue to a head by that time. This contingent of U.S. citizens had continually pressured the Senate to oppose the 1904 treaty—negotiated but never ratified—that renounced U.S. claims to the island. Their lobby efforts had successfully prevented the U.S. Senate from reaching the required two-thirds majority needed to ratify the agreement. Hughes, however, attempted to get reluctant senators to relent on the issue throughout his time as secretary of state.12

Once in office, Hughes realized that the unresolved issue remained a serious point of contention between the United States and Cuba that might result in the Caribbean nation’s closer tilt toward the League of Nations. Cuba was extremely active in the League from the organization’s founding throughout the 1920s. It was the only nation in the Caribbean region to send a full delegation to the League’s assembly throughout the decade; it had one of its citizens appointed as a jurist in the World Court; it regularly sent delegates to the organization’s technical conferences; and it cooperated with the ratification of League conventions. Cubans were hoping that their active participation in the League of Nations would convince the world that they were indeed capable of independence, and thus gain international support for their complete self-determination. Given Cuba’s active interest in the League, Hughes was concerned that the dispute

concerning the Isle of Pines might be a catalyst for it to increase such efforts in the organization.\(^{13}\)

Hughes hoped to halt Cuba’s move toward the League of Nations, and in the process improve U.S.-Latin American relations, by getting the Senate to ratify the 1904 treaty. He realized that this would be a difficult task, because the Senate had not publicly debated the treaty since 1908. Hughes tried to convince that body that finally ratifying the treaty was imperative in order to improve relations with Cuba. He argued that the United States had never gained possession of the island and that it had always been considered part of Cuba. “The present undetermined status of the Isle of Pines,” he stated “constitutes one of the few remaining questions capable of prejudicing the intimate relations between the United States and Cuba.” The Harding administration was able to persuade Senator Henry Cabot Lodge to revive the treaty in 1922, but opposition in the Senate remained.\(^{14}\)

The administration’s efforts to secure ratification of the Cuban Treaty of 1904 faced serious opposition from the American settlers on the island, which Hughes countered by advocating the principle of the rule of law. After Lodge revived the treaty, American settlers flooded the Senate with letters and petitions demanding that the treaty be defeated. To overcome their lobbying efforts, Hughes argued that Cuba’s ownership of the island was beyond question based on the U.S. Supreme Court’s ruling on the


matter. Hughes contended that Cuba would not relent on the issue because according to the United States’ supreme legal body, the island was its possession. He stated that, Cuba “considers herself entitled to the Island and looks to the United States to perform an act of justice. The failure of the Treaty, then, would simply leave the status of the Island unsettled; it would still remain under Cuban administration; and we should have stirred up ill-feeling. While we cannot obtain the Island for ourselves by refusing to ratify the Treaty, we can by its ratification put an end to an unpleasant question and strengthen the bonds of friendship between the two peoples.” Hughes thus contended that the United States would be able to remove an obstacle to improved relations with its southern neighbor by demonstrating its steadfast defense of the principle of justice.15

When he became president, Coolidge also advocated for the Senate to ratify the Isle of Pines Treaty, believing that such a move was in America’s best interest. He argued that since Cuba would never relinquish its claim, and the United States would not fight for the island, there was no point in dragging out the issue. With this stance, Coolidge believed that Americans living on the island would gain nothing if the Senate failed to ratify the agreement, because they would remain under Cuba’s governance. Even more important for Coolidge than the practical reasons for the Senate to ratify the treaty was the opportunity it offered to improve U.S.-Latin American relations. As he stated, “It is a small island. I don’t know of any purpose that the United States would serve by undertaking to hold it, and of course it would be interpreted all through Latin-America as an attempt on the part of our country to seize some territory that belonged to

somebody else. That is my main object in wishing that this treaty should be ratified—to
avoid any suggestion of that kind. We are now on excellent terms with Latin-American
countries. I don’t want to give them any cause for apprehension.”

As a result of the Coolidge administration’s lobbying the Senate ratified the Isle
of Pines Treaty on March 13, 1925, in what was seen as another victory for Hughes’s soft
paternalistic policy. The U.S. Senate voted 63 to 14 for ratification, just after Hughes had
resigned as secretary of state. The administration’s purpose in advocating for ratification
of the treaty was to improve U.S.-Latin America relations, show the goodwill of the
United States, and demonstrate that the United States was interested in protecting the
rights of the smaller nations. As Coolidge stated, the ratification of the treaty
“demonstrates pretty conclusively that our country wants to do the right thing by other
countries and that it has no disposition to grab anything because it has the power to do it
but rather shows the disposition to deal equitably, fairly, justly, honorably and generously
with the rights of the small countries, and especially to deal fairly with Cuba, in which we
are interested and over which we attempt to exercise a beneficent influence.” While
improving relations with Latin American countries was an essential part of the
administration’s foreign policy, it also attempted to demonstrate the effectiveness of the
peace agreements that were concluded during the Harding administration.

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17 Frank Kellogg to Crowder, Telegram, 13 March 1925, vol. 2, FRUS 1925, 11; “Memorandum of the
President’s Press Conference,” 13 March 1925, vol. 2, Press Conferences of the Secretaries of State;
“Memorandum of the Press Conference, Saturday Morning,” 14 March 1925, vol. 2, Press Conferences of
the Secretaries of State; Janet Delavan Frost, “Cuban-American Relations Concerning the Isle of Pines,”
348-50; Grieb, Latin American Policy of Warren G. Harding, 122.
Honduras

The United States felt it had succeeded in nudging Latin Americans toward its vision of peace when the Central American agreements were signed in 1923, but these accords were quickly tested by a crisis in Honduras. The crisis was a result of the unclear result of the Honduran presidential election of 1923 in which none of the three major candidates won the election outright. The situation quickly deteriorated after the election, and fighting soon erupted throughout the country. While the United States briefly introduced troops into Honduras, the administration’s primary response to the escalating crisis was to utilize the terms of the Central American treaties to find a peaceful settlement. In the process, it hoped to demonstrate to the people of the hemisphere and the world that the agreements that began to establish the pax-Americana system were indeed capable of restoring peace and order.\textsuperscript{18}

When examining the conditions of Honduras in 1923, Americans believed that the situation was ominous due to the nation’s impending presidential election. The concern stemmed from the terms of the Honduran Constitution, which stipulated that if no candidate won a majority of the ballots cast in the general election, the final selection of the president would be made by its Congress. With three legitimate candidates, Tiburico Carias, Policarpo Bonilla, and Juan Angel Arias, this scenario seemed likely due to the vote being split between them. The State Department felt that if the election went to the

Congress for final settlement, a deadlock would ensure in the body that would eventually lead to a civil war. The administration attempted to lessen the chances of this scenario playing out by instructing Franklin Morales, the inexperienced U.S. minister in Honduras, to hold talks among the candidates. Morales was instructed not to dictate a compromise, but instead to convince the candidates to reach an agreement that would lessen the likelihood of civil war. Hughes’s message to Morales stated, “The interest of this Government is simply in bringing about an agreement satisfactory to all parties and calculated to assist in the maintenance of peace, and is willing to use its good offices and to have you very discreetly use yours, without making any commitment of any nature, to assist in bringing about an agreement among all parties and all candidates for the presidency.” These talks failed to reach an agreement, and the administration was left to hope that the election would result in a smooth transition of power.¹⁹

As the administration feared, the Honduran election was inconclusive, resulting in an immediate political crisis. The final vote tally was: 46,800 for Carias, 33,000 for Bonilla, and 18,000 for Arias. With no candidate winning a majority of the ballots cast, the issue was to be decided by the Honduran Congress. Carias immediately disputed the result, enraged that his supporters had been attacked at various polling places during the election. He felt that these attacks had prevented him from winning the election outright, and thus he argued that he should be immediately declared president. Carias’s opponents disagreed, insisting that Congress decide the issue as the terms of the nation’s

constitution stated. To prevent the election from being stolen from Carias, his supporters refused to attend congressional meetings, which resulted in the body not obtaining a quorum. Rumors then emerged in December 1923 that Carias was about to take up arms in order to assume the presidency. As a result, outgoing President Rafael Lopez Gutierrez declared martial law and had more than 200 of Carias’s most loyal supporters arrested, which sparked the outbreak of fighting between the various Honduran factions.²⁰

The Coolidge administration’s response to the eruption of fighting in Honduras was to invoke the terms of the recently signed Central American treaties of 1923 and to help protect civilians and foreigners who had been caught up in the fighting. By the beginning of 1924, the situation was becoming more volatile, with Honduras’s neighbors seemingly preparing to involve themselves in the crisis. At this time, Nicaragua seemed to be readying to enter the fighting on the side of Carias, while Guatemala and El Salvador were threatening to aid his opponents. To complicate the matter further, an Indian uprising erupted along the Honduran-Guatemalan border. At this point, the administration felt the best option to end the fighting was for Honduras to hold new elections. When its suggestion was rebuffed, Coolidge invoked the non-recognition clauses of the General Treaty of Peace and Amity of 1923 and withdrew U.S. diplomatic recognition of Honduras on February 9, 1924.²¹ In addition, the administration ordered

naval vessels to the Honduran coast but held off on authorizing landing forces except in an extreme emergency. Eventually the Honduran factions permitted a limited number of U.S. troops to establish neutral zones to protect civilians and foreigners caught up in the fighting. In addition, a small U.S. guard was sent to protect the U.S. minister and foreigners in the Honduran capital of Tegucigalpa. The administration, however, specifically ordered these forces not to interfere in the political situation.  

While there was a limited U.S. intervention in Honduras in 1924, the administration sought to settle the crisis by applying the terms of the Central American treaties. Hughes appointed Sumner Welles as the U.S. special representative to Honduras and gave him the task to oversee the process in which Hondurans would agree to return to constitutional governance. The approach the administration decided upon was to call a conference to get the Central American nations to work in unison with the United States in achieving this objective. While there was some initial doubt about inviting other Central Americans to participate in such a conference, Welles argued that, “Such a conference in addition to being in harmony with the purposes of the Central American Conference, would be a practical demonstration of the intention of the President of the United States and the Central American States to ensure the maintenance of peace and the safeguarding of orderly government by constitutional methods in Central America.”

21 While not an official signatory of the agreements reached at the Central American Conference of 1923, the United States had pledge itself to abide by the terms of the agreements.  

Welles’s arguments overcame any doubts in the State Department, and the administration arranged a conference among representatives of the various Honduran factions, the United States, Guatemala, Nicaragua, and El Salvador. These nations uniformly declared that under terms of the General Treaty of Peace and Amity of 1923 they would not recognize any Honduran government that obtained power through unconstitutional methods. The conference took place aboard the U.S.S. *Milwaukee* and produced an agreement that seemingly offered to restore order in Honduras.²³

When the conference held on the U.S.S. *Milwaukee* produced the Pact of Amapala, the United States believed it had validated the ideals of the *pax-Americana* system. Through application of the principles of the Central American Conference, a promising plan to restore order in Honduras was produced. This agreement called for General Vicente Tosta to be named the provisional president while Honduras organized a new election. Tosta was not to be candidate for president, and he was to ensure that the election was a fair and free contest. After the election was held, and the legitimate government seated, the new president would assume leadership of the country. With an agreement reached, the administration believed that the crisis was over and removed its guard from Tegucigalpa. By getting the Central American nations to work in unison to declare that no Honduran government would be recognized until it went through the

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²³ Sumner Welles to Charles Evans Hughes, 11 April 1924, FRUS, 1924, vol. II, 1924, 305; Charles Evans Hughes to Sumner Welles, 8 April 1924, FRUS, 1924, vol. II, 1924, 300; Charles Evans Hughes to Sumner Welles, 10 April 1924, FRUS, 1924, vol. II, 1924, 303; Charles Evans Hughes to Sumner Welles, 26 April 1924, FRUS, 1924, vol. II, 1924, 312-13; Munro, *The United States and the Caribbean Republics*, 133-34.
constitutional process, the United States was seemingly able to sway Hondurans to return to constitutional governance.\textsuperscript{24}

The sense that the crisis had been settled by the Pact of Amapala was shattered when renewed fighting erupted in Honduras in 1924. The problem arose when Carias declared himself to be a candidate for the presidency. The administration deemed his candidacy unacceptable for two reasons. First, he was completely opposed by the liberals in Honduras, and thus his election would likely spark a revolt. In addition, the administration contended that since he had attempted to gain power through revolutionary activity, he was ineligible to be recognized as president under the terms of the General Treaty of Peace and Amity of 1923. In order to defuse the situation, the administration sent Stokeley Morgan to Honduras but his efforts were not able to prevent a second wave of violence from breaking out in August 1924. With renewed fighting, the commander of the U.S. naval force decided to land a small contingent of men at La Ceibe for a short time. The administration did not approve of this action and sent orders not to land additional troops without the president’s approval, except to save Americans in imminent danger.\textsuperscript{25}

The revolt was quickly put down by Honduran forces, and the administration attempted to quell the source of the trouble by again turning to the Central American treaties to convince Hondurans to reject Carias. The administration convinced the other Central American nations to issue a statement with the United States proclaiming that if

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\item[25] Munro, \textit{The United States and the Caribbean Republics}, 135-40.
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Carias was elected his government would not be recognized. This unified response led Carias’s party to reject his candidacy and instead nominate Miguel Paz Barahona for president. The Coolidge administration announced that Barahona was eligible to be president under the terms of the treaty, and he was subsequently elected in January 1925. Upon his election, the administration issued a public statement that said, “The Government of the United States is gratified that it has been possible to reach a solution of the problem of establishing in Honduras a constitutional government with which the Government of the United States and those of the other Central American republics can maintain cordial relations without inconsistency with the provisions of the General Treaty of Peace and Amity signed at the Washington conference of 1923.”26

The administration succeeded in finding a satisfactory solution to the political chaos in Honduras by applying the terms of the Central American treaties of 1923. The administration utilized the agreements to get the Central American nations to work in unison with the United States to convince Honduras to return to constitutional governance. While a satisfactory settlement was reached, this crisis foreshadowed the next major Central American predicament. When fighting erupted in Nicaragua, the United States attempted to settle the issue through the use of a conference, and again U.S. troops were utilized. In the case of Honduras, there was little negative reaction to the deployment of the limited number of U.S. troops, but in Nicaragua that would not be the case. The United States still had not renounced its “right” to intervene into the region,

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26 Charles Evans Hughes to Lawrence Dennis, 22 January 1925, FRUS, vol. II, 1925, 316; Lawrence Dennis Dennis to Charles Evans Hughes, 21 January 1925, FRUS, vol. II, 1925, 317; Munro, The United States and the Caribbean Republics, 140-41.
which would become a major point of contention between Latin America and the United States. It would be the United States exercising this “right” that prevented the country from gaining the goodwill of many Latin Americans when the United States helped to settle long-standing disputes in the region, such as the debate concerning ownership of the provinces of Tacna and Arica.

**Tacna-Arica**

Soon after the conclusion of the Honduran crisis, the Coolidge administration undertook to settle the long-standing Tacna-Arica dispute. The Harding administration had agreed to arbitrate the dispute in 1923, and Calvin Coolidge announced the U.S. decision in March 1925. Hughes was the primary author of this ruling that applied a legal interpretation to the unfulfilled provisions of the Treaty of Ancon. While the ruling was written by Hughes, it fell upon Kellogg to implement it, something he quickly realized would not be easy. Instead, the issue would be a constant source of trouble for Kellogg, who felt it must be settled peacefully in order to demonstrate that the policies of the *pax-Americana* system had the ability to solve international problems. With this concern, Kellogg sought a peaceful solution to the issue by basing the actions he took upon legal principles.

The 1925 ruling on the Tacna-Arica dispute rested on the legal principle that binding agreements between nations must be respected. In this ruling, Hughes concluded that a plebiscite should be held to settle the ownership of the two provinces as stipulated
in the Treaty of Ancon. Hughes argued that the fact that the vote was supposed to be held in 1893 was immaterial to the issue at hand. He contended that Article III of the Treaty of Ancon did not “provide for the termination of their obligations by lapse of time. The Article contains no provision for forfeiture. It fixed no period within which the plebiscite must be taken. The plebiscite was to be had ‘after the expiration of that term,’ that is, after the ten years but no limit was defined.” With the agreement stating that a plebiscite should be held after ten years, it was incumbent on these nations to conduct the vote as they had bound themselves to do in 1883. Hughes, however, wanted to assure both nations that the election was fair to prevent the loser from protesting the result. To avoid this outcome, the ruling called for a plebiscite commission that would include a representative from Chile, Peru, and the United States to oversee the vote.27

When beginning to implement Hughes’s ruling, Kellogg first had to decide who he would appoint to be the U.S. representative on the plebiscite commission. The ruling created the commission in a manner that seemingly prevented the United States from dictating the terms of the plebiscite, because Chile and Peru could outvote the U.S. representative at all times. This fact ostensibly allowed those nations as much freedom as they wished to solve the problems that arose. The administration, however, knew that frequent disagreements would arise as a result of the decades of hard feelings that had

built up between these countries. This reality would make the U.S. representative a crucial member of the commission through his advocacy for just compromises or casting the deciding vote, which would be needed to settle the issues that were likely to arise. The administration thus believed that because this delegate would serve a crucial role in demonstrating the soundness of the U.S. peace system it had to be someone who was highly respected. The Coolidge administration believed that it found such a man when it persuaded General John J. Pershing, who had commanded the American Expeditionary Force in World War I, to accept the position.²⁸

When Pershing arrived in Arica in 1925, he quickly concluded that the plebiscite was doomed to failure. Almost immediately he became dismayed that Chile was taking actions in the provinces seemingly to either prevent the plebiscite from being held or to ensure its victory in the contest. It was clear to Pershing that the Chilean police force, which was charged with keeping order in these provinces, was either participating with or allowing Chilean supporters to intimidate, attack, and deport Peruvians in order to prevent their participation in the plebiscite. As Pershing reported to Kellogg, “investigations prove many times over the conclusions that were contained in my last letter as to the intimidation, oppression and deportation of Peruvians by the Chileans, both past and present, and the consequent difficulties of conducting a fair plebiscite.”²⁹

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²⁸ Frank Kellogg to Charles Evans Hughes, 24 March 1925, Vol. 16, Kellogg MSS, 122; Frank Kellogg to Henry Fletcher, Letter, 4 February 1925, Box 12, Folio 3, Fletcher MSS; Charles Evans Hughes to Henry Fletcher, Letter, 2 March 1925, Box 12, Folio 4, Fletcher MSS.

²⁹ John J. Pershing to Frank Kellogg, Telegram, 3 September 1925, Box 336, Pershing MSS; Von Tresckow to Frank Kellogg, Telegram, 18 January 1926, Box 336, Von Tresckow to Frank Kellogg, Telegram, 13 January 1926, Box 336, Pershing MSS; Pershing MSS; Von Tresckow to Frank B. Kellogg, 11 December 1925, Box 336, Pershing MSS.
With these Chilean transgressions, Pershing began to press Kellogg to send U.S. troops to maintain order in Tacna and Arica. Pershing believed that the deployment of U.S. troops in the provinces was the only way to ensure that eligible Peruvians would be allowed to register to vote and to prevent attacks on them on the day the plebiscite was held. Kellogg quickly rejected his request, arguing that the United States had no legal authority to police the polling stations as Pershing had suggested. Instead, the secretary attempted to assure Pershing that if Chile did not honor its international obligation to police the region justly, then it would not be able to claim that the plebiscite had been a fair election. As a result, Chile would be confronted by international condemnation, and thus its victory in the plebiscite would not be recognized by the world.\(^\text{30}\)

Pershing reached a breaking point in January 1926, and out of frustration with the situation he resigned from the commission. On January 6, 1926, four members of Pershing’s staff witnessed Chileans attacking a group of Peruvians who had just returned to Tacna to participate in the plebiscite. Pershing reported to Kellogg that, “the Chilean officers of the law stood by without affording them protection or making any serious effort to do so. The mob had no provocation; and its very presence is sufficient evidence that there was ample notice of the coming of the Peruvians.” This incident led Pershing to request that the administration send Chile an ultimatum, demanding the cessation of violence or cancellation of the plebiscite. Again Kellogg rejected Pershing’s request,

\(^{30}\) John J. Pershing to Frank Kellogg, nd, Box 336 Pershing MSS; Frank Kellogg to John J. Pershing, Telegram, 21 January 1926, Box 336, Pershing MSS; Von Tresckow to Frank Kellogg, Telegram, 12 January 1926, Box 336, Pershing MSS; Von Tresckow to Frank Kellogg, 27 October 1925, Box 336, Pershing MSS; E.A. Kreger, “Report Submitted to the Plebiscitary Commission by the Investigating Committee, under date of December 16, 1925, Covering Hearings Conducted from October 23 to November 19, 1925, Box 339, Folio 3, Pershing MSS.
stating, “deplorable as the incident is it cannot in my judgment properly be made the base for the delivery at this stage of anything in the nature of an ultimatum to the effect that the plebiscite must be abandoned unless certain measures as indicated in your message are taken by Chile.” Instead, Kellogg requested that Pershing personally discuss the matter with the Chilean representative and implore him that according to the arbitral award Chile was obligated to ensure the conditions necessary for a fair and free plebiscite. Dejected at the situation, Pershing resigned from the plebiscite commission in January, officially citing health issues for his return to the United States.\footnote{Von Tresckow to Frank Kellogg, Telegram, 12 January 1926, Box 336, Pershing MSS; Frank Kellogg to John J. Pershing, Telegram, 11 January 1926, Box 336, Pershing MSS.}

Kellogg was hesitant to take any action that might endanger the plebiscite in order to prevent outside influences from disparaging the U.S. peace initiatives. The secretary believed that by the end of 1925 there was a concerted effort being undertaken by outside interests to undermine the plebiscite in order to advance other countries’ nationalistic goals. For example, when a British citizen named Harry S. Thomas alleged that he was attacked by a member of Pershing’s staff, the administration viewed the charge as an effort to derail the plebiscite. Kellogg believed that the accusation was made because Thomas resented U.S. leadership in Latin America and was attempting to discredit the plebiscite commission. He felt that such efforts were being made to prevent the United States from establishing an alternative peace system in the Western Hemisphere and feared that if the United States failed in its attempt to hold a fair plebiscite then some Latin Americans might conclude that the U.S. peace vision was not viable. As Kellogg wrote to Pershing, if the plebiscite was not held then it would be a, “fatal blow to our
prestige not only in South America but in [the] world. It will cause wide spreading of false charges already frequently published that we do not desire success of the plebiscite but seek to intervene and get a foot-hold or dominating influence in South America.”

With conditions deteriorating, the administration sought to salvage the situation as Kellogg appointed Major General William Lassiter as the new U.S. member of the plebiscite commission. He arrived in January 1926, and like Pershing, quickly concluded that the situation was hopeless and advised Kellogg to cancel the plebiscite. Given the disparaging reports, Kellogg turned to Hughes for advice. The two men concluded that they lacked the legal standing to introduce U.S. troops to keep order, because under the terms of the Treaty of Ancon the Chileans were to police the provinces until a plebiscite was held. With no legal option to improve the security in the area, Hughes and Kellogg concluded that the plebiscite had to be called off because of Chile’s actions.

By the spring of 1926, it was clear that the plebiscite could not be held, and the administration utilized legal methods to abandon the vote. In order to insulate the United States from criticism for the failure to hold the plebiscite, the administration attempted to

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32 Frank B. Kellogg to John J. Pershing, 8 December 1925, Box 336, Pershing MSS; Frank B. Kellogg to John J. Pershing, 7 December 1925, Box 336, Box 336, Pershing MSS; Joseph Grew to John J. Pershing, 28 December 1925, Box 336, Pershing MSS; John J. Pershing to Frank B. Kellogg, 29 December 1925, Box .336, Pershing MSS; Von Tresckow to Frank B. Kellogg, 10 December 1925, Box 336, Pershing MSS.

convince both nations to agree to suspend the plebiscite. As legalists had long argued, the only way to scrap a binding agreement between two parties was if they mutually agreed to alter the contract. With this perspective, Kellogg initiated diplomatic talks to persuade both Peru and Chile to agree to suspend the plebiscite and returned to direct negotiation to settle the dispute. In June 1926, with both Peru and the United States voting to end the plebiscite and Chile abstaining, the proposed plebiscite was terminated.  

While the United States had scrapped its 1925 ruling on the Tacna-Arica dispute, it continued to attempt to settle the issue peacefully. For the next two years, Kellogg made several different proposals to settle the dispute. First, he tried to get Peru and Chile to agree to split the territory, but Peru refused. A second proposal was to award the territory to Bolivia, giving that nation an outlet to the sea, which also failed due the Peru’s objection. A third unsuccessful proposal was to neutralize the territory by giving the two provinces limited independence, but granting rights to Chile, Peru, and Bolivia in the area. It was not until 1928 that a renewed possibility of settling the dispute occurred when Peru informed Kellogg that it was willing to accept his first proposal, which was to divide the territory between Chile and Peru. Although Peru had originally rejected the proposal, because Peruvians believed it was a matter of national pride to regain all of the lost territory they felt was stolen from them, national leaders began to realize that they

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had to obtain at least some of the disputed territory or risk losing the support of many of their citizens. Chile agreed to the proposal in 1928 because its leaders felt that they could not risk losing the whole territory in the north, which served as a buffer zone to the mineral rich province of Tarapaca. In the summer of 1929, the two nations signed and ratified the agreement, which awarded Tacna to Peru and Arica to Chile, finally ending this dangerous international dispute.³⁵

The Tacna-Arica arbitration ended up being a successful failure for the Coolidge administration. After many years of toil, the United States was able to help find a peaceful settlement to the controversy. While achieving its aim to find a peaceful solution, the United States had failed to hold a plebiscite as its 1925 ruling had stipulated, presenting an opening for anti-U.S. Latin Americans to attack the United States. The administration also failed to win much goodwill for its successful efforts that helped settle the dispute. This was the case because of the outrage that the U.S. intervention into Nicaragua had sparked throughout the region.³⁶

Nicaragua

The Coolidge administration’s efforts to find a peaceful solution of the Tacna-Arica dispute did not win much favor throughout Latin America because of the effect of


the U.S. intervention into Nicaragua. The first major policy decision of the Coolidge administration that dealt with Nicaragua was a decision to liquidate a U.S. intervention in that nation. When U.S. troops were withdrawn, political chaos erupted that seemed to threaten the spread of radical ideas and risk a European intervention in Nicaragua. These threats seemingly endangered the U.S. efforts to reshape the hemisphere’s international system. With this view, the administration felt it had no choice but to use its military to attempt to regain order, thus violating its soft paternalistic strategy.

When Coolidge became president, he inherited an ongoing U.S. intervention in Nicaragua. U.S. troops had been sent to Nicaragua beginning in 1912 not only to bring political order to the nation but also to protect U.S. interests within its borders. The United States had a long-standing interest in the nation due to its proximity to the Panama Canal and the possibility of the construction of another canal through its territory. By the 1920s, the Panama Canal had been constructed, but American planners still saw the importance of Nicaragua in the event a second canal needed to be constructed in the future. This sentiment had led to the Bryan-Chamorro Treaty of 1916, which gave the United States the exclusive right to build and operate a canal through Nicaraguan territory. As Henry Stimson stated, “Sooner or later, though not within the lives of this generation or possibly the next, a second canal will be constructed through the isthmus by that route [Nicaragua], and this canal when completed will necessarily command the same dominating strategic relation to the safety of the United States as the present one at

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37 Henry L. Stimson was a very influential man in the government of the United States during the first half of the twentieth century. Stimson served as the U.S. secretary of war from 1911-1913 under William Howard Taft, and again during the administration of Franklin Roosevelt from 1940-1945. He also would serve as the secretary of state during the Hoover administration.
Panama.” In the meantime, the nation was also deemed essential for the defense of the Panama Canal, due to its proximity to that vital waterway.\(^\text{38}\)

Despite the U.S. interests in Nicaragua, the Coolidge administration decided to liquidate its intervention in the Central American nation in 1924 as part of its efforts to improve U.S.-Latin American relations. The administration’s plan called for a full U.S. exit after the victors of the 1924 Nicaraguan election assumed their offices in January 1925. The administration selected this date so U.S. Marines would be able to oversee the election and thus ensure a fair and free contest. As Hughes stated, “It is believed that the withdrawal of the Marines can be effected with less danger of disorder in Nicaragua if the forthcoming elections are conducted in a manner which leaves no room for doubt that the successful candidate has the support of a real majority of the people. It is therefore desired that the Legation should exert every proper influence to bring about the holding of free and fair elections under the new electoral law.”\(^\text{39}\)

To ensure that the election was fair, the administration sought as much U.S. supervision as the Nicaraguans would allow. The administration twice offered to send Americans to organize and supervise the election, but the Nicaraguans declined in each instance. Instead of demanding that Nicaraguans accept direct supervision of the election, the administration decided to pursue a different route that would not offend the Nicaraguans but still ensure that the elections were fair. Hughes instructed Walter


Thruston, the U.S. chargé in Nicaragua, to “send a few reliable Marines to important centers outside of Managua at the time of the elections in order to help you obtain information about the manner in which the elections are carried on. The Department is most anxious that you should obtain the fullest information about the conduct of the elections and it leaves the manner of obtaining this information to your discretion.” The administration hoped that the presence of the Marines near the voting centers would eliminate any charges that the election had been manipulated. The intended result was to assure Nicaraguans of the fairness of the election while simultaneously promoting the principle of a peaceful transfer of power in Nicaragua and neighboring countries.40

Once the election was held, the administration began to implement its plan to withdraw from Nicaragua in order demonstrate that it was honestly moving away from its past interventionist policies, but the new government was not in such a hurry. After his election as president of Nicaragua, Carlos Solorzano requested that the United States delay the withdrawal of its troops until he had time to recruit and train a National Guard to keep the peace after U.S. forces departed. The administration’s initial reaction was to adamantly declare that the U.S. withdrawal would occur as scheduled. The Coolidge administration repeatedly informed Solorzano that with the election of a constitutional government the United States had no further cause to remain in Nicaragua. Eventually, the administration relented and agreed to keep U.S. forces in Nicaragua after it received repeated warnings from American representatives of impending revolution if the Marines left Nicaragua. With these warnings, the Coolidge administration delayed removing its

troops until September 1925 in order to give Nicaragua more time to train a National
Guard.\textsuperscript{41}

While many U.S. leaders believed that the removal of its troops would aid efforts
to win Latin American favor by liquidating another intervention, the situation took a
dramatic turn when the Nicaraguan government was rocked by crisis. This disturbance
began in October 1925, when General Emiliano Chamorro staged a coup that ousted the
newly elected government. The administration initially responded to the eruption of
violence by declaring that it would not intervene to restore constitutional governance, and
instead declared “that Nicaragua’s political problems must be solved by the Nicaraguan
people themselves.” Instead of intervening in 1925, the Coolidge administration
implemented the terms of the General Treaty of Peace and Amity of 1923 and refused to
recognize the Chamorro government. The administration also was successful in
convincing the other Central American nations to withdraw their recognition of
Nicaragua’s government. Instead of intervening, the administration sought to implement
the ideals of the \textit{pax-Americana} system to isolate the Chamorro government. This
unified action would, in theory, result in Chamorro’s ouster, which would allow
Nicaraguans to create a new government through constitutional means.\textsuperscript{42}


\textsuperscript{42} Frank Kellogg to Charles Eberhardt, 9 December 1925, FRUS, 1925, vol. 2, 642; Joseph Grew to Charles
Eberhardt, 14 December 1925, FRUS, 1925, 643; Frank B. Kellogg to American Missions in Costa Rica,
Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador, 7 January 1926, FRUS, 1926, vol. 2, 781; Engert to Frank B.
Kellogg, 8 January 1926, FRUS, 1926, vol. 2, 781; Summerlin to Frank B. Kellogg, 10 January 1926,
FRUS, 1926, v. 2, 782; Whitney T. Perkins, \textit{Constraint of Empire: The United States and Caribbean
By 1926, the Coolidge administration was forced to reevaluate its position when fighting erupted in Nicaragua. After Chamorro’s coup the liberals in Nicaragua threatened to revolt, and fighting broke out in May 1926. This first uprising was quickly put down after Chamorro launched a quick counter offensive, but the peace only held until a second uprising commenced in August 1926. This revolt was much more successful, as the liberals were able to gather weapons, primarily from Mexico. While the rebels were winning assistance, the lack of diplomatic recognition was preventing Chamorro from receiving foreign support for his forces. The most devastating development for Chamorro was that the Department of State began advising U.S. banks not to conclude loans with his regime, which the United States did not recognize. When they followed its recommendation, Chamorro could not adequately fund his military in the fight against the liberals. With the situation deteriorating in Nicaragua, as in Honduras, the United States landed a few Marines when violence erupted to create neutrality zones for the protection of foreigners and civilians. These forces, however, were not to involve themselves in the political situation in any way. While there was a limited U.S. intervention, the administration’s primary effort was to use Chamorro’s tenuous position to convince him to step down as president and to return Nicaragua to constitutional governance.43

When the second uprising erupted in Nicaragua, Kellogg attempted to settle the matter by holding a conference aboard a U.S. warship between the liberal and

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conservative factions of Nicaragua. With his position weakening, Chamorro relented and agreed to resign as president if the proposed conference was able to reach a reasonable plan for the transfer of power. Kellogg jumped at Chamorro’s offer, and the State Department organized a conference that took place on the U.S.S. Denver. These talks included representatives of the various factions in Nicaragua, with the U.S. representative serving as a neutral participant. Kellogg instructed the U.S. representative, Lawrence Dennis, not to take any action that would make the United States responsible for any agreement reached. Instead, he was only to help the Nicaraguan factions to find an acceptable solution to the crisis. Although this conference failed to produce a formal agreement between the various factions, the conservatives agreed to a plan to transfer power from Chamorro. This arrangement called for Chamorro to step down and Sebastian Uriza to be named the provisional president. He would hold power until the Nicaraguan Congress of 1924 was restored. Once in session, that body would vote to designate Adolfo Díaz as president. Díaz would then restore all liberals to their governmental positions and organize new elections. When stating his opinion on the plan, Kellogg proclaimed, “It is not the desire of the Department to suggest or favor any candidate for Congress to designate. However, it is the feeling of the Department that should Adolfo Diaz be designated he would be a wise choice.”

While the conservative plan won the support of the United States, it failed to win the backing of the liberals in Nicaragua, who objected to the conservatives retaining the

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presidency and argued that former president Juan Sacasa, who had been deposed years earlier, should be reinstalled to office. The liberals refused to compromise because they knew that they had the support of Mexico and would thus be able to continue fighting for their cause. With neither side of the dispute willing to compromise, fighting erupted when Sacasa returned to Nicaragua from exile in late 1926 to press his right to resume the presidency. With this development, the United States had to decide how to react to a rebellion that was being aided by Mexico and that it believed was endeavoring to install a radical in the presidency.45

When renewed fighting erupted, the Coolidge administration altered its thinking on Nicaragua because of fears of Bolshevism. The fear of Bolshevism in Nicaragua began when the United States received information that Mexico was supporting the liberal faction in the civil war. The Coolidge administration felt that Mexico was a base for Bolshevik activities in Latin America that were threatening U.S. leadership in the region. The concern for the administration was that Sacasa harbored radical ideas, a belief that led Kellogg to declare, “Should Doctor Sacasa subsequently established a government in Nicaragua, the Department could not consider him other than a revolutionist.” Added to the fear of Bolshevism, the United States was concerned that the European powers would intervene in Nicaragua to protect their interest in that nation.46

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45 Perkins, Constraint of Empire, 112-14.

46 Frank Kellogg to Lawrence Dennis, 6 November 1926, FRUS, col. 2, 804; Henry Stimson to Francis White, Letter, 18 July 1927, Stimson MSS, Vol. 72, 15; Dennis to Frank B. Kellogg, 19 October 1926, FRUS, 1926, v. 2, 796-97; Statement Left by the Secretary of State Frank Kellogg with the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, 12 January 1927, FRUS, 1927, vol. 1, 356-57; Dennis to Frank B. Kellogg, 8 December 1926, FRUS, 1926, vol. 2, 80.
After Diaz was named president by the Nicaraguan Congress and the fighting was renewed, the administration was increasingly concerned about the threat of European intervention in Nicaragua. Initially, the United States saw an opportunity to demonstrate the unity of the Central American nations in their support of the General Treaty of Peace and Amity of 1923 by getting the United States and the signatories of the pact to recognize Diaz’s government simultaneously. Almost immediately after gaining the recognition, Diaz called upon the United States to intervene in Nicaragua in order to support his government against Mexico. The Coolidge administration responded to Diaz’s request by saying that his government would get the moral support of the United States but no troops. Diaz replied that without American troops he would be forced to use radical measures in order to fight the Nicaraguan revolutionaries, including the use of inflation and the suspension of payments on foreign debt in order to fight the rebels. This worried the Coolidge administration because a suspension of loan payments to European nations could result in them intervening in Nicaragua in order to force the servicing of their debt. In addition, the administration was also concerned that the fighting could destroy the property of European citizens, which might also lead to their intervention.

The United States quickly responded to European pleas for assistance in protecting their citizens and property in Nicaragua.47

The eruption of violence in Nicaragua, coupled with the specter of the spread of radicalism and European intervention, left the Coolidge administration no choice but to launch a new military intervention in Nicaragua. With these concerns, Kellogg sent a message to Nicaragua in January 1927 stating that Coolidge had ordered Marines to land in that nation for the purpose of protecting the lives and property of Americans and foreigners in Nicaragua, which the administration claimed was a legitimate action under international law. As the Coolidge was reported to have said in a press conference, “we are there to protect lives and property of American citizens, protect the interests of this Government in the Canal concession and the right to establish a naval base, and in addition to that we have received requests from two (three) foreign government to protect the lives and property of their citizens . . . However, that seems incidental. Our forces there strive to do whatever is necessary to protect our interests, and the interests of other countries are naturally protected by the same method. We are doing what we can to compose the situation and prevent injury to our interests before they accrue.” On January 6, 1927, 160 Marines were dispatched to Managua as a legation guard. The force was authorized to seize arms and ammunition from anyone the Nicaraguan president requested to be disarmed and to establish neutral zones throughout the east coast ports in order to prevent foreign supplies from reaching the rebels.48

While the Coolidge administration decided to intervene in Nicaragua, it continued efforts to work with both sides to stabilize the situation. In April 1927, the administration

sent Henry L. Stimson to Nicaragua to reestablish order by reaching an agreement between the factions to disarm and for the holding of a fair and free election in 1928. When Stimson arrived in Nicaragua, he quickly brought together the government and rebel leaders and attempted to get an agreement to reestablish peace. At a conference at Tipitapa on May 4, Stimson was able to work out an agreement to end the revolt against Diaz. The Tipitapa agreement allowed for the retention of Diaz as president for the remainder of his term and permitted the United States to supervise the Nicaraguan election in 1928. In addition, U.S. military forces would be given the power to disarm Nicaraguans in order to ensure that the election of 1928 would be held without incident. When the agreement reached, Stimson left Nicaragua, and the 1928 election was held with U.S. supervision. After the election the U.S. forces remained, with their official mission being to train a new Nicaraguan National Guard. But instead of training the National Guard, the U.S. troops found themselves involved in a guerilla war. With the goal of helping the Nicaraguan government quell this rebellion, U.S. troops would remain until the presidency of Herbert Hoover.49

Out of desperation, the Coolidge administration decided to invoke the “right” of the United States to intervene into Nicaragua based on the international right of protecting its citizens’ property and lives. Underlying this official reason, however, was the unstated goal of preventing threats to the envisioned pax-Americana system. Kellogg believed that radicals were attempting to block U.S. leadership in the region, including

49 Henry Stimson, “Memorandum of a Conference with the President, The Secretary of State, Colonel Olds and Mr. Stimson,” 7 April 1927, Stimson Diaries, vol. 1, 744-50; Henry Stimson to John Franklin Carter, Letter, 3 June 1927, Stimson Papers, Roll 71, 633-34; Henry Stimson to Calvin Coolidge, 20 August 1927, Stimson MSS, vol. 72, 281-83; Munro, The United States and the Caribbean Republics, 202-06, 221.
efforts to establish effective peace agreements there. In addition, the fighting threatened a European intervention into the area, which might lead to the spread of European ideals to Latin America. The intervention undertaken to protect the *pax-Americana* vision created a major obstacle for the administration, due to the uproar that erupted after the Marines were dispatched in 1927.

Latin American backlash against U.S.

When the Coolidge administration intervened in Nicaragua in 1927, protest quickly arose from around the world. The administration attempted to justify its actions in order to quell what it saw as a concerted effort by those trying to attack the United States in order to advance their own nationalistic agendas. As Kellogg remarked, “U.S. actions in crises that developed in Latin America such as in Tacna-Arica and Nicaragua, have done much to stir up resentment in South America and to encourage radicals to denounce the United States. I am doing everything I can to allay this feeling. I think the President has in mind to use his influence in every possible way to that end. The desire of the United States is to live in peace with every one of the countries of the Western Hemisphere and recognize their absolute sovereignty as equals and to be very careful about any action which would lead to resentment.” While Kellogg saw ulterior motives for the attacks on the United States, at first he could do little but take defensive action due to the widespread condemnation.50

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Global reaction was swift in condemning the U.S. intervention in Nicaragua. In Europe, organizations such as the Ibero-American Society, based in Madrid, attacked the U.S. action and gave support for Latin American nations to regain their “independence” from the United States. The International Students’ Association based in Paris called on students in Latin American nations to name delegates to a convention that was to criticize U.S. Latin American policy. Kellogg was informed that the protests emanating from France were due largely to French jealousy of the United States and were being fed by anti-American propaganda.51

Even more worrisome for the administration were the protests arising from Latin America, which directly challenged the United States. After the United States intervened in Nicaragua, many Latin American nations felt renewed apprehension of U.S. actions in the Western Hemisphere. While protests erupted throughout the region, the government of Costa Rica went further than any other Latin American nation and decided to revive its challenge to the Monroe Doctrine in the League of Nations. Costa Rica had first questioned the meaning of the Monroe Doctrine in the League’s Covenant in 1919, when it requested that the organization define Article XXI. The League had rebuffed its pleas for a definition at that time, but in 1928 Costa Rica demanded that the League define how the organization interpreted the doctrine.52


52 Juan Franco Paredes to Robert Lansing, 14 December 1919, Box 6, Folio 12, White MSS; Legation of Salvador to Robert Lansing, 11 February 1920, Box 6, Folio 12, White MSS; Frank L. Polk to Don Salvador Sol, 26 February 1920, Box 6, Folio 12, White MSS.
The Costa Rican challenge to the Monroe Doctrine had its origins in that nation’s decision to withdraw from the League of Nations in the mid-1920s. After the first five sessions of the Assembly of the League of Nations, where the country was only represented by one representative, the small nation announced that it was leaving the League on December 24, 1924. The primary reason for its exit was the financial burden of membership. Costa Rica officially left the League of Nations on January 1, 1926, after it had waited the designated time to officially withdraw. The League, however, sent a communication to Costa Rica stating that it would be extremely gratified if the nation would decide to reenter the organization.\(^{53}\)

When Costa Rica replied to the League’s communication, it renewed a controversy that had plagued the organization since its founding. On July 18, 1928, Costa Rica asked the Council of the League to clarify its interpretation of the Monroe Doctrine before it made the decision to rejoin the organization. The Monroe Doctrine had been a major source of controversy for the League since the drafting of its Covenant in 1919. Article XXI was inserted into the document as an attempt by Wilson to placate Americans who claimed the organization would destroy the Monroe Doctrine. Latin Americans had unsuccessfully sought League clarification of the meaning of this article, but the League had only vaguely replied to these inquiries in order not to offend the United States, which it still hoped would someday become a member.\(^{54}\)


Although first reaction of the Council of the League of Nations to Costa Rica’s inquiry was to give a noncommittal answer, it soon decided to issue an interpretation of the Monroe Doctrine. Many European nations hoped for a vague answer, but Latin Americans insisted that the Council adequately reply to the question or face an upheaval from the region. The League ultimately decided not to define the Monroe Doctrine in order to reduce the inevitable outrage that would be generated if the organization made any declaration concerning the doctrine in the United States, and instead grounded its position on Article XXI. The League stated that the Covenant recognized agreements that were designed to secure peace that did not violate the principles of the organization. Its statement went further, however, by saying that the Covenant only recognized that regional agreements could exist and did not in any way validate the terms of the Monroe Doctrine. The League’s refusal to validate the U.S. definition of the Monroe Doctrine was seen in Latin America as a major victory.\(^{55}\)

While the United States was facing challenges in the League of Nations, it was also facing opposition from members of the Pan American Union. After the intervention into Nicaragua, any U.S. goodwill trip to Latin America faced swift opposition throughout region and was being used as a source for anti-American propaganda. One such trip was being undertaken by the Navy Department, which had decided to send two warships to visit to Uruguay and Argentina. U. Grant-Smith, the U.S. minister to Uruguay, implored the State Department to scrap the proposed trip. As Grant-Smith argued, “I must confess that the lack of understanding on the part of the other

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Departments of the anti-Yankee psychology which is prevalent throughout this part of the world is to me astonishing.” He went on to say that the visit “would be considered a God-send by the very active Communist group in this community whose members would find peculiar pleasure in starting rows in which our sailors would be implicated.” Fearing that such actions were threatening to increase tensions, the State Department convinced Coolidge to order all U.S. departments to consult with the State Department before taking action that might affect the nation’s foreign policy.56

During this period of intense criticism, the State Department was extremely frustrated by the condemnation coming from Latin America. There was a feeling in the United States that Latin Americans did not comprehend what the nation was doing for them in their interventions into the political affairs of the region. Assistant Secretary of State Francis White stated, “When these Latin Americans carp about the rights of small states I think they should be reminded that big states also have rights and that little states, like big states, also have obligations, and that if they do not like our intervention in their internal affairs, as is sometimes necessary, as at the present in Nicaragua, the remedy is in their own hands. All we ask is justice. We give their citizens justice when they come to our country and, if they will give ours justice and will maintain peace and quiet and conduct their Government with orderly procedure, there will be no intervention from us—the matter is one that lies in their control.”57

56 U. Grant-Smith to Francis White, Letter, 1 February 1928, Box 5, Folio 18, in Francis White Papers, Herbert Hoover Presidential Library, West Branch, Iowa (hereafter cited as White MSS); Francis White to U. Grant-Smith, 5 March 1928, Box 5, Folio 18, White MSS.

57 Francis White to U. Grant-Smith, Letter, 7 December 1927, Box 5, Folio 18, White MSS.
While the administration was contemplating how to react to the harsh criticism that had erupted as a result of its intervention into Latin America, it was also preparing for the Sixth Pan American Conference. The timing was not propitious. As Kellogg noted, “The next meeting of the Pan American Conference is going to be more important and probably more difficult than any we have had in many years. The propaganda which has been going on in South and Central America by Mexico, by Russian propagandists and by some organizations in [Italy] which are unpatriotic and always against the government, has had a very unfortunate repercussions.” With this feeling abounding, Kellogg was sure that “There is no use disguising the fact that there are liable to be elements going to the next Conferences purely for the purpose of making trouble for the United States.”58

Sixth Pan American Conference

As the Sixth Pan American Conference approached, Kellogg realized the possibility of a concerted Latin American attack upon the United States due to the uproar that was initiated by its intervention in Nicaragua. In order to prevent this potentially embarrassing situation, Kellogg sought to exclude from the conference’s agenda any debate concerning the issue of U.S. intervention. The administration’s overriding goal for the conference was to prevent a Latin American attack upon the U.S. leadership that

58 Frank B. Kellogg to Henry Fletcher, 26 July 1927, vol. 27, Kellogg MSS, 314-16.
was transforming the region’s peace system, and thus allowing those efforts to continue
after the talks had concluded.

Kellogg had concluded that a primary cause for the attacks on the United States
was European efforts to drive a wedge between the United States and Latin America and
was thus on guard against League participation in the conference. Kellogg believed that
the anti-American feeling that arose out of the Nicaraguan intervention was
incomprehensible, because the United States had not used the intervention for its own
advantage. Instead, he believed that this criticism was “undoubtedly partly due to
European trade rivalry and European propaganda.” Concerned that Europeans were
attempting to thwart U.S. leadership in the region, he sought to prevent the League of
Nations from involving itself in the conference. In this effort, Kellogg borrowed the
argument Hughes had utilized to prevent League involvement at the Fifth Pan American
Conference, asserting that the Pan American movement existed to discuss matters that
pertained only to the nations of the Western Hemisphere and that League participation
would destroy the purpose of the gathering. To ensure that the League would not be
allowed to participate in the conference, without showing obvious hostility to the
organization, Kellogg wrote to the U.S. delegation, “There is, of course, not the slightest
objection for cooperation with the technical services of the League of Nations through the
exchange of reports and information, and reciprocal advantage may thus appropriately be
taken of statistics and reports of investigation. Participation of representatives of the
League in the Pan American Conference, however, would bring to the Conference the
view-points and policies of the States who are members of the League of Nations and are
not American States and thus fundamentally alter the nature of the Conference itself.”

By justifying U.S. objection to the League’s participation in the conference with a legal argument, Kellogg thwarted any attempt to allow the organization to directly join the talks. 59

While Kellogg prevented the League from being invited to participate in the conference, he also had to block Latin American attacks upon the U.S. “right” to intervene in Latin America. Kellogg feared that due to the unpopular U.S. intervention in Nicaragua, some Latin American delegates were planning to attack the nation’s Latin American policy. Kellogg made it clear that he considered Nicaragua a political question and believed that it thus had no place at the conference. To head off any challenge to the right of the United States to intervene in Latin America, Kellogg engaged in diplomacy with the Latin American nations to keep intervention off the agenda. Through intensive diplomatic work, he succeeded in limiting the conference’s agenda to: the possible expansion of the Pan American Union; codification of international law; hemispheric communication problems; intellectual cooperation; economic problems; social problems such as sanitary codes; and future conferences. The secretary of state instructed the U.S. delegation to beware of anti-American propaganda in Latin America that was charging the United States with imperialism. Kellogg told the delegation that “it is possible that an effort may be made by some delegates to the Sixth Pan American Conference to bring up

controversial matters which the United States would not consider appropriate for a
gathering of this nature, and it is not improbable that in the course of their remarks
certain delegates may attack the policy of the United States Government towards Latin
America with special reference to its relations with Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama and
Haiti. Every effort should be made to have the topics discussed at the Conference
confined to those on the pre-arranged agenda, or such additional topics as do not involve
any discussion or criticisms of the foreign policy of this or any other country.‖

Kellogg’s pre-conference strategy to avoid any discussion of the issue of U.S.
interventionism at the conference included domestic action as well. Kellogg became
aware just days before the conference was scheduled to begin that the U.S. Senate was
preparing to hold hearings on Coolidge’s decision to intervene into Nicaragua. Kellogg
responded to this information by attempting to get the Senate to postpone any such
investigations until the conference had concluded. Kellogg wrote of the matter, “If it
could be arranged not to take up this discussion or have the investigation while the
conference is in session I think it would save the American delegation a great deal of
embarrassment. It is hardly fair to prejudice the position of the United States by such
investigations and discussions when we are engaged in [the] conference . . . There is no

60 Frank B. Kellogg to the American Delegation to the Sixth Pan American Conference, 5 January 1928,
FRUS, 1928, vol. 1, 573; Memorandum of Kellogg Press Conference, 12 January 1928, Press Conferences
of the Secretaries of State, vol. 3; Frank B. Kellogg to Henry Fletcher, 26 July 1927, vol. 27, Kellogg MSS,
314-16; Frank B. Kellogg to Calvin Coolidge, 19 August 1927, Vol. 27, Kellogg MSS, 757-59; E.H.
Crowder to Frank B. Kellogg, 11 March 1927, Records of the Department of State Relating to Political
Relations between the United States and Cuba, 1910-1929 Microfilm, v.1, (Washington: National
Archives and Records Service, 1963), 548-49; Edwin Morgan to Frank B. Kellogg, 11 April 1927, vol. 1,
Papers Relating to Political Relations with Cuba, 550; David Sheinin, Argentina and the United States at
the Sixth Pan American Conference (Havana 1928) (London: Institute of Latin American Studies, 1991),
3-8.
desire to cover up anything and the committee can have all the information we have as
soon as the Conference is over.”

With the importance that Kellogg placed on thwarting any attack upon the United
States at the conference, he felt it was vital to appoint a strong slate of delegates to the
conference. When discussing the conference with the president, Kellogg stated, “The
next Pan American Conference, in my opinion, is going to be one [of] the most important
we have ever had and I fear that many delicate situations may develop which will require
the skill and prestige of an able delegation to handle.” Kellogg not only convinced the
president to accept an invitation to speak at the opening session of the conference, he
picked many of the leading figures of the U.S. foreign policy establishment to be
members of the nation’s delegation. He quickly decided that the best choice to be the
chairman of the U.S. delegation was Charles Evans Hughes, who agreed to undertake the
assignment. Hughes was joined by such men as Henry P. Fletcher and Leo S. Rowe, both
of whom were seen in a favorable light by Latin Americans. While he was joined by
other capable men, it was Hughes who became the central figure in defending the United
States during the conference.

By the time that the conference opened on January 16, 1928, the Coolidge
administration did as much as it could to prevent a challenge to the U.S. “right” to


63 Frank Kellogg to Calvin Coolidge, 19 August 1927, vol. 27, Kellogg MSS, 757-59.
intervene, but it was unable to prevent a challenge to its interventionism. On February 4, Argentina’s chief delegate, Honorio Pueyrredon, contested the “right” of the United States to intervene in Latin America during a meeting of the Committee on Public International Law. Pueyrredon’s attack on the United States quickly gained the support of delegations from mostly Central American and Caribbean nations, including Mexico, the Dominican Republic, Honduras, Guatemala, Ecuador, Paraguay, and El Salvador. While Pueyrredon’s challenge received support from some Latin American nations, most opposed or remained neutral in the committee.  

There were two primary reasons why most nations of the Pan American Union reacted tepidly to Argentina’s challenge to the U.S. interventions into Latin America. First, Kellogg’s active pre-conference diplomacy succeeded in getting nations to agree not to support a challenge at the conference. Just as important to the administration’s efforts was Hughes’s effective defense of U.S. actions, as he insisted that the United States was not intervening in Latin America to attack functioning governments in the region, but instead in an effort to establish a just international system. He argued that the United States had the right to protect the property of Americans and other foreigners in any Latin American nation that had descended into anarchy. The combined efforts of Hughes and Kellogg were able to divide the committee, and the administration won a

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victory when the committee decided to postpone any action in protest of the U.S. intervention until the Seventh Pan American Conference.\textsuperscript{65}

Hughes’s victory was short lived, however, as the issue came up again during the final session of the conference. When the conference was seemingly at an end, Laurentino Olascoaga of Argentina introduced a resolution that expressed regret that a solution to the question of U.S. intervention had not been found at the conference. Every nation signed the resolution, which moved a Guatemalan delegate, Alvarado Tello, to ask why if the conference regretted not finding a solution to the problem, it could not settle the matter? Following this question, Dr. Gustavo Guerrero of El Salvador proposed a new version of the anti-intervention resolution that simply stated “That no state had the right to intervene in the internal affairs of another.”\textsuperscript{66}

Tello’s statement along with Guerrero’s resolution initiated a new discussion about U.S. intervention into Latin America, and once again Hughes was able to deflect the issue. First he convinced the Brazilian and Columbian delegations to speak in favor of the United States. After these speeches, Hughes himself defended the U.S. position affirming that the United States did not want to take away the sovereignty of Latin American nations and that it opposed any nation utilizing aggressive war to achieve its nationalistic goals. He went on to say, however:

\textsuperscript{65} Francis White to U. Grant Smith, Letter, 1 March 1928, Box 5, Folio 18, White MSS; Sheinin, \textit{Argentina and the United States at the Sixth Pan American Conference}, 1, 10-15; Samuel Guy Inman, \textit{Inter-American Conferences}, 116-17; James Brown Scott, \textit{The Sixth International Conference of American States}, 1836.

Of course, the United States cannot forego its right to protect its citizens. No country should forego its right to protect its citizens. International law cannot be changed by the Resolutions of this Conference. International law remains. The rights of Nations remain. But Nations have duties as well as rights. We all recognize that. This very formula here proposed is the proposal of a duty on the part of nations. But that is not the only duty. There are other obligations which the courts and international law have frequently set forth; and we cannot codify international law and ignore the duties of States, by setting up the impossible reign of self-will without any right upon the part of a state to recognize its obligations to its neighbors.\footnote{Charles Evans Hughes, “Speech of Charles Evans Hughes to the Plenary Session of the 6th International Conference of American States, Havana Cuba,” 18 February 1928, vol. 31, Kellogg MSS, 132.}

In this speech, Hughes defended the U.S. vision of a just legal system. In a society based on the rule of law, individuals had the right to pursue their lives freely, but it was incumbent on them to live up to their legal obligations. If they failed to do so, then authorities could step in and force them to alter their actions. After Hughes’s speech, the resolution was dropped and the delegates agreed to take up the issue at the Seventh Pan American Conference.\footnote{U.S. Department of State, Report of Delegates to the Sixth Pan American Conference, 14-16; Hughes, Autobiographical Notes, 275-78.}

The administration was able to accomplish U.S. goals at the Sixth Pan American Conference. Through Kellogg’s pre-conference diplomacy and Hughes’s successful deflection of criticism of the United States during the conference, the administration was able to protect the nation’s efforts to reshape the international system. The administration was especially thrilled with Hughes’s performance at the conference. Coolidge wrote to Hughes, “You secured a public demonstration of the sincerity and unselfishness of our motives and the correctness of our actions. It was a great service in creating understanding and friendly relations among the peoples of the western hemisphere. It
received widespread approval from the public, and even greater appreciation from those of us who were more familiar with the situation.” Francis White wrote of the conference that what Pueyrredon “apparently had in view was to crystallize anti-American feeling around Argentina which would become the champion and leader of the so-called weak States of this hemisphere against the hegemony of the United States. In the battle of wits with Mr. Hughes, Pueyrredon was immediately and completely outdistanced and ignominiously failed in all his attempts.”

While many in the United States felt that the conference was a success for the nation, they knew that the issue of intervention would come up again in the next Pan American conference to be held in Montevideo, Uruguay, and thus the administration almost immediately set out to improve its prospects at that conference. After the Sixth Pan American conference, Henry Fletcher concluded: “It is very clear that Argentina hoped to give us as much trouble as possible over the intervention issue at Havana, and that we owe much to Pueyrredon’s overweening egotism. I believe, from my talks with the Argentine Ambassador here and from the tone of the Argentine press comment, that Argentina will continue to endeavor to make as much noise as possible about intervention.” By June 1928, the State Department began its search for a new ambassador to Uruguay. As Francis White, the head of the Latin American Division for the State Department, said, “We want an A-1 man for Montevideo to start preparing the way for the Seventh Pan American Conference.”

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69 Calvin Coolidge to Charles Evans Hughes, Letter, 17 April 1928, Vol. 4, Hughes MSS, 658-659; Francis White to U. Grant-Smith, Letter, 1 March 1928, Box 5, Folio 18, White MSS.
While the administration was already concerned about the next Pan American conference, in the short term it believed that the overriding significance of the conference was U.S. freedom to continue to press for the adoption of the principles of the *pax-Americana* system. At the Sixth Pan American Conference, the nations of the hemisphere adopted a resolution rejecting war as a valid method of settling inter-American disputes and instead pledging to settle all troublesome international questions through arbitration of a judicial method. This statement was designed to advocate the administration’s efforts to continue reshaping the international system during its final year in office. \(^71\)

**Kellogg-Briand Pact**

Simultaneously as the United States was defending itself at the Sixth Pan American Conference, Kellogg was endeavoring to conclude the Kellogg-Briand Pact. This agreement was an administration attempt to begin spreading the ideals of *pax-Americana* system to the world. Instead resorting to war, this agreement called on nations to reach a peaceful solution to their international disputes. It was an example of the soft paternalistic strategy of the United States, in which no threats were issued to ensure that nations followed the agreement, but instead sought to transform humanity’s

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\(^70\) Henry Fletcher to Francis White, Letter, 28 May 1928, White MSS, Box 5, Folio 7; Francis White to Henry Fletcher, Letter, 9 June 1928, White MSS, Box 5, Folio 7.

mindset by gaining free acceptance of the proposal to reach a peaceful agreement to settle international crises.

Since the end of World War I influential Americans had proposed that the United States lead the movement to outlaw war, which ultimately led to the circumstances of the agreement. The leading voice for the outlawry of war by the late 1910s was Salmon O. Levinson, a wealthy lawyer from Chicago. Levinson pressured governmental leaders to outlaw war by arguing that wars occurred because they were legally acceptable in international law; if war was outlawed, leaders who resorted to war would be punished as criminals. The result of the criminalization of war, Levinson maintained, would be that all rational governmental leaders would refrain from using it as a tool of foreign policy. While Levinson struggled to gain adherents to his plan, he did convince James T. Shotwell, a professor of history at Columbia. Shotwell liked the idea of outlawing war, and as a U.S. itinerant ambassador sans portfolio, he was able to take his message throughout Europe. In 1927, he met with French Foreign Minister Aristide Briand. Briand heard Shotwell’s plea and saw in the proposal an opportunity to tie the United States to the frameworks of the Covenant of the League of Nations and the Locarno Pacts. With this goal in mind, on April 6, 1927, Briand sent a message to the United States proposing that the two nations conclude a bilateral agreement to outlaw war.72

While the people of France and the United States hoped that such an agreement would be reached, the Coolidge administration responded coolly to the French proposal.

The administration worried that this bilateral treaty was an attempt by France to draw the United States into the French security system based on the ideas of old nationalistic system. The administration’s initially cool reaction to the proposal was altered after U.S. officials realized that it could be transformed into a sweeping international agreement to which all nations could adhere. This strategy prevented the United States from being drawn into a “negative military alliance” with France that would make it nearly impossible for the United States to remain neutral in a war in which France was attacked and allow for widespread dissemination of the ideals of the *pax-Amerciana* system that U.S. diplomats had sought to build in the Western Hemisphere.\textsuperscript{73}

The administration also realized that such an effort would likely be supported by the U.S. Senate. Senator Arthur Capper (R-KS) introduced a resolution to outlaw war on December 8, 1927. The Capper Resolution called on all nations that wished to declare war illegal to pledge to settle their international disputes through arbitration or negotiation. If a nation broke that pledge, the other signatory governments were to withdraw all support from that offending power. Senator William Borah, who had supported the calls to outlaw war throughout the 1920s, called such a move “the basis for success of the more legalistic requirements.” In December 1927 he introduced a resolution outlawing war and establishing a world court modeled on the U.S. Supreme Court, an important step in securing worldwide acceptance of U.S. principles.\textsuperscript{74}


\textsuperscript{74} Congressional Record, vol. 69, pt. 1, 351; William Borah to Charles Clayton Morrison, 13 March 1924, Box 162, Folio 6, Borah MSS; Louria, *Triumph and Downfall*, 130-31.
Once the administration had made the decision to pursue such a treaty, Kellogg became the driving force behind the agreement. He reopened negotiations with the French and began to call for the agreement to be open to all nations to sign. He also rejected the French proposal that the agreement only ban wars of aggression because of the difficulty involved in defining what situations would be interpreted as aggressive war and what constituted self-defense. Instead, he called for nations to renounce all war as an instrument of national policy.75

When the Kellogg-Briand Pact was signed on August 27, 1928, it was a general agreement between the nations of the world to renounce war and pledged to find peaceful solutions to international disputes. The treaty in its final form included two articles, first that the signatory nations renounced war as a national policy, and second that all international disagreements be settled through peaceful means. There was no enforcement machinery or definition of aggressors. By 1929, 63 nations from around the world had agreed to the pact, which was interpreted by the United States as proof that the world was moving toward the U.S. vision of peace. Kellogg argued that in this effort, the world was deciding freely to reject war on the basis of legal agreements. As he stated, the best way to abolish war was to “extend the field of arbitration to cover all juridical questions, to negotiate treaties applying the principles of conciliation to all questions which do not come within the scope of arbitration, and to pledge all the nations of the world to condemn recourse to war, renounce it as an instrument of international policy, and to declare themselves in favor of the settlement of all controversies by pacific means.”

75 Frank Kellogg to Claudel, 11 January 1928, FRUS, 1928, vol. 1, 3-5; Louria, Triumph and Downfall, 130-33.
Thus may the illegality of war be established in the world as a principle of international law.”

In this light, the State Department sought to convince the Latin Americans to adhere to the agreement when they began wavering on whether to sign the pact. Once the treaty had been signed, Kellogg began working on the “question of the adherence of the various powers and, I may say, particularly the Latin American powers.” Kellogg hoped that Latin American signature of the agreement would set the Western Hemisphere up as an example to the world of a peaceful hemispheric system. As the U.S. representative in Bolivia argued, “I would very much appreciate Bolivia’s adherence thereto and hoped that she would be the first country in Latin America to accept the same, as it would go a long way toward showing not only the United States, but the world, her desire to live harmoniously with her neighbors.” The United States was encouraged when eventually eighteen Latin American nations agreed to the principles of the treaty.

The administration also worded the agreement in order to thwart domestic opposition. Unlike the Covenant of the League of Nations, which called for collective security, the Kellogg-Briand Pact only morally bound a nation to renounce war. The administration realized that many protectionists supported the principle of the outlawry of

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77 “Treaty between the United States and Other Powers,” 27 August 1928, FRUS, 1928, vol. 1, .153-55; For examples of the administration’s push to gain Latin American adherence to the Kellogg-Briand Pact see Robert Woods Bliss to William R. Castle Jr, 15 September 1928, Box 1, Folio 2, William R. Castle Papers, Herbert Hoover Presidential Library, West Branch, Iowa (Hereafter cited as Castle MSS); William R. Castle to Dwight W. Morrow, 18 August 1928, Box 10, Folio 6, Castle MSS; David Elaugana to William R. Castle, 13 September 1928, Box 2, Folio 5, Castle MSS; Culbertson to William R. Castle, 12 September 1928, Box 2, Folio 9, Castle MSS.
war but that some senators would question the agreement. When questions arose about what the agreement meant to the United States if a nation violated the terms of the accord or whether it tied the United States to the League of Nations, Kellogg responded by arguing that the United States was not bound to respond in any way if a nation violated the agreement.78 As he stated:

I cannot understand how anybody can think that the United States is giving up anything when it enters into an agreement with all the principle powers of the world not to resort to war for the settlement of international disputes. Nor is it true that “some of the terms of the imperfect Versailles treaty so flatly rejected by our country in 1920 seems now to have been recognized.” This treaty has nothing whatever to do with the Versailles Treaty nor with the League of Nations. I realize, of course, that this country rejected the League and that there is no use of talking about joining it. The treaty is simply an additional obligation by the nations of Europe and the United States not to go to war. If any of the countries break the treaty, naturally and as a matter of law the other countries would be released from their obligations as to the belligerent powers which would leave the United States in exactly the same position in which it now is.79

This stance not only convinced the protectionists in the Senate but also won their admiration. Senator Borah, an irreconcilable during the League fight, wrote to Kellogg, “I want to sincerely congratulate you, not only in securing the Treaty, but in securing it in the form in which it seems now it will undoubtedly be accepted. I look upon the Treaty as a great and distinct achievement in the cause of peace and I regard the manner and skill with which you have conducted the negotiations as an exhibition of the highest statesmanship.” The U.S. Senate ratified the agreement by a vote of 85-1 after passing an interpretation stating that the agreement did not infringe on the U.S. right to self-defense


and did not force the United States to take action against a nation that violated the agreement.\textsuperscript{80}

The United States saw this agreement not as the definitive pact that would immediately end all wars but as a starting point that could be built upon in the future to spread the \textit{pax-Americana} international system globally. Kellogg was thrilled at the overwhelming support the treaty was getting from humanity and believed that the world was moving toward the U.S. vision of peace. As he stated, “I think you realize that international law is gradually built up through the negotiation and ratification of new treaties and agreements by which nations are bound in their relations with each other. When the nations of the world, therefore, formally renounce war as an instrument of their national policy, this becomes a new tenet of international law and any nation resorting to war is necessarily acting illegally.” Under the Hoover administration this agreement, with its implication that the world was moving toward the U.S. vision, would lead to new directions concerning U.S. policy toward Latin America and the League of Nations. Before the Coolidge administration left office in 1929, however, it would hold another conference to further establish \textit{pax-Americana} ideals in the Western Hemisphere.\textsuperscript{81}

\textsuperscript{80} William Borah to Frank Kellogg, 22 July 1928, vol. 33, Kellogg MSS, 410.

International Conference of American States on Conciliation and Arbitration

The nations of the Pan American Union adopted a resolution at the Sixth Pan American Conference rejecting war to settle inter-American disputes and instead pledging to settle disputes through arbitration of a judicial method. This resolution was the genesis of the International Conference of American States on Conciliation and Arbitration, held in Washington D.C. in 1929 at which the Coolidge administration sought to conclude a treaty that would expand the existing conciliation and arbitration agreements between the American republics. This conference also presented an opportunity to show the effectiveness of the peace agreements to settle conflicts that arose between the American republics.82

Planning of this conference began quickly after the conclusion of the Sixth Pan American Conference, and again Kellogg looked to Hughes for guidance. Kellogg relied on Hughes for both helping to plan the agenda for the conference and leading the U.S. delegation. He strongly suggested that Kellogg discuss with the nations of Latin America their views on what should be accomplished at the conference. In this way, the United States could be assured that an agenda would be created that would win the support of the delegates while also limiting any attacks on U.S. Latin American foreign policy. Hughes felt this was imperative for the administration to know because he did not believe that the nation should “enter into a conference of that importance with the chance of disruption on account of extreme demands or of an endeavor to put the United States in an unfortunate

82 Inman, Inter-American Conferences, 129-32.
position before the public opinion of the world.” Hughes wanted to ensure that the United States could further its vision for world peace while protecting its image as a tireless advocate for the creation of a peaceful international system.\textsuperscript{83}

The goal of the administration at the conference was to expand accords that were already in effect to dramatically increase the chances of reaching agreements that would further the creation of the pax-Americana system. The administration entered the conference with two major goals: to broaden the principles that were included in the Bryan arbitration treaties and to add to the Gondra Treaty, which had been signed at the Fifth Pan American Conference.\textsuperscript{84} Kellogg supported the idea of the Bryan treaties and saw the conference as an opportunity to expand this method of settling international disputes. In addition, most Latin American nations had ratified the Gondra Treaty. With most nations of the Western Hemisphere thus already adhering to these agreements, the United States could make greater headway in creating a truly peaceful system by tweaking the scheme to make it more effective instead of attempting to radically change the peace process. In addition, since the agreement had already been ratified by the U.S.


\textsuperscript{84} One of the major goals of William Jennings Bryan as secretary of state in the Wilson administration, was to conclude arbitration treaties between the United States and any nation that was willing to arbitrate any differences that might arise between the two nations. Bryan proposed to other nations that they should conclude treaties with the United States that called for any dispute that could not be settled through traditional diplomatic means, which the issue be sent to a commission for study before the nations would resort to war. Bryan believed that the time that the commission needed to conclude their work would create a cooling off period where these nation’s people and world opinion would come to put pressure on the governments to settle the issue peacefully. Bryan was successful in getting thirty-six nations to accept the terms of the treaty before he left the State Department in 1915. See Gilderhus, Pan American Visions, 14-15.
Senate, he believed that body would be more likely to consent to the changes with little debate.\footnote{Frank B. Kellogg to Joseph E. Ransdell, Letter, 30 October 1928, Vol. 35, Kellogg MSS, 490-91; Frank B. Kellogg to Charles Evans Hughes, Letter, 20 November 1928, vol. 36, Kellogg MSS, 58-59; Gilderhus, Pan American Visions, 14-15; Mecham, The United States and Inter-American Security, 106-11.}

When the conference opened on December 10, 1928, the administration made it clear that it hoped the talks would become an example for the world to emulate. Coolidge’s introductory speech to the opening of the conference made clear the administration’s goals for the conference. Coolidge called on the delegates to develop effective mediation, laws, and tribunals. By reaching such agreements, he argued that the nations of the Western Hemisphere would hopefully begin an international movement to settle disputes peacefully. He stated, “It is an effort to raise humanity to a higher level of existence, where nations may dwell together in peace and harmony according to the principles of liberty and equality under the fostering influence of justice and equity.”\footnote{U.S. Department of State, Proceedings of the International Conference of American States on Conciliation and Arbitration, (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1929), 30-48; Frank Kellogg to Charles Evans Hughes, Letter, 20 November 1928, Vol. 36, Kellogg MSS, 61-61; Charles Evans Hughes to Frank B. Kellogg, Letter, 21 November 1928, Vol. 36, Kellogg MSS, 93.}

While the administration only hoped to improve existing agreements, when the conference opened, a crisis developed between Bolivia and Paraguay that threatened League involvement in the hemisphere. The dispute was focused on the region known as the Chaco Boreal, which both landlocked nations saw as a way to gain a secure position on the Paraguay River and from there gain access to the Amazon River and then the Atlantic Ocean. By the late 1920s, both nations had established forts in the disputed territory, and in December 1928 the forces of these two nations engaged in fighting. As
soon as the commencement of hostilities between Bolivia and Paraguay became known, the League of Nations considered getting involved in the dispute. Since both nations were members, Eric Drummond, the secretary-general of the League, decided to take it upon himself to introduce the subject to the League’s Council. While the Council was concerned about the dispute, it decided to stay out of the crisis in order not to offend the United States and to wait to see how the United States and the countries of the Pan American Union would react to the issue. If the mediation of the Pan American Union did not succeed in calming the situation, then the League might have to take action. Even this mild League of Nations consideration was sufficient to worry the Coolidge administration.  

In order to ensure that the League did not involve itself in the dispute while also showing the effectiveness of the developing U.S. peace system, the agenda for the conference was altered to include discussion of the Chaco Boreal dispute. Kellogg was able to get both Bolivia and Paraguay to submit the dispute to the conference in the hope of defusing the threat of League intervention in the dispute, by demonstrating the benefits of the hemisphere’s peace system. In other words, he believed that the conference’s action would again show the nations of the region that they should look to the superior U.S.-led Pan American system instead of turning to the European-dominated League of Nations.  

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Participants at the conference almost immediately began working to calm the deteriorating situation between Bolivia and Paraguay. On the first day of the conference, those nations unanimously approved a message to be sent to both Bolivia and Paraguay urging them to find peaceful means to settle the controversy. The delegates then approved a resolution offering those nations their good offices in settling the dispute. After both nations agreed to submit the question to the Pan American system for settlement, the conference created a Commission of Inquiry and Conciliation. The Coolidge administration saw acceptance of the offer of mediation as further proof of the effectiveness of the Pan American peace system that was being driven by the United States. On January 5, 1929, Kellogg spoke of the issue at the conference. He stated,

May I also refer to the fortunate circumstance that this Conference was in session when the differences arose between two of our sister republics. These difficulties made dramatically evident the fact that the peace of the Americas is a matter that lies close to the heart of all the nations of this hemisphere and is something for which all the governments, members of the Pan American Union, feel a real responsibility. We may well congratulate ourselves that through the efforts of this Conference the questions involved have been led into channels which promise an early and satisfactory adjustment. 89

Although U.S. officials believed that creating a Commission of Inquiry and Conciliation to mediate the Chaco Boreal dispute was an important outcome for the conference, they were encouraged by the agreements reached at the conference that seemed to further the pax-Americana system. The two major agreements reached at the conference were the General Convention of Inter-American Conciliation and the General

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Treaty of Inter-American Arbitration. The General Convention of Inter-American Conciliation was an attempt by the nations at the conference to strengthen the Gondra Treaty of 1923. It modified the process for settling inter-American disputes by allowing the commissions that were created in the Gondra Treaty to begin their investigation even if no party had appealed for their intervention in a dispute.\[^{90}\]

The second major agreement reached at the conference was the General Convention of Inter-American Arbitration, which established an extensive multilateral arbitration agreement between the nations of the Pan American Union and continued the U.S. effort to create a legal-internationalist peace system as envisioned by Charles Evans Hughes. “Conscious of the great moral and material benefits which peace offers to humanity” the treaty maintained that “the sentiment and opinion of America demand, without delay, the organization of an arbitral system which shall strengthen the permanent reign of justice and law.” To achieve this goal, the nations agreed that almost all international questions dealing with the nations of the Pan American Union were subject to arbitration. The nations agreed to submit all international issues that could not be solved through traditional diplomatic means to arbitration. The list of issues that could be sent to arbitration under the treaty included the interpretation of a treaty, a question of international law, investigation of possible breach of international obligations, and reparation for any breach of an international obligation. While the treaty included numerous possible issues, it did enumerate specific issues that could not be decided by

\[^{90}\text{U.S. Department of State, } Proceedings of the International Conference of American States on Conciliation and Arbitration, 634-50; Mecham, The United States and Inter-American Security, 106-11.\]
arbitration, including purely domestic issues and disputes involving states that were not a part of the agreement.\(^91\)

The International Conference of American States on Conciliation and Arbitration was seen as a great achievement for the Coolidge administration. Kellogg believed that the results of the conference affirmed the effective leadership the United States was giving not only to the Western Hemisphere but also in the form of an example to the whole world by its pursuit of a rational movement to promote peace. In concluding the conference on January 5, 1929, Kellogg congratulated the delegates. In his remarks, Kellogg stated, “The action of this Conference will have a profound influence not only on the public opinion of the western hemisphere, but of all the world. It is by such treaties, declarations, and accomplishments that the world sentiment against war will be marshaled.” Francis White was ecstatic over the results of the conference, writing, “In fact the Arbitration Treaty that was signed went far beyond anything the League has yet drawn up and the Conciliation Convention is also most ample, and the Conference, taking to heart the lack of machinery that would have existed in the Paraguay-Bolivia controversy except for the fortunate circumstance of the Conference being in session, has set up machinery for dealing with such matters in the future.”\(^92\)

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\(^92\) U.S. Department of State, *Proceedings of the International Conference of American States on Conciliation and Arbitration*, 190; Francis White to Hugh R. Wilson, 21 January 1929, Box 12, Folio 15, White MSS.
Conclusion

When Calvin Coolidge assumed the presidency in 1923, his administration sought to continue U.S. efforts to create an alternative peace system to the League of Nations in Latin America by utilizing soft paternalistic tactics. Throughout its time in office, the administration sought to improve U.S.-Latin American relations, attempted to utilize existing agreements to settle intra-American crises, and continued to expand the peace machinery of the Western Hemisphere not by relying on force and threats, but instead by seeking to get the nations of the region to freely accept the U.S. vision. The administration believed that it had been successful in expanding the alternative peace system in Latin America while preventing the League from involving itself in crises that developed in the region. In addition, it was encouraged because its successes were beginning to be emulated by the world.

If creating an alternative to the League of Nations might have remained the goal of U.S. foreign policy in Latin America under the leadership of the Coolidge administration, by its end in 1929 Latin America had been alienated by the United States. With the perceived threats to its vision for peace, the administration decided that it had no choice but to launch a new intervention in Nicaragua after it concluded that the situation threatened to bring to power radicals or lead to European interventionism, outcomes that could hinder U.S. peace efforts in the region. Although many Latin Americans publicly attacked the United States, the administration believed it had defended itself well from
those attacks at the Sixth Pan American Conference, allowing it to continue its efforts to expand peace agreements in the region.

When leaving office, the Coolidge administration was not fully aware of the damage the Nicaraguan intervention had done to the possibility of creating an alternative peace system to the League of Nations in the Western Hemisphere. Instead of building on the success of the early 1920s, the United States took a step backward. If U.S. officials did not know of the full extent of the damage that was done to U.S.-Latin American relation, it was clear that there were problems. It would fall upon the Hoover administration to deal with the Nicaraguan intervention’s consequences, and it went to work immediately to improve U.S.-Latin American relations to help bring the goal of a U.S.-led peace system to fruition.
Chapter 5

Toward Universal Action: The Hoover Administration

When Herbert Hoover was elected president in November 1928, he realized his administration faced numerous obstacles in Latin America. The Coolidge administration had continued Charles Evans Hughes’s soft paternalistic strategy that was designed to convince regional states to adopt the principles of the pax-Americana international system. Despite the outward appearance of progress in this effort, the Coolidge administration had severely damaged U.S.-Latin American relations by steadfastly defending the U.S. “right” to intervene in the Western Hemisphere. As a result, many Latin Americans concluded that the primary threat to their independence was the United States, and thus by the end of the decade many were hesitant to follow its leadership. Upon entering office, the Hoover administration hoped to repair the damage done to U.S.-Latin American relations in order to continue U.S. efforts to reform the international system.

To facilitate the improvement of U.S.-Latin American relations, Hoover initiated the “Good Neighbor” policy characterized by refusal to approve new U.S. interventions into the region and simultaneously moved to liquidate the ones that his administration inherited. The purpose of this policy was to buttress the soft paternalistic strategy Hughes had developed, as Hoover hoped that by eliminating the greatest irritant to U.S.-
Latin American relations, the region would continue adopting the peace initiatives the United States advocated. The process of extracting U.S. troops from Latin America, however, was not as easy as Hoover had anticipated, and the delay in the liquidation of U.S. interventions led to the continuation of a Latin American backlash against the United States. This mistrust eventually led to a Latin American challenge to U.S. leadership in settling hemispheric crises when two wars broke out in South America over the Chaco Boreal and Leticia regions in 1932.

When war broke out in South America, the Hoover administration was forced to alter the U.S. policy toward the League of Nations. Although the initial U.S. reaction of the administration was to utilize the peace agreements the United States had championed throughout the previous decade, those efforts were not only unsuccessful at ending the bloodshed but also unable to prevent other Latin American nations from aspiring to end the fighting themselves. The administration considered this South American challenge to its leadership a threat to the pax-Americana system and turned to the League of Nations for assistance. By 1932, the administration believed that the organization was adopting the principles of the U.S. peace system. With this view the administration withdrew its objections to the League of Nations involving itself in disputes of the Western Hemisphere, because it was following the lead of the United States. By withdrawing its objections to League involvement, the administration hoped to thwart the sprouting of a rival peace movement in the Western Hemisphere while simultaneously internationalizing the policies of the pax-Americana. Ultimately, however, the Hoover administration failed in its efforts to utilize the peace machinery that the United States
had created in the previous decade to prevent the outbreak of war or quickly end any fighting that did erupt.

Hoover’s Efforts to Gain the Goodwill of Latin Americans

Upon winning the presidential election of 1928, Herbert Hoover began efforts to repair U.S.-Latin American relations. He realized that in order to acquire Latin American support for the continued establishment of the *pax-American* system, the United States must distance itself from its interventionist past. As president-elect, Hoover sought to convince Latin Americans of his intention to establish a new era of U.S.-Latin American relations by embarking on a goodwill tour of the region. Once he assumed office, his administration adopted the arguments contained in the Clark Memorandum on the Monroe Doctrine, which called for the United States to return to the original meaning of the proclamation and thus discard its interventionist policies of the previous thirty years. The purpose of these actions was to continue Hughes’s soft paternalistic strategy of improving U.S.-Latin American relations in order to nudge Latin America to adopt the *pax-American* system.

Throughout the 1920s, Herbert Hoover had supported the Harding and Coolidge administrations’ efforts to reform the international system. While he had been a reservationist during the League fight, as secretary of commerce, he came to support the notion that legal-internationalist principles should be the basis of a reformed peace system. Although he supported these efforts, he was aware that some foreigners believed
the United States was only endeavoring to promote its national interests. He responded
to these charges by stating, “They fail to see that the idealism of America will lead it to
no narrow or selfish channel, but inspire it to do its full share as a Nation toward the
advancement of civilization. It will do that not by mere declaration but by taking a
practical part in supporting all useful international undertakings. We not only desire
peace with the world, but to see peace maintained throughout the world. We wish to
advance the reign of justice and reason toward the extinction of force.”\(^1\)

In an effort to continue the establishment of a reformed international system,
Hoover appointed Henry L. Stimson as his secretary of state. While the two men often
had disagreements throughout their time in office, they both shared the belief that legal-
internationalist principles were the proper method to settle international disputes. With
this perspective, the two men sought to strengthen the agreements that the United States
had reached since 1921, not only in the Western Hemisphere but around the world. With
the mindset that the United States needed to win the approval of others for this system to
be successful, they thus attempted to create the conditions necessary for the world to
accept this principle as the bedrock of international relations.\(^2\)

A major area of concern for the administration was Latin America. Hoover
realized that U.S.-Latin American relations were at a nadir, and he was determined to
rectify the situation by removing the primary source of tension between the United States
and its southern neighbors. Hoover believed that as long as the United States continued

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\(^2\) Louria, *Triumph and Downfall*, 142.
to declare that it had the “right” to intervene in Latin America, then many of the people of the region would continue mistrusting the intentions of the United States. As Hoover wrote, “As Secretary of Commerce I had developed an increasing dissatisfaction with our policies toward Latin America. I was convinced that unless we displayed an entirely different attitude we should never dispel the suspicions and fears of the ‘Colossus of the North’ nor win the respect of those nations. An interpretation of the Monroe Doctrine to the effect that we had the right to maintain order in those states by military force, in order not to give excuse for European intervention, created antagonisms and suspicions which dominated the polices of much of the Latin area.”

As president-elect, Hoover initiated his effort to repair U.S.-Latin American relations by embarking on a goodwill tour of the region. He believed that this voyage would demonstrate the seriousness of his intention to create a new era of relations between the United States and the region. The tour of Latin America began on November 19, 1928, and took him to ten nations of Central and South America. Throughout the journey, Hoover declared he had come to Latin America as “a good neighbor.” He proclaimed that the nations of the Western Hemisphere needed to work together in order to endeavor to be an example for the world to follow. As he stated, “There is abundant reason why friendship and understanding between us should be deeply rooted in the hearts of the people of both our nations. We have on both sides a

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history of common labor, of building in the new world a new form of government
founded upon a new conception of human rights.”

Hoover spoke of friendship and mutual cooperation between the United States
and Latin America during the tour, and the incoming administration was encouraged by
the reaction of the press of Latin America. Press reports came from throughout the
region expressing their hopefulness that the new administration would follow through
with the promises that Hoover was making in his addresses. Stimson later said of the
voyage, “It is difficult to overestimate the good effect of such personal contacts upon the
people of Spanish-American culture. A foundation was thus laid which has done more to
cure historic sore spots and brush away suspicions than could be accomplished in any
other way.” While many in Latin America hoped Hoover’s trip did signal a change in the
U.S. policy, they still wanted the administration to put the president’s words into action.

In order to demonstrate the seriousness of Hoover’s intentions, the administration
endorsed ideas contained in the Clark Memorandum. In 1928, Frank Kellogg had
requested that Undersecretary of State J. Reuben Clark examine the meaning of the
Monroe Doctrine. The resulting memorandum argued that the Monroe Doctrine should
be brought back to its original purpose. Clark argued that the original intent of the

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doctrine, to shield the newly independent nations of the Western Hemisphere from European encroachment, had been lost by the turn of the twentieth century, by which time it had morphed into an instrument that the United States utilized to justify its intervention into Latin America. The memorandum recommended that the Monroe Doctrine be stripped of the various corollaries that had been added throughout the years and brought back to its original intent. As Clark asserted, “This declaration, like the one regarding colonization, visualized a United States against Europe, not a United States against Latin America.” The Hoover administration adopted the ideas of the Clark Memorandum in order to demonstrate that the United States was itself going to adhere to just international principles, and thus began the process of liquidating many of the U.S. military interventions that it had inherited from previous administrations.6

With the decision to return to the original purpose of the Monroe Doctrine, the administration sought to terminate the ongoing U.S. interventions in Latin America. Stimson argued that due to the Latin American demand for complete self-determination, the United States must limit itself to advising regional nations on the proper methods of creating a stable political system. As he argued, “Latin America[ns] have convinced me that backward nations throughout the world will now insist upon working their own way out towards ultimate stability, and that the most we can do for them is to help them with good advice and such brotherly assistance as they ask for. We cannot do it by force.” The administration also concluded that U.S. military forces needed to be removed in

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6 Frank Kellogg to American Diplomatic Officers in Latin America, 28 February 1929, FRUS, 1929, 698-710; Fausold, The Presidency of Herbert C. Hoover, 183-85; DeConde, Herbert Hoover’s Latin-American Policy, 47-48.
order to defend the nation from anti-American propaganda. This concern led the administration to seek to liquidate the interventions in Nicaragua and Haiti. As Stimson stated, these interventions were “used by critics of the United States as evidence of our imperialism and our intention to use our power to subvert the independence of our neighbors. These accusations, although quite unjustified, had damaged our good name, our credit, and our commerce far more than was appreciated by our own people.”

Withdrawal from Nicaragua

While Latin Americans were encouraged that Hoover was proclaiming that he would initiate a new era in U.S.-Latin American relations, they still wanted his words to be backed up by actions. Hoover sought to demonstrate that he was serious in his statements by beginning the process of liquidating the U.S. intervention in Nicaragua. Upon entering office, Hoover inherited a very tense situation in Nicaragua, but he still sought to pull out of that nation in order to improve relations with Latin Americans. This desire was complicated by an ongoing rebellion that was raging in that nation. Thus, Hoover sought simultaneously to find a way to prevent radicals from gaining power in Nicaragua while pulling U.S. troops out of that country.

Since the Coolidge administration’s decision to launch a new intervention in Nicaragua in 1926, U.S. forces had struggled to reestablish order in that nation. The

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difficulty for U.S. forces was a rebellion that was under the leadership of Augusto C. Sandino. Sandino blamed the U.S. intervention in Nicaragua in 1912 for bringing hardships to his family and his country. He moved to Tampico, Mexico, in 1923, where he became a socialist and decided to fight for the victims of U.S. capital in Latin America. Sandino returned to Nicaragua in 1926 and quickly came to dislike the major candidates for the presidency of his native land, whom he considered to be stooges of American imperialism. By the end of the year, Sandino had raised a small guerilla force that became known as the Sandinistas to fight both the U.S. Marines and the American-trained Nicaraguan National Guard. For five years, Sandino fought a guerilla war, and his ability to continue his fight while constantly avoiding capture made him a hero to Latin Americans who opposed the United States.\(^8\)

The fighting was raging when Hoover took office in 1929, but the new administration still desired to withdraw from Nicaragua as soon as it was practical. Although Hoover hoped the withdrawal could happen quickly, his advisers immediately warned him of the consequences of such action. The State Department was concerned that if the United States withdrew too quickly, a repeat of the events that occurred after the U.S. withdrawal in 1925 might transpire. Instead of an immediate liquidation, therefore, Hoover decided to gradually withdraw U.S. troops in order to ensure the future stability of the country by establishing an effective National Guard to defeat the rebellion. As Hoover stated, “About 1,600 marines remain in Nicaragua at the urgent request of that

government and the leaders of all parties pending the training of a domestic constabulary capable of insuring tranquility. We have already reduced these forces materially and we are anxious to withdraw them further as the situation warrants.”

The initial focus of the administration was to build up the Nicaraguan National Guard, which the United States hoped would both promote political stability and defeat Sandino. U.S. officials sought to convince the Nicaraguan government to make the National Guard non-partisan so it could be relied upon to put down uprisings that threatened to overthrow the constitutional government. Simultaneously with the development of an effective guard, the United States would gradually turn over the battle with the Sandinistas and begin pulling its troops out of the country. The administration’s hope that this force could be developed fairly quickly was thwarted by disagreements with Nicaragua concerning the level of funding for the guard. Nicaraguans argued that they could not afford the size of the force that the United States was advocating, while the administration held that the guard had to be of sufficient size to ensure national political stability. Instead of demanding that Nicaragua accept the funding the administration felt proper, it spent nearly a year in negotiations in order to demonstrate that the United States was taking its view into consideration. These negations eventually led the Hoover administration and President Jose Maria Moncada of Nicaragua to reach a compromise on the issue. The two agreed that Nicaragua would abandon forts in areas

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where the Sandinistas were not operating in order to reduce costs, while the majority of the force would focus on defeating the rebellion.  

With an agreement in place concerning the Nicaraguan National Guard, the administration announced the U.S. plan of withdrawal. By 1931, the administration concluded that conditions in Nicaragua had sufficiently improved to move forward with the liquidation of its military mission in that nation. This plan called for all but a small detachment of Marines to be removed from Nicaragua by June 1931. The small U.S. force would remain in Nicaragua until the Nicaraguan presidential election of 1932. The administration expected that this announcement would demonstrate to Latin Americans that the United States was indeed serious about altering its policy toward the region. As Stimson stated, this announcement “has been an indication of sincerity of our motives.”

After this announcement, the administration made clear its intentions to liquidate the intervention. In April 1931, the State Department cabled its consuls in the region instructing them to warn Americans that, “we would not be able to protect them in the interior and that if they were dissatisfied with the protection of the Nicaraguan National Guard, they had better come to the coast towns where they could be protected or given asylum on ships.” The administration then began to escalate the removal of U.S. forces from that nation. By 1932 there were only a few hundred U.S. troops remaining in Nicaragua, down from 5,000 when the administration assumed office. Following Dr.

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Juan Sacasa’s election as president in Nicaragua in November 1932, the United States began its final withdrawal. The last American troops left Nicaragua on January 2, 1933, but their departure did not mean the end of the administration’s efforts to help ensure political stability in the nation.\footnote{12}

While the administration began its withdrawal from Nicaragua, it began to focus on other methods to stabilize the situation as the fighting continued between governmental forces and the Sandinistas. Sandino announced that he was not moved by the U.S. decision to initiate its withdrawal and vowed to continue fighting to remove U.S. influence from the nation. With the rebellion continuing, the administration concluded that alternative methods needed to be undertaken to defeat Sandino. As Henry Stimson stated, “evidently it was a situation which could not be cured by purely military action in the form which had been carried on.”\footnote{13}

Instead of focusing on military force, the administration began utilizing economic measures to end the revolutionary activity in Nicaragua. In the early 1930s, due to the Great Depression, fruit companies had decreased their purchases of produce from local farmers. Unable to sell their fruit many independent Nicaraguan producers were forced to lay off much of their labor force. The Hoover administration came to believe that the terrible economic situation in Nicaragua was the key factor in Sandino’s ability to recruit fighters. To combat this situation, the administration concluded that an effective way to

\footnote{12 Henry Stimson, 16 April 1931, vol. 3, Stimson Diaries, 389-90; DeConde, \textit{Hoover’s Latin-American Policy}, 79-84; Langley, \textit{The Banana Wars}, 205-07.}

combat the rebellion was to improve the economic prospects for Nicaraguans. In December 1930, Stimson met Captain Alfred Johnson who had just conducted an election in Nicaragua. The conversation between the two men led Stimson to write, “He confirmed my feeling that the cure can only come by economic changes, and told me an instance of how a lot of bandits come in in order to get some road work, and some of them had even brought their guns with them and turned them in.” Such reports convinced the administration that the most effective way to end the rebellion was to improve the Nicaraguan economy.14

Instead of relying on U.S. troops to regain order, the administration sought to secure funds for Nicaragua to build new infrastructure. By 1931, the administration believed that the building of a better transportation system in the hotbeds of Sandinista activity would help quell the rebellion by offering the Nicaraguan National Guard greater mobility to respond to the rebels. In addition to the benefits for the military situation, the road construction jobs created in these regions would offer hope to potential revolutionaries, thus reducing the number of men willing to join the rebellion. With this strategy in mind, the administration offered Nicaragua the services of engineers and equipment to help with the project. The administration also worked to secure a loan from the international bank of Nicaragua and its fiscal agent the International Acceptance

Bank. Through the administration’s efforts, the National Bank of Nicaragua agreed to fund the project in January 1931.15

While the Hoover administration did liquidate the U.S. intervention in Nicaragua during its final days in office, it was unable to accomplish its overriding objective. It had hoped to demonstrate by rapid withdrawal from Nicaragua that the United States was altering its Latin American policy, but the administration failed to immediately end the intervention. Because the administration believed the situation in Nicaragua remained exceedingly dangerous, it worried that if the United States withdrew too hastily, then political chaos would grow, risking a repeat of what had occurred when the United States first left that country in 1925. With this concern, the Hoover administration did not order its forces out of that country until it felt the situation was stable, thereby sending the message to Latin Americans that the United State was not serious about the change in its policy. A similar outcome plagued the administration in the other major intervention that it inherited, the one in Haiti.

Attempted Withdrawal from Haiti

Another troublesome issue for the Hoover administration was the U.S. intervention in Haiti. In the early 1920s, Charles Evans Hughes had ostensibly initiated the process to withdraw U.S. forces from that nation, but the intervention continued throughout the decade. When Hoover became president he sought to liquidate the

15 Munro, The United States and the Caribbean Republics, 264-66; Kamman, A Search for Stability, 197-98.
intervention as soon as possible in order to improve the U.S. image throughout Latin America. As in Nicaragua, however, he delayed taking such action until Americans were assured that the nation would remain politically stable after their departure. With the resulting delay in withdrawing U.S. troops, the administration failed to demonstrate that it was serious in its claims that it was acting as a “good neighbor” to Latin America.

While Hoover sought to end the U.S. intervention in Haiti, he was convinced that this operation was undertaken for altruistic reasons. It was clear to Hoover that the removal of U.S. troops from Haiti would help demonstrate that the nation was moving away from its interventionist past. Simultaneously, Hoover believed that U.S. efforts had uplifted the Haitian people. As he stated:

I stated before that I have no desire that we should be represented abroad by marines. We entered Haiti in 1915 under a treaty that provided we should assist the Republic of Haiti to restore order, to organize an effective police force, to rehabilitate its finances, and develop its natural resources. We entered at that time because of the distress and chaos brought about by continued revolutions. Peace and order have been restored, the finances have been rehabilitated, the police force has been functioning under the leadership of marine officers. We have built up roads and schools and sanitation. General Russell deserves great credit for the work that he has done in that country.¹⁶

Many State Department officials feared that if Hoover insisted on the immediate liquidation of the U.S. occupation, the benefits that the United States had brought to the Haitian people would be quickly lost. Dana Munro of the State Department argued that if U.S. troops were removed political chaos would quickly take hold because Haitians were not ready to handle their own affairs. Like Munro, Stimson was worried about the likely

breakdown of political stability in Haiti after a U.S. withdrawal, putting at risk the bondholders that had agreed to invest in the rebuilding of that country. Stimson argued this point in legal terms when he stated, “In regard to Haiti, where he [Hoover] did not have the personal experience of Negro government, he accepted my point that we were bound by our treaty to protect the bondholders whose bonds are still outstanding.”

Stimson was able to convince Hoover to follow Hughes’s policy of gradually liquidating the U.S. intervention in Haiti, advocating for the United States to continue the Haitianization of governmental positions, while the United States either fulfilled its obligations to the treaty that permitted the occupation or concluded a new agreement altering this binding agreement. Hoover was eventually convinced by the argument that an immediate withdrawal would lead to political chaos in Haiti and thus decided that the United States had to work with the Haitians to ensure stability after it withdrew. In order to delay the withdrawal, which would allow the gradual Haitianization of its governmental positions with U.S. supervision and to fulfill the nation’s binding obligations, he decided to begin negotiations for a new treaty with Haiti.

While Hoover was contemplating how to proceed to end the intervention in Haiti, he was faced with a serious incident in that nation. In December 1929, Haitian frustration over U.S. dominance led to the outbreak of a riot directed toward the U.S.

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18 Henry Stimson, 16 March 1931, Stimson Diaries, vol. 3, 299-300; Memorandum, 4 February 1930, Box 989, Folio 8, Hoover MSS.
Marines. In the port of Aux Cayes a crowd of fifteen hundred Haitians confronted a small group of Marines. The U.S. troops fired upon the multitude, killing twelve and wounding another twenty-three Haitians. In response to the incident, Hoover appointed a special commission to investigate the U.S. intervention in Haiti, in an attempt to quell both domestic and foreign criticism. He also denied the pleas of some officials who advocated that the five hundred Marines off the coast of Haiti be deployed in the nation. The president agreed with the State Department, which feared that insertion of more U.S. troops would merely inflame the situation not only in Haiti but throughout Latin America.¹⁹

The United States already faced intense criticism concerning its occupation of Haiti, and the riots simply served to increase those attacks. When the administration first took office, it was clear to government officials that many anti-American entities were utilizing the Haitian intervention to drive a wedge between the United States and Latin America. The killing of Haitians in the 1929 riots resulted in the intensification of these criticisms. Attacks were emanating from around the world, including Great Britain, France, Spain, Japan, and various Latin American nations, leading to the intensification of anti-American sentiment in the region. As John Barrett reported to Hoover, “The principal disturbing Pan American issue and subject of discussion in Latin America today is the Haitian problem.”²⁰

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In an attempt to blunt the attacks upon the United States, Hoover sent the Forbes Commission to Haiti in 1930. Hoover had already decided to appoint a commission to study the intervention and to make recommendations about its future course, but the riot led Hoover to expedite its creation. Hoover charged the commission with making recommendations on two issues: “The primary question which is to be investigated is when and how we are to withdraw from Haiti. The second question is what we shall do in the meantime.” The Forbes Commission arrived in Haiti in February 1930 and began to investigate the conditions and the feelings concerning the intervention from both the Haitian and American perspectives. While there was some criticism of the intervention, the commission commended it for helping the physical state of the nation. Its report also declared that it was likely that once the U.S. forces were removed, Haiti would again descend into political chaos. While the administration was apprehensive over the result of the U.S. disengagement, it began to implement a legal method of disengaging gradually in order to improve U.S.-Latin American relations.21

After the Forbes Commission had issued its report, the administration initiated negotiations with Haiti to lay out the Haitianization process. Hoover believed that the United States was still legally bound by the U.S.-Haitian Treaty of 1915, which charged the United States with maintaining order in that nation until 1936. In order to defend the

20 John Barrett to Herbert Hoover, 7 February 1930, Box 989, Folio 8, Hoover Presidential MSS; Senator Tasker Oddie, “Our Relations with Haiti,” 12 May 1929, Box 989, Folio 3, Hoover Presidential MSS; Schmidt, The United States Occupation of Haiti, 204-06.

21 Memorandum, 4 February 1930, Box 989, Folio 8, Hoover MSS; Herbert Hoover to Henry Stimson, 25 September 1930, Box 989, Folio 7, Hoover Presidential MSS; Leo S. Rowe to Herbert Hoover, 19 March 1930, Box 989, Folio 4, Hoover Presidential MSS; Herbert Hoover to Henry Fletcher, 3 February 1930, Box 111, folio 16, Hoover Presidential MSS; Schmidt, The United States Occupation of Haiti, 204-16.
U.S. advocacy of legal-internationalist principles, he believed that a new treaty must be negotiated that relieved the United States from this responsibility. This treaty would initiate the process of a gradual withdrawal of U.S. forces while simultaneously appointing Haitians to the positions held by the departing American officials.

Negotiations opened in 1930, but the talks continued throughout Hoover’s presidency. The administration wanted to ensure that when the United States left Haiti, a stable political system would be able to exist, and thus they sought a more gradual approach. Haitians, however, sought a rapid extraction of U.S. personnel from their country. With these differences, the new treaty and the subsequent U.S. withdrawal from that country did not take place until the presidency of Franklin Roosevelt.²²

The administration hoped that its actions in Haiti would improve the image of the United States throughout Latin America. Hoover sought to withdraw U.S. troops from that nation as soon as possible, but the fears of political instability led him to decide to undertake a gradual liquidation of the intervention. This process confirmed to many Latin Americans that they could not trust the United States. The mistrust of the United States resulted in a South American movement that sought to assume the lead in attempting to settle Latin American disputes, as would be evident with the eruption of fighting in South America at the end of Hoover’s time in office. While the administration was struggling to gain Latin American trust, which was essential in order to continue its peace policies in the region, it believed it was having more success in gaining support for the pax-Americana system outside of the Western Hemisphere.

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The Stimson Doctrine

While the Hoover administration was working to improve U.S.-Latin American relations, it was also attempting to spread the ideals of the *pax-Americana* system globally. Hoover had been encouraged at the overwhelming support the Kellogg-Briand Pact had won throughout the world and hoped to build on that success. As he stated in 1929:

> We are not only at peace with all the world, but the foundations for future peace are being substantially strengthened. To promote peace is our long-established policy. Through the Kellogg-Briand pact a great moral standard has been raised in the world. By it fifty-four nations have covenanted to renounce war and to settle all disputes by pacific means. Through it a new world outlook has been inaugurated which has profoundly affected the foreign policies of nations. Since its inauguration we have initiated new efforts not only in the organization of the machinery of peace but also to eliminate dangerous forces which produce controversies amongst nations.\(^{23}\)

With this stance, the Hoover administration continued the Republican attempt to lead the world to adopt its vision of peace. The most significant outcome of this effort was the Stimson Doctrine, which the League of Nations seemingly adopted.

The Hoover administration saw an opportunity to begin transforming the way the League of Nations attempted to ensure peace after the signing of the Kellogg-Briand Pact. Henry Stimson saw value in the League’s efforts to defuse international differences by sponsoring various conferences, but he believed the organization’s fundamental flaw was the collective security clause of its Covenant. He shared the view of many legal-internationalists who believed that it was not possible to force nations to pursue peaceful

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\(^{23}\) Herbert Hoover, *Message of the President of the United States to Congress*, 3 December 1929, *FRUS 1929*, vol. 1, v.
settlements. Instead of force, Stimson believed that peace could only be secured through humanity willingly choosing to pursue peaceful settlement, which he believed the Kellogg-Briand Pact had accomplished. Humanity’s acceptance of this agreement seemed to Stimson as proof that public opinion was coalescing around the U.S. peace vision. The administration sought to build on this international support to alter the way the League of Nations reacted to the outbreak of war. It thus worked to get the League to adopt the non-recognition principle that the United States had championed in Central America.24

Stimson’s attempt to convince the League of Nations to adopt the policies of the pax-Americana system began with the Manchurian crisis of 1931.25 The crisis began on September 18, 1931, when Japanese forces attacked the city of Mukden in southern Manchuria. As it became clear that Japan had launched a significant attack on the Chinese province, the world was forced to decide how it was going to respond to Japan’s aggression. The Hoover administration decided that it would work with the League of Nations, but in a way that implemented the ideals of the pax-Americana system.26


25 Manchuria was a region of northern China that was rich agriculturally and in natural resources, which were extremely attractive to the mineral poor mainland of Japan.

When the crisis erupted, Stimson was apprehensive about the response of the League of Nations to Japan’s aggression. By the fall of 1931 the Council of the League of Nations was contemplating invoking Article XV of its Covenant, which threatened economic sanctions be placed on Japan. The administration felt that if economic sanctions were placed upon Japan, the crisis would likely escalate. As Stimson wrote, “I concur . . . as to the danger of a blockade leading to war. It is almost a belligerent step and in the case of Jefferson, although the situation there was entirely different in 1807, it did eventually take this country into war.” Instead, the administration believed that the world should undertake to utilize moral principles to convince Japan of the immorality of its actions and persuade it to withdraw from Manchuria. The administration believed this course of action would be successful because it saw international moral pressure as having ousted Japan from the Chinese Province of Shantung following World War I. With this viewpoint, the administration worked to prevent the League of Nations from placing harsh economic sanctions on Japan and instead to implement the principles of the *pax-Americana.*

In the fall of 1931, the administration began working with the League of Nations to promote its non-aggressive response to the crisis, because as Henry Stimson argued, “The League of Nations is still bungling ahead” on the Manchurian Crisis. In order to guide the League to invoke the Kellogg-Briand Pact and to convince it to respond by utilizing moral persuasion, Hoover allowed Prentiss Gilbert to take a seat on the Council...
of the League of Nations.\textsuperscript{28} The goal of the administration was to demonstrate the effectiveness of its peace proposals, as Stimson wrote, “If we can only keep a war from coming now, the demonstration of peace power in the case of a union of the nations has been made and a tremendous addition has been made to the power of the League of Nations and the other treaties.”\textsuperscript{29}

When the League of Nations issued a resolution to end the hostilities in Manchuria in December 1931, the Hoover administration was pleased. The proposal called for an immediate halt to the fighting in Manchuria. In addition, a five member commission was dispatched to the province to study the problem and write a report to the Council of the League of Nations on how best to settle the issues that had led to the eruption of violence. Stimson believed the League’s response was an endorsement of U.S. efforts to create a new international system, as he wrote, “It means the application, with the consent of both China and Japan, of modern and enlightened methods of conciliation to the solution of this problem. The principle which underlies it exists in many treaties of conciliation to which the United States is a party and which have played in recent years a prominent part in constructive peace machinery of the world.” He believed that the League’s response validated the Kellogg-Briand Pact and the Nine-Power Treaty’s ability to calm international crises in methods other than aggressive

\textsuperscript{28} Prentiss Gilbert was the American Consul in Geneva, and had the unofficial task of reporting on the activity of the League of Nations to the State Department.

As Stimson concluded, “These are the essential principles for which the United States and the nations represented on the Council have been striving, and it is in itself a signal accomplishment that there has been arrayed behind these principles in a harmonious cooperation such a solid alignment of the nations of the world.”

By January 1932 it had become clear that the League’s decision to send a commission to Manchuria was not calming the situation, and thus the administration decided to announce the Stimson Doctrine. After the Japanese occupied the city of Chinchou on January 2, 1932, Stimson wrote what has become known as the Stimson Doctrine. This statement declared that the United States “does not intend to recognize any situation, treaty or agreement which may be brought about by means contrary to the covenants and obligations of the Pact of Paris of August 27, 1928, to which Treaty both China and Japan, as well as the United States, are parties.” This doctrine was a global extension of the non-recognition policy that the United States had championed in its agreements with Latin America throughout the era of the Republican Ascendancy.

Stimson’s original declaration was unilaterally issued in a message to China and Japan on January 7, 1932, but the administration hoped that the pronouncement would be adopted by the world. The administration independently issued the statement in order to prevent other nations from insisting on changes that might contradict the principles of the

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30 The Nine-Power treaty was one of the major agreements that were reached at the Washington Conference of 1921-1922. In this treaty, all signatory nations agreed to respect the territorial integrity of China and to adhere to the “open door” principle in that nation.


pax-Americana, and the European nations initially reacted coolly. After the Hoover administration continued to push the League to endorse the announcement, in March 1932, the Assembly of the League of Nations unanimously voted in favor of a resolution that echoed the Stimson Doctrine. Once the League decided to follow the lead of the United States, Stimson felt that he had taken the correct course of action. He would say of the situation, “I should have received a number of adverse replies and perhaps no support whatever. I knew that and made the decision to act alone, believing that such leadership was the only way eventually to gather support. Such proved to be the fact, and I eventually got the support of every nation except Japan, only two months later, on March 11.”

The Manchurian Crisis led the Hoover administration to believe the League was beginning to adopt the ideals of a pax-Americana system, which eventually led it to utilize the League to assist in its efforts to settle inter-American crises. In two major breaches of the peace in the Western Hemisphere, the United States looked to the League in order to gain international support for its handling of the outbreak of fighting in South America while simultaneously thwarting a rival hemispheric peace movement. Thus, beginning in 1932, the Hoover administration reversed the U.S. policy concerning League involvement in Latin America in order to promote its vision of peace.


The Chaco Boreal Dispute

The Hoover administration believed that it was making headway in spreading the *pax-Americana* vision throughout the world by 1932, but the situation in Latin America remained troublesome. When the long-standing border dispute between Bolivia and Paraguay erupted over the Chaco Boreal region, the United States was concerned when a rival peace movement in the Western Hemisphere attempted to settle the dispute. In order to prevent a viable challenge to U.S. leadership in the region, the administration decided to allow the League of Nations to help settle the dispute. With the administration believing that the organization was adopting the tenets of the *pax-Americana* system, it held that it could place international pressure for these nations to accept a peaceful settlement while also thwarting the rival peace movement.

The dispute between Bolivia and Paraguay over the Chaco Boreal region had become a major international issue by the late 1920s. The region under dispute consisted of 115,000 square miles of sparsely inhabited land due to its remoteness and harsh natural conditions. While neither Bolivia nor Paraguay had any grand designs to heavily develop the area, both saw the region as vital to their futures. Bolivia and Paraguay were the only landlocked countries in South America, and the region offered them enhanced access to the Paraguay River. Both countries saw the river, which connected to the Amazon and thus to the Atlantic Ocean, as the key to advancing their economic positions. The
opportunity for greater river access thus led both nations to fight for their claim to one of
the most remote regions in South America.35

The Chaco Boreal dispute had long been a potential threat to the peace of South
America, but for many years neither nation actively sought the territory. Like many of
the border disputes that arose throughout Latin America, this one arose out of the ill-
defined boundaries of the old Spanish Empire. Once the nations of South America
gained independence, the vagueness of the old Spanish colonies led to disputes between
the newly independent nations. Both Paraguay and Bolivia made claims on the Chaco
Boreal region following their independence, but neither nation was aggressive in pressing
its claims. The situation changed as a result of the War of the Triple Alliance in 1865 in
which Paraguay was defeated by an allied force of Brazilian, Argentinean, and
Uruguayan armies. As one of the victors, Argentina eventually demanded control of a
larger section of the Chaco region. When Argentina expanded its claim in 1870,
Paraguay relied on the arbitration of the United States to settle the issue. President
Rutherford Hayes issued a ruling that divided the territory between the two powers.
Hayes’s refusal to consider the Bolivian claims on the territory was the genesis of the
Bolivian and Paraguayan conflict over the region. Following the ruling, Paraguay
claimed that the award proved its rightful possession of the territory, while Bolivia held
that its claims were never heard and that the award was thus invalid.36

35 Bruce W. Farcau, The Chaco War: Bolivia and Paraguay, 1932-1935 (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1996, 5-

36 Farcau, The Chaco War, 5-8.
By the mid-1920s, tensions rose between Bolivia and Paraguay when both nations expanded their military presence in the region. By the end of 1927 and into 1928 skirmishes between Paraguayan and Bolivian units became more common, and it was clear that continuous fighting between the forces of these two nations could erupt at any moment. On September 5, 1928, the situation ignited after Paraguay launched a surprise attack on a forward Bolivian military position, resulting in almost the entire Bolivian force being killed or captured. This incident sparked outrage throughout Bolivia, which responded by rushing reinforcements into the area. Once Bolivian forces were in position, they began attacking Paraguayan military outposts in the Chaco in retaliation.37

When the initial fighting erupted, the Coolidge administration sought to employ the Western Hemisphere peace machinery that it had been building throughout the 1920s. At the International Conference of American States on Conciliation and Arbitration, the U.S. delegation utilized the Pan American gathering to convince Bolivia and Paraguay to end the fighting. The nations of the conference offered their good offices to both nations, and appointed a sub-committee to lead the Pan American effort to restore peace. As a result, on January 3, 1929, the representatives of Bolivia and Paraguay signed a protocol that formed a Commission of Inquiry and Conciliation. This Commission of Neutrals was to be made up of two representatives from both Bolivia and Paraguay, and one member each from the United States, Mexico, Cuba, Uruguay, and Colombia. This commission was charged with investigating the matter and submitting proposals that

would satisfy both Bolivia and Paraguay in order to reach a peaceful settlement to the dispute. \(^{38}\)

During the first year of the Hoover administration, the Commission of Neutrals seemed to make substantial progress in preventing a full-scale war between Bolivia and Paraguay over the Chaco region. The commission held its initial meeting in Washington on March 13, 1929, and issued its report on the dispute on September 12, 1929. This document called for both nations to mutually forgive each other for the eruption of violence, the reestablishment of the status quo of December 5, 1928, and the renewal of diplomatic relations between the two nations. The commission’s resolution satisfied both Bolivia and Paraguay, and appeared to have settled the dispute without further bloodshed. While both governments agreed with the commission’s plan, the issue continued to simmer because the commission provided for merely a return to the status quo not a final settlement over the disputed territory. \(^{39}\)

While peace was maintained in the Chaco in 1929, both Bolivia and Paraguay continued to push their claims in the region. From 1929 to 1932, Bolivia pursued a policy to extend and consolidate its territory in the area. In order to accomplish this task, the Bolivian government established forts in the territory that had not been occupied by Paraguay and began building a road network that would be essential for the movement of


troops and equipment should war erupt. Paraguay also began preparing for a possibility of the outbreak of war. After 1928, it accelerated the modernization of its military through the purchase of European and American weaponry and the dispatch of its officers to Europe to receive training. Given the military buildup, Bolivia and Paraguay broke off diplomatic relations in July 1931.40

With tensions on the rise in 1931, the Commission of Neutrals renewed its efforts to prevent another outbreak of violence between Bolivia and Paraguay. In November 1931, it attempted to get the two nations to agree to reestablish diplomatic relations, submit the dispute to arbitration, not send any additional troops to the region, and conclude a non-aggression pact. As the negotiations between the two disputants and the Commission of Neutrals dragged on, suggestions were advanced that the United States should work alone to reach a settlement on the issue. The Hoover administration, however, refused to consider such a proposal because it believed utilization of the Council of Neutrals was promoting Latin American participation in the U.S. peace system. The United States believed that every time it got Latin Americans to involve themselves within the framework that it was trying to implement, the closer they became to fully accepting the principles of the pax-Americana system.41

The Commission of Neutrals’ effort to find a peaceful settlement was dashed when fighting broke out between Bolivia and Paraguay in June 15, 1932, forcing the

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Hoover administration to change course. Stimson was flabbergasted by the two nations’ inability to work out their seemingly insignificant differences peacefully, as he wrote, “Who are here trying to negotiate a pact of non-aggression between their two countries and thus take another step forward in settling the irritating difficulties between those two little nonsensical republics which have been bothering them now for two years.” Despite Stimson’s frustration over the outbreak of fighting, he did become active in attempting to bring the hostilities to a close once they erupted. The task was complicated, however, because the administration could not rely on the peace agreements the United States had championed during the Republican Ascendancy: Bolivia had not ratified the Gondra Treaty, and neither it nor Paraguay had formally ratified the Kellogg-Briand Pact.\(^{42}\)

Unable to use ratified treaties to help end the fighting, the administration sought to get other Latin American nations to apply the non-recognition principle to the crisis in the hope of convincing both nations to cease hostilities. After the fighting erupted, neither Paraguay nor Bolivia was readily cooperating with the Commission of Neutrals’ effort to restore the peace. Both nations were resistant to accept a cease-fire due to their refusal to relinquish their gains made on the battlefield. With the lack of success, the administration sought to utilize the Stimson Doctrine to restore order. On August 3, 1932, the administration was able to convince all nations of the Pan American Union to agree to send a diplomatic message to the two belligerents proclaiming that, “the nations of America declare that the Chaco dispute is susceptible of a peaceful solution and they earnestly request Bolivia and Paraguay to submit immediately the solution of this

controversy to an arrangement by arbitration or by such other peaceful means as may be acceptable to both.” In addition, it also announced that the Stimson Doctrine would be applied if the dispute was not peacefully settled. As the message stated, “The American nations further declare that they will not recognize any territorial arrangement of this controversy which has not been obtained by peaceful means nor the validity of territorial acquisitions which may be obtained through occupation or conquest by force of arms.”

Stimson saw great promise in this action, not only in Latin America but also internationally. He wrote in his diary that by getting all American nations to protest the war on the principles of the Kellogg-Briand Pact, “will be a great reinforcement of my recognition policy, and that will help materially in the situation with Japan.” The secretary hoped that with the nations of the Western Hemisphere agreeing with his doctrine, not only would the region continue moving toward the pax-Americana vision but it would also demonstrate to Japan that the Americas were morally opposed to the use of aggression to achieve national goals.43

While the United States was attempting to utilize the Pan American movement to settle the dispute, Argentina initiated a challenge to U.S. leadership in the region. It had been a vocal opponent of the U.S. interventionist policies in Latin America, and in 1932 it began seeking to limit U.S. influence in South America. On March 16, 1932, Argentine Minister for Foreign Affairs Carlos Saavedrea Lamas convinced Argentina,

Brazil, Chile, and Peru to attempt to negotiate a settlement of the Chaco dispute. Lamas hoped that the ABCP Powers would be able to establish themselves as the primary bloc of nations that South Americans would rely upon to help settle continental disputes, as he stated these powers were attempting to create a “permanent organization claiming exclusive jurisdiction over future conflicts on the South American continent.” During the crisis, the ABCP Powers positioned themselves as an alternative to the U.S. dominated Commission of Neutrals, by declaring that they were going to settle the dispute without consulting the United States. In a statement to the press, Stimson responded to Argentina’s action by saying the United States wanted “nations like Argentine, Peru, Chile, and Brazil [to] take an interest in these quarrels as they are doing and bring their influence to bear to stop them. We do not in the least regret, or resent, what Argentina is doing now, although she is doing it in a very ungracious way and is trying to make capital out of us.” Instead of openly opposing the ABCP Powers’ attempt to settle the crisis the administration intermediately called upon them to propose solutions to the crisis, in order to demonstrate that it was not hostile to any nation taking the initiative to strive to maintain peace. The administration, however, was concerned about the challenge to U.S. leadership in securing peaceful settlements in the hemisphere and sought to thwart this threat by securing global support for its efforts. With the United States belief that the League of Nations was accepting its peace policies, the administration concluded that it could convince the organization to endorse its position and in the process continue

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44 During the Chaco crisis, the ABCP Powers were commonly referred to as the Neighboring Countries.
moving it toward fully adopting the ideals of the *pax-Americana* system, while also blunting the threat of the ABCP Powers.\(^{45}\)

While not overtly hostile to the intervention of the ABCP Powers publicly, the Hoover administration was concerned that it was a danger to the U.S. peace vision and thus sought to ensure that those states did not use the League of Nations to gain influence in the crisis. Worried that Argentina might try to convince the League of Nations to follow the lead of the ABCP Powers instead of backing the plans laid out by the U.S. Commission of Neutrals, the administration instructed its diplomatic personnel in Geneva to prevent Argentina from precipitating such a development. As Undersecretary of State Francis White wrote to Hugh Wilson, “I do not think that [Eric] Drummond or any of the European members of the League can possibly understand the political situations that exist in Bolivia and Paraguay and in the neighboring countries, the alignment of some of the neighboring countries with one or the other of the contending countries, and the jealousy between those neighboring countries, each one trying to spike the suggestions of the other and get support for its own.”\(^{46}\)

The Hoover administration was concerned about Argentina’s ability to utilize the League because the organization was monitoring the events in Chaco. The League of


\(^{46}\)Francis White to Hugh R. Wilson, 19 September 1932, Box 12, Folio 15, White MSS; Francis White to Hugh R. Wilson, 20 September 1932, Box 12, Folio 15, White MSS; White MSS; Francis White to Hugh R. Wilson, 5 November 1932, Box 12, Folio 15, White MSS; Lester D. Langley, *America and the Americas: The United States in the Western Hemisphere* (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 1989), 138-40.
Nations began discussing the issue almost immediately after hostilities broke out in June 1932, when Bolivia and Paraguay each sent notes to the Secretary-General of the organization claiming the other’s actions had caused the eruption of violence. In September 1932, the Council of the League of Nations began to consider the course the organization should take to end the fighting between two of its member nations, as it was required to do under the terms of its Covenant. The League Council was split, with many powers advocating that the League take a back seat in the dispute because the organization was dealing with the Manchuria Crisis and involved in disarmament talks. Other members of the council, most of them smaller powers, insisted that the League become heavily involved in the dispute.\(^{47}\)

When examining the situation, the administration concluded that by working with the League, the United States could simultaneously lessen the threat of the ABCP Powers and further internationalize the principles of the \textit{pax-Americana} system. As it had in the Manchurian Crisis of 1931, the administration endeavored to get the League of Nations to follow the lead of the United States. While the United States did not turn over control of the negotiations to the League of Nations, it did feel that the League’s assistance on the matter would only strengthen the U.S. attempt to bring peace to the region, using the principles of the \textit{pax-Americana}. The administration accepted the League’s proposal to create a Committee of Three, which included representatives of the Irish Free State, Spain, and Guatemala. This commission closely monitored the dispute and received

updates from the United States on the Commission of Neutrals’ efforts to obtain a just settlement.\textsuperscript{48}

By late 1932, the administration was utilizing the League to strengthen the moral standing of its proposals concerning the Chaco dispute. On December 15, 1932, the Commission of Neutrals called on both belligerents to terminate hostilities and settle the dispute through arbitration. The commission called for a cease-fire within 48 hours after the agreement was signed and demobilization of both nations’ armies. Once this was accomplished, then the two nations would be given four months to negotiate a settlement on Chaco; if no agreement was reached, the dispute would be settled through a court of arbitration or by the Permanent Court of International Justice. The Hoover administration was able to convince the League to support this proposal. On December 17, 1932, the League stated that it “considers that [the] proposal of Neutrals Commission provides [an] honorable and just settlement of [the] question and that by loyal acceptance and observance thereof both parties will acquit themselves of duties incumbent upon them by virtue of [the League’s] Covenant.” The administration hoped that the League’s backing would help convince Bolivia and Paraguay of the righteousness of this plan, but both countries balked at the proposal. While both nations rejected the plan, the administration continued to try and convince these nations to accept it by arguing that the world recognized it as a fair proposal, saying to them, “Proposal of December 15 has been recognized by your Excellency’s Government and by all the other Governments of

America, as well as by the League of Nations, as being a just and honorable one. It is inadmissible, therefore, that a peaceful solution of this conflict cannot be found. To continue fighting when such a fair basis of negotiation and settlement is offered will be condemned most severely by history.”

After both nations rejected the proposal of December 1932, the Hoover administration continued to get the League of Nations to support U.S. policies. Following the failure of its December plan, the administration proposed an arms embargo on Bolivia and Paraguay. The administration asked the U.S. Congress to empower the president to place an arms embargo on Western Hemispheric nations that were engaged in war. In January 1933, the administration seemingly won congressional approval, after the Senate voted unanimously in favor of the embargo. After the Senate had voted, however, Senator Hiram Bingham filed a motion to reconsider the measure. With his objections, the Senate was unable to act on the measure until after the Hoover administration left office. While Hoover’s effort to place an arms embargo on Bolivia and Paraguay was stalled in the U.S. Senate, the administration attempted to get the League to agree to stop arm shipments to these nations. Stimson convinced Great Britain and France to support this U.S. proposal. On February 25, 1933, they proposed that

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50 Senator Hiram Bingham of Connecticut was absent from the initial vote on the proposed arms embargo. He asked the Senate to reconsider the measure because he feared that an embargo threatened to lead the United States away from its position of neutrality in international conflicts.
Article XI of the Covenant be invoked, placing an arms embargo on Bolivia and Paraguay. The organization unanimously voted in favor of an embargo, but it did not go into effect until the U.S. Congress finally approved of the scheme.51

While the administration utilized the League to further its peace proposals concerning the Chaco dispute, it continued to oppose any effort of the League to take the lead in ending the fighting. By late January 1933, the conflict between Bolivia and Paraguay was intensifying and thus the League proposed that a new commission be created that would seek to get these nations to accept a cease-fire. The Hoover administration balked at the proposal, arguing that efforts of the ABCP Powers and the Commission of Neutrals be given more time to settle the crisis. After the League countered by proposing that the commission be made up of an American, an Argentine, and a representative from a small European nations, the administration protested in February 1933 that Argentina was not acting as a neutral party but instead was strongly favored Paraguay in the dispute. This demonstrates that the administration was seeking to lead the organization to its vision, and not that it fully trusted the League because they had not come to fully accept the principles of the pax-Americana system. Although the administration was able to block the League’s efforts to take the lead in the dispute, it was unable to end the fighting before it left office. The war, in fact, dragged on until

1935 when a peace treaty was negotiated, but the final settlement was not official until the treaty was signed in 1939.\textsuperscript{52}

The Hoover administration was ultimately unable to find a peaceful solution to the Chaco War before it left office, but during the crisis it consistently sought to promote the policies of the \textit{pax-Americana} system. When faced with a challenge from Argentina to its leadership in the Western Hemisphere, the administration responded by using the League to help promote its ideas. While it utilized the League to help promote the U.S. proposals to end the conflict between Bolivia and Paraguay, it opposed the organization taking the lead in ending the fighting. In all of these efforts, the administration sought to convince other nations to follow its lead rather than forcing them to do so.

Simultaneously as Hoover was attempting to deal with the Chaco War, he would be faced with another war in South America over Leticia.

\textbf{Leticia}

While the Hoover administration was confronting the Chaco dispute, at the end of its time in office it also had to deal with a dangerous situation developing in Leticia. Leticia was a remote port on the Amazon River with a population of 300 to 500 that threatened to draw the nations of Peru, Colombia, Brazil, and Ecuador into a war. This sparsely populated area would again test U.S. leadership when its Western Hemispheric  

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{52} Hughes Wilson to Henry Stimson, 27 January 1933, FRUS 1933, Vol. 4, 262; Henry Stimson to Hugh Wilson, 30 January 1933, FRUS 1933, Vol. 4, 263-64; The Chairman of the Commission of Neutrals to the Minister in Switzerland, 2 February 1933, FRUS 1933, vol. 4, 265-66.}
peace system was unable to defuse the crisis and again it turned to the League of Nations to facilitate the use of U.S. principles to end the conflict.\textsuperscript{53}

Like many other threats to peace in Latin America, the Leticia dispute originally arose out of the vague boundaries of the old Spanish Empire that had not been fully settled after these nations gained independence. In 1922, Peru and Colombia had signed the Salomón-Lozano Treaty, which was to have settled the issue between the two nations. Brazil, however, felt that the treaty hurt its interests in the region and thus objected to the agreement. Charles Evans Hughes worked to settle the issue in 1925, in the hope of defusing another threat of war in the Western Hemisphere. The United States believed that such action would not only help ensure hemispheric peace but also be the “best evidence of its [U.S.] pacific policy and its desire to be helpful to the countries concerned.”\textsuperscript{54}

Hughes became more engaged in the dispute in 1925, when he attempted to promote a settlement that would demonstrate to the region that the United States was working in the interests of peace and not for any nation’s selfish advantage. By the beginning of 1925, Hughes was seemingly able to make quick headway in negotiating a peaceful solution to the problem. The deal he brokered called for Colombia to recognize Brazilian sovereignty over a portion of the territory in return for Colombia gaining river navigation rights. This agreement was reached on March 4, 1925, and the resulting treaty

\textsuperscript{53} Manley O. Hudson, \textit{The Verdict of the League: Colombia and Peru at Leticia} (Boston: World Peace Foundation, 1933), 1-5.

was formally ratified in 1930. With this agreement, it seemed that the United States was able to pacify another potential threat, but the agreement began to fall apart in the early 1930s.\footnote{Miles Poindexter to Charles Evans Hughes, Telegram, 15 July 1924, FRUS 1924, Vol. 1, 293-94; Piles to Charles Evans Hughes, Telegram, 1 February 1924, FRUS 1924, Vol. 1, 294; Charles Evans Hughes to (Colombia) Piles, Telegram, 22 March 1924, FRUS 1924, Vol. 1, 295; “Memorandum by the Secretary of State of a Conversation with the Colombian Minister (Olaya),” 4 December 1924, FRUS 1924, Vol. 1, 302-03; “Memorandum by the Secretary of State of a Conversation with the Peruvian Ambassador (Velarde),” 12 December 1924, FRUS 1924, Vol. 1, 303; Charles Evans Hughes to Morgan (Brazil), Telegram, 7 January 1925, FRUS, Vol. 1, 436-37; Charles Evans Hughes to Morgan, Telegram, 23 January 1925, FRUS 1925, Vol. 1, 438; “Proces-Verbal of a Meeting Between the Secretary of State, the Peruvian Ambassador (Belarde), the Colombian Minister (Olaya, and the Brazilian Charge (Gracie),” 4 March 1925, FRUS 1925, Vol. 1, 461-62; Walters, \textit{A History of the League of Nations}, 536-37.}

While the Leticia dispute had seemingly been settled with a treaty between Colombia and Brazil, many local Peruvians were dissatisfied with the outcome of the negotiations. After the agreement was signed, Colombia began to build a river port at the small Indian village of Leticia in order to gain access to the Amazon River. In September 1932, a Peruvian militia force from Loreto undertook a 200 mile journey and attacked the small Colombian garrison in Leticia. At first the Peruvian Government condemned the attack and seemed to endorse returning Leticia to Colombia. Luis M. Sánchez Cerro, the president of Peru, however, abruptly altered Peru’s stance when he refused to disavow the attack when pressed by the State Department, saying at this early moment that “the matter was purely domestic.” By November 1932, Peru had reinforced Leticia with troops; Colombia responded by arming six vessels and sending them up the Amazon River in order to regain control of the territory.\footnote{Dearing (Peru) to Henry Stimson, Telegram, 2 September 1932, FRUS 1932, Vol. 5, 270-71; Rogers (Acting Sec of State) to Dearing, Telegram, 3 September 1932, FRUS 1932, Vol. 5, 271; Dearing to Henry Stimson, Telegram, 3 September 1932, FRUS 1932, Vol. 5, 272-75; DeConde, \textit{Hoover’s Latin-American Policy}, 39-41; Walters, \textit{A History of the League of Nations}, 536-37.}
After receiving reports of the situation, Stimson was concerned about the consequences of Peru’s actions in Leticia. He immediately called upon Peru to stand down in Leticia and blamed it for the troubles in the region. He also believed that the crisis needed to be settled quickly in order to defend U.S. peace efforts in the region, as he stated, “The Leticia incident is still on, and it is perfectly indefensible on the part of Peru. Peru and Colombia are drifting into war over it and if they do, it will be one of the worst incidents to show how superficial all the peace work we are doing here [is].” With this view, Stimson refused to consider a Peru’s proposal to reopen negotiations over Leticia before its troops were withdrawn from the town. Stimson saw this as an affront to legal-internationalist principles, because if accepted, all nations that previously signed agreements that settled disputed boundaries would be tempted to use military action to reopen negotiations if they were not fully satisfied by the original treaty. In response to the situation, Stimson attempted to get the nations of the Western Hemisphere to unite in their condemnation of Peru’s actions. Stimson wanted to make sure that the United States was seen in Latin America as working with regional nations to keep the peace and not acting on its own in order to blunt any charges of U.S. imperialism. His instructions to U.S. diplomatic personnel in Peru stated, “you will of course have in mind that this Government does not desire to be singled out as the only Government to bear the burden of working for peace in South America and of supporting the declaration of August 3, which was subscribed to by all the American states. We are willing to do what we can to assist in a friendly manner to keep this question within proper bounds, but we have no
responsibility to act as sole guardian of the peace of Latin America nor do we desire to assume such responsibility."

While the administration sought to use Pan Americanism to settle the dispute, this effort was hampered because its effort to utilize the peace machinery that the United States had built in Latin America during the Republican Ascendancy was thwarted. On October 3, 1932, the United States appealed to the Permanent Commission on Inter-American Conciliation at Washington, which had been created by the Gondra Treaty, to investigate the crisis. This effort failed because Colombia insisted that the area was its undisputed territory and that the matter was thus a purely domestic issue that was not eligible for the commission to review. To make matters worse for the administration, Ecuador in November sent a note to the United States seeking to ensure that its interest in the region was not ignored during the negotiations. Stimson said of the note, “It affects great interest in the preservation of peace there, but the underlying purpose of the note was for Ecuador to be able to fish in the troubled waters in the case there should really be a row, and to get what she wanted in that disputed region.” When the U.S. effort to apply the hemispheric peace machinery to the crisis was thwarted and the other powers began making claims, the administration decided to turn to the League of Nations for assistance.


58 Francis White, “Memorandum by the Assistant Secretary of State, 4 October 1932, FRUS 1932, vol. 5, 281-82; The Minister in Colombia to the Secretary of State, 5 October 1932, FRUS 1932, vol. 5, 282; The
By January 1933, the League was beginning to get involved in the dispute, and the administration was encouraged that it was acting in accordance with legal-internationalist principles. By the beginning of 1933 both the United States and the League were concerned that the crisis threatened the principle that treaties were a legally binding obligation upon nations. Stimson had no doubt that the League was supporting this view when it refused to accept Peru’s request that the organization take action to prevent Colombia from attacking Leticia. The League responded to this request by stating that under the terms of the treaties concerning the area, Leticia was Colombia’s territory, which it had the right to restore to its control. The administration was encouraged that the League was taking the same position as the United States in defending treaties, as Stimson wrote, “We heard during the day from Geneva that the League of Nations had taken action which was exactly along the same lines as ours. They declined Peru’s request to intervene against Colombia’s approach up the Amazon, saying expressly that Colombia had a right to restore order in Leticia, because it was admittedly her territory.”

With the administration’s belief that the League was supporting U.S. peace principles, it did not object when the organization formally involved itself in the crisis.

On January 14, 1933, the Council of the League of Nations sent a telegram to both Peru

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Ecuadoran Minister to the Secretary of State, 12 November 1932, FRUS 1932, vol. 5, 292-94; Memorandum by the Chief of the Division of Latin American Affairs, 15 November 1932, FRUS 1932, vol. 5, 294-95; Henry Stimson, Diary, 15 November 1933, Stimson Diaries, Vol. 5, 170-72; DeConde, Hoover’s Latin-American Policy, 41-43.

and Colombia that reminded the two nations of their responsibility to work out their
differences peacefully. In February, Colombia invoked Article XV of the Covenant of
the League of Nations, and the League formally got involved in the dispute. 60 The State
Department responded to this development by announcing that the League’s action did
not violate the Monroe Doctrine and stating that the United States hoped that the League
could find a peaceful solution to the problem. On February 25, 1933, the League
announced a proposal for the settlement of the Leticia dispute. In this proposal, the
League of Nations suggested that Peru evacuate the territory and that control of the area
would be turned over to a commission of the League of Nations. Once this had occurred,
the commission would be charged with settling the issue. After it had issued its proposal
the League of Nations asked the United States for its support. Stimson replied on
February 27, 1933, "I find the proposal suggested by the League of Nations a most
straightforward, helpful one, which, if accepted by both parties, should make possible a
peaceful solution of the present controversy, honorable to both Governments." 61

The Leticia dispute was not settled by the time that the Hoover administration left
office in March 1933. Throughout its remaining time in office, the administration

60 Article XV of the Covenant of the League of Nations stated that if a situation developed that threatened
war between members of the organization, the matter would be turned over to the Council of the League of
Nations. The Council would then issue a report on the issue that would stating the facts of the situation.
This report would be used as a guide to help settling the dispute between the powers concerned, or if no
agreement was reached, it would be utilized by the League to decide the organization future reaction.

61 Henry Stimson to The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia, 27 February 1933, Box 29, Folio 4,
White MSS; Henry Stimson, 27 February 1933, vol. 5, Stimson MSS, 624; “The League Proposal of
February 25, 1933,” Box 29, Folio 4, White MSS; Colombia Invokes League Covenant,” 19 February
1933, New York Times, 1; Henry Stimson, Diary, 27 February 1933, Stimson Diaries, Vol. 5, 624; Walters,
A History of the League of Nations, 536-38; Manley O. Hudson, The Verdict of the League: Colombia and
Peru at Leticia (Boston, MA: World Peace Foundation, 1933), 11-12.
supported League action in the dispute. The administration saw that the League was working in the same line as the United States, and thus had no problem with the organization taking action in settling a purely American dispute. The issue would be left for the incoming Roosevelt administration, which continued to work with the League of Nations in order to settle the dispute between Colombia and Peru. In the end, the issue was settled in 1934, with Colombia regaining control of the territory.

Conclusion

During its time in office, the Hoover administration altered the nation’s Latin America policy. The administration came to office with the plan to improve relations with Latin American nations in order to support U.S. leadership in the region. While Hoover proclaimed that his administration would usher in a new era in U.S.-Latin American relations, his decision not to immediately liquidate the interventions in Haiti and Nicaragua convinced many Latin Americans otherwise. Instead of gaining Latin American trust, the administration faced growing criticism throughout the region that eventually led Argentina to create an alternative to the peace system developed by the United States during the Republican Ascendancy. To make matters worse, when crises erupted in Chaco and Leticia, the administration was unable to apply the peace machinery developed over the course of a decade to end the fighting.

While the Hoover administration was frustrated at the developments in Latin America, it felt that it made substantial headway in internationalizing the principles of the
pax-Americana. After the perceived U.S. successes, such as the acceptance of both the Kellogg-Briand Pact and the Stimson Doctrine, the administration concluded that the League was not as threatening to its vision of peace as it once had been. With this perspective, the administration began seeking League assistance in settling disputes in the Western Hemisphere. The administration was confident that the League was following the lead of the United States, and concluded that by working with the organization its principles could gather more influence. While the administration believed that such action was beginning to spread its peace system globally, its efforts were ultimately in vain. The Republican efforts were unable to prevent the outbreak of war, not only in Latin America but also throughout the world.
Conclusion

This dissertation has begun to fill a gap in the historical literature concerning the years of the Republican Ascendancy. By examining the overlooked question of why the United States attacked League activity in Latin America throughout much of the era only to seemingly abruptly change course by asking the organization to involve itself in intra-American disputes in 1932, this work demonstrates that economic issues were not the only major factors driving the formulation of U.S. foreign policy toward Latin America during the era. While there were numerous important economic issues that the United States attempted to secure during the period, the Harding, Coolidge, and Hoover administrations were pursuing what they believed to be an altruistic attempt to lessen the chances of the outbreak of future wars. Following the conclusion of World War I, many Americans believed that the United States had to take the lead in reforming the international system to prevent the outbreak of another war. These administrations took it upon themselves to realize this lofty objective by seeking to transform the international system of the Western Hemisphere, and thus they created their policy toward Latin American in a manner that they believed would help achieve this goal.

After the First World War concluded in late 1918, there was a general consensus that Americans must lead the world to peace, but there was disagreement concerning how the United States should undertake this difficult task. Within the United States there were two primary views on the subject. Wilsonians believed the United States should
take a leadership role in the newly formed League of Nations in order to use the organization to guide the world to peace. Other Americans believed that instead of the United States joining the League of Nations, it should adopt an alternative approach based on legal-international principles.

The administrations of the Republican Ascendancy were adherents of the legal-internationalist perspective. Their fundamental problem with the League of Nations was that it relied on hard paternalism to compel the world to accept peace. Republican leaders believed that the Covenant of the League of Nations sought to coerce humanity to settle international disputes peacefully, or face a collective response from its members. They believed that this scheme would be unable to prevent the outbreak of war because the Covenant did not fundamentally alter the mindset of humanity. Without changing people’s view that war was justified if their core national interests were threatened, they would risk facing a collective response in order to defend them. In addition, because national interests were diverse, a collective response to the outbreak of war would be near impossible. With this perspective, the Republican administrations created an alternative approach to attempting to secure world peace.

The Republican approach, which was formulated primarily by Charles Evans Hughes, utilized a soft paternalistic strategy to get the world to adopt the U.S. legal-internationalist vision. These administrations sought to internationalize legal principles, such as the rule of law and equality under the law, which the United States believed led to its rise to world power status. They held that if these principles became the basis for a *pax-Americana* international system, disputes between nations could be in the same way
that the U.S. court system adjudicated personal conflicts among American citizens. As American citizens accepted the court’s rulings, because they accepted these verdicts as just, humanity in general would come to accept international tribunal rulings if they were based on U.S. legal principles. Hughes theorized that the only way to successfully lead humanity to accept such a method to settle international disputes was to adopt a soft paternalistic approach. The United States sought to spread its principles by proposing agreements that people would predictably accept. With this strategy, these administrations sought to lay the groundwork for a legal-internationalist system while simultaneously conditioning nations to settle their disputes peaceful through the utilization of legal international agreements. This approach was essential because, as Hughes argued, people could not be forced to reject war, instead they must freely accept peace.

When looking at the situation they inherited, these administrations concluded that the most effective way to begin implementing the *pax-Americana* system was to focus much of their attention in Latin America. The Harding administration realized that any attempt to immediately create an alternative organization to the League of Nations would result in failure. The global powers showed no interest in such a scheme, and domestic opposition would threaten the administration’s ability to successfully pass its agenda. Thus, the United States focused on Latin America to begin building its alternative system. The region seemed to be an ideal place to begin transforming the world’s international system for two primary reasons. First, domestic opposition would be minimized due to the long tradition of the United States being involved in the area.
Second, racial views of the day led the administrations to believe that Latin Americans would be willing to accept their peace vision.

During much of the era of the Republican Ascendancy, the U.S. policy toward Latin America was driven by the desire to lead the region to accept those administrations’ peace policies. Throughout the period, the U.S. pursued three major goals. It sought to thwart the League of Nations from gaining undue influence in the region. It also sought to improve U.S.-Latin American relations in order to repair the damage done by U.S. military interventions into the Caribbean during the first decades of the twentieth century. By improving relations, the administrations hoped that Latin Americans would be more willing to begin concluding agreements with the United States that sought to begin establishing the framework for the *pax-Americana* system in the Western Hemisphere. Finally, the United States sought to mediate disputes using accepted international laws in the hope of demonstrating the effectiveness of its peace vision. In each of these issues, the Republican administrations did not try to force these nations into accepting U.S. leadership, but instead attempted to convince them to adopt their stance, and thus hopefully alter their behavior by freely accepting the change. The United States hoped that if it was successful in creating an effective peace system in the hemisphere, then the region would become an example for the rest of the world to emulate.

Throughout much of the decade of the 1920s, the Republican administrations believed that they were succeeding in their objective of altering the international system of the Western Hemisphere. The United States was able to prevent the League of Nations from involving itself in intra-American disputes, thus limiting their influence in the
region. The Harding and Coolidge administrations were able to help settle long-standing regional boundary disputes, such as between Costa Rica and Panama and the Tacna-Arica dispute. In the process they were able to gain Latin American support for these rulings. In addition, they felt that they were succeeding in improving U.S.-Latin American relations by initiating the process of removing U.S. troops from Latin America. These successes seemed to be confirmed when Latin Americans were willing to sign agreements that began to set up American tribunals to defuse regional crises, such as the Gondra Treaty.

While the United States believed it was making progress in Latin America, it was ultimately unable to fully gain the trust of many Latin Americans. The nation was seemingly moving to liquidate ongoing interventions in the Caribbean, but the delay in withdrawing from the Dominican Republic and Haiti raised suspicion among many people in the region, who doubted that the United States had really altered its policy toward the region. This feeling exploded after the Coolidge administration decided to launch a new intervention in Nicaragua after a civil war broke out there in 1926. The administration was able to conclude agreements that expanded the Gondra and the Bryan Arbitration Treaties in 1929, but the Latin American people were clearly moving away from the United States by that time. The Hoover administration renewed U.S. efforts to improve relations with its southern neighbors, but they were not successful in this attempt. When war broke out in South America, not only did the nations involved hesitate to adopt the policies advocated by the United States but other Latin American nations also began to challenge U.S. leadership in settling intra-American disputes.
Simultaneously, the United States began to believe that the world was adopting the principles of the *pax-Americana* system. In 1928, the Kellogg-Briand Pact was concluded, in which all signatory powers pledged to renounce military aggression as a national policy. In addition, the League of Nations voted to endorse the Stimson Doctrine that territory won through aggression would not be recognized. The Hoover administration held that these actions demonstrated that the League was rejecting the collective security clause of its Covenant and instead adopting the U.S. vision. With this perspective, the administration began to utilize the League of Nations to help settle the South American wars that broke out in the early 1930s. The United States then believed that the organization would follow its leadership, resulting in the increase in moral pressure on these nations to settle their disputes peacefully. In addition, by turning to the League the Hoover administration attempted to thwart the Latin American challenge of the ABCP Powers to assume leadership in settling intra-American disputes.

When the Hoover administration left office, it was already becoming clear that the Republican vision to reform the international system was failing to achieve its goal. The United States was unable to prevent or halt the fighting in South America by utilizing the agreements that it had championed throughout the 1920s and early 1930s. In addition, its hope that the world was beginning to adopt the *pax-Americana* system by the early 1930s proved fallacious as but the globe was already descending into chaos. Japan had already invaded Manchuria and shortly the fascist governments of Europe would adopt their aggressive foreign policies.
While the Republican efforts were unable to prevent the outbreak of numerous wars, including the worst war in human history, World War II, many Americans continued to advocate the continuation of their policies throughout this period. Franklin Roosevelt adopted Hoover’s “Good Neighbor Policy” and expanded it by finally renouncing the “right” of the United States to intervene in Latin America in order to improve relations with the region. During World War II, many Americans were still advocating Republican peace policies. Writing in 1944, Sumner Wells stated, “Many people have recently advocated a world order built upon the same foundations as the existing inter-American system. I am first to maintain . . . that the present agreements between the twenty-one American republics have resulted in the most advanced regional system ever to have been evolved. The system can worthily serve as a successful example of what free peoples can achieve.” The only weakness that Welles saw in globalizing this system was that it did not contain agreements that authorized the use of force in order to prevent war. He did see promise in the machinery of conciliation, mediation, and arbitration that the American states created to help settle all regional disputes. Not only were their ideas advocated in theory, these ideas were formally continued after the conclusion of World War II. When the Organization of American States was created in 1948 to replace the Pan American Union, the Gondra Treaty was the basis of how these states were to prevent the outbreak of regional wars.¹

Thus, the alternative vision to the League of Nations envisioned by the administrations of the Republican Ascendancy was an influential failure. This vision was

¹ Welles, *Time for Decision*, 368-70.
ultimately unable to prevent the outbreak of the numerous minor wars of the 1930s as well as World War II. While Republican policy clearly did not accomplish the desired outcome, its fundamentals held on inside the United States. Throughout the period leading up to the outbreak of the Cold War, Americans sought to continually build upon the original agreements reached during this period for the purpose of progressively creating a peaceful international system, as Charles Evans Hughes had first argued when he assumed the position of secretary of state in 1921.
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