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Quaker of Virtue: Herbert Hoover and His Humane Foreign Policy

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QUAKER OF VIRTUE: HERBERT HOOVER AND HIS HUMANE FOREIGN
POLICY

by

Ryan T. Peters

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ABSTRACT

QUAKER OF VIRTUE: HERBERT HOOVER AND HIS HUMANE FOREIGN POLICY

by

Ryan T. Peters

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2013
Under the Supervision of Professor Glen Jeansonne

This study examines the major foreign policy events of Herbert Hoover's presidency. The thesis uses newspapers, presidential memorandums as well as memoirs from key cabinet members in Hoover's administration to bring into account Hoover's background and upbringing as a motive for how he dealt with foreign policy issues throughout his four years in office and brings to light his efforts to create a better and more peaceful world. Beginning with his childhood, Hoover began to develop moral and character attributes that taught him the importance of helping neighbors and always acting humane when it came to issues of war, pain and suffering. Hoover organized massive relief efforts in Europe during and after World War I, saving millions from starvation and death. As President-elect, he traveled to Latin America on a quest for "good will" to repair a fractured United States-Latin American relationship. The Quaker strove for world peace and his administration took part in several disarmament conferences with the goal of reducing arms and ultimately an elimination of war. He also developed and set the precedent for summit diplomacy as a means of achieving peace and good will. The Manchurian Crisis of 1929-1933 brought Hoover's humanitarian policy to the Far East. The President implemented numerous decrees and steered his Secretary of State toward a

pacific resolution of the conflict. By securing peace in the Far East, Hoover kept the United States out of war and averted senseless death and destruction. Following the signing of the Versailles Treaty, intense and heavy-handed reparations were placed upon Germany. As a result, the economies of Europe collapsed and resentment developed in the citizens of Germany. Hoover attempted to curb the banking failure by implementing a debt moratorium and standstill agreement in an effort to nurse European economies back to health and prevent the spark of another world war. Ultimately, this study, by blending Hoover's moral character, ambitions and determination with his humane policies, attempts to dispute misconceptions of Hoover and his presidency. It adds to the missing historiography and strives to bring Herbert Hoover from the prejudice of condemnation and into more favorable light.

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This thesis is dedicated to those closest to me:

To my parents, Tom and Rosana. For always being there. For all their love and support through happy days and hard nights. For never missing a baseball game, bike race or scouting event. For taking the time to travel to libraries and museums, especially to the John F. Kennedy Library in Boston – spring 2010 and the Herbert Hoover Library in West Branch to help me research for this project – summer and fall 2013. For the August evenings of workbooks when everyone else was playing. Because you both instilled in me the qualities and character values to be a decent man. Because you led me to where I am today and where I am going in the future.

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Introduction: West Branch Values

Herbert Clark Hoover was born in a modest one-story, three-room farm cottage in the small town of West Branch, Iowa on August 10, 1874.¹ He was the middle child, having an older brother, Tad, and younger sister, Mary. Born on the edge of the frontier, his childhood was typical of a boy raised on the plains of middle-America. His days were filled with the excitement of swimming in the local creek, fishing for pan- and cat-fish and camping in the summer months, as well as sledding down snow-covered hills in order to satisfy a craving for speed during the long and harsh Midwestern winters.²

Hoover reflects on the days of his youth in the first volume of his memoirs:

I prefer to think of Iowa as I saw it through the eyes of a ten-year-old boy. Those were eyes filled with the wonders of Iowa's streams and woods, of the mystery of growing crops. They saw days filled with adventure and great undertakings, with participation in good and comforting things. They saw days of stern but kindly discipline.³

The days of chores, labor and school, planting corn, hoeing gardens, learning to milk cattle and sawing wood were unique to young Herb's life because of his staunch Quaker upbringing. In fact, Quakerism dominated his environment as both his parents were practicing Quakers, or more properly known as "Friends". His father, Jesse, was a blacksmith. His mother, Huldah, was educated as a school teacher and became an unpaid Quaker minister.⁴ Quakers emphasize "Inner Light," that is the spark within that

¹ Herbert Hoover, *The Memoirs of Herbert Hoover: Years of Adventure, 1874-1920* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1951), 4.

² Ibid, 1-3; Glen Jeansonne, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker, 1928-1933* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 2.

³ Hoover, *Years of Adventure*, 1.

provides a direction for one's moral compass. The idea that every individual uses intuition and conscience and that each person resembles a floating vessel in the grand sea that is God, is central to the Friends' beliefs. The Quaker sect preaches and practices humility, charity, equality and the treatment of all men as brothers. Friends protest against boasting and flaunting, instead focusing on adherence to "plain clothes" and "plain language." They are pacifists and opposed to slavery and racism. They take pride in their work and idleness is discouraged. Life revolves around the family, home and community. When Quakers encounter hard times, they are helped by their neighbors and the whole sect works together.⁵ These ideals became central to Hoover's moral code. They would come to fruition during his relief efforts in Europe and his good will toward Central and South America.

Quakers believe that "every man was enlightened by the divine light of Christ" and each member of the sect should "regularly ask themselves a list of demanding queries, a self-examination of virtues ranging from human brotherhood to moderation of speech and honor in one's worldly dealings."⁶ This "asking themselves a list of demanding queries" comes during prayer. Quaker services are held in a public meeting house and are silent, sometimes for hours, until a member is moved by their "Inner Light" to speak.⁷

⁴ Joan Hoff Wilson, *Herbert Hoover: Forgotten Progressive* (Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, 1992), 3-5.

⁵ Hoover, *Years of Adventure*, 8; Jeansonne, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker*, 2.

⁶ Richard Norton Smith, *An Uncommon Man: The Triumph of Herbert Hoover* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984), 59-60.

⁷ Jeansonne, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker*, 2; Martin Fausold, *The Presidency of Herbert C. Hoover* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1985), 1-3.

Hoover jokingly describes the hours of meditation in his memoirs:

Those who are acquainted with the Quaker faith, and who know the primitive furnishing of the Quaker meeting-house, the solemnity of the long hours of meeting awaiting the spirit to move someone, will know the intense repression upon a ten-year-old boy who might not even count his toes...it was strong training in patience.⁸

A literal belief of the Bible is also central to the Quaker religion. Individual Bible reading is part of the Friends' concept of education, explains Hoover. Great tolerance, conviction in spiritual inspiration and individual responsibility are concepts gained from Bible reading. Even babies are present at the invariable family prayers and Bible readings every morning. By the time Hoover left Iowa at the age of ten, he had "read the Bible in daily stints from cover to cover."⁹

Herb held fast to these teachings. As a child he never initiated a fight and during his adult life he never lost his temper in public. He always dressed plainly and never flaunted his possessions. Hoover was noted for his philanthropy and became self-reliant.¹⁰ In fact, self-reliance was a theme he stressed throughout his adult life and political career. As the Chairman of the Commission for the Relief of Belgium (CRB), he challenged the American people to help aid and support those starving in Belgium and Northern France. When the United States entered World War I, Hoover tasked his nation with not only becoming self-reliant for their own needs, but also to sacrifice for the servicemen and citizens of war-torn Europe.¹¹ As historian Glen Jeansonne states, "In many respects Hoover's was a typical Quaker personality: reticent, modest and generous

⁸ Hoover, *Years of Adventure*, 7.

⁹ Ibid, 8.

¹⁰ Jeansonne, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker*, 2.

¹¹ Smith, *An Uncommon Man*, 89.

– a man who never boasted and refused to attack others verbally. Though common among Quakers, such traits are rare among politicians.”¹²

Hoover’s early teachings of virtues of industry, honesty, truthfulness and helpfulness played a major role early on in his life, when he was orphaned by the age of eight. Jesse Hoover died of a heart attack at the age of thirty-four in 1880. Two years later Huldah succumbed to pneumonia after getting caught in a winter storm while walking home from a neighboring town where she was preaching. She was just thirty-five. Following their parents’ deaths, Herb and his siblings were split up by the Quaker council. Tad and Mary were sent to live with nearby relatives while Herb was placed in the care of his Uncle John on a farm near West Branch.¹³ His time there did not last long and the following year, at age ten, Herb was sent to live with relatives in Oregon.

Herb was taken in by his uncle, Henry John Minthorn, who was a country doctor in Newberg, Oregon, a Quaker settlement in the Willamette Valley. The young boy was at once put to work at chores that included churning butter, feeding his uncle’s team of horses, milking the cows and splitting wood. When Herb turned fifteen, Uncle Henry opened a Quaker land-settlement business in Salem, Oregon. Rather than attend high school, Hoover began working at the “distinguished position” of office boy.¹⁴ As Hoover describes it in his memoirs, “My duties as office-boy were not very exacting.”¹⁵ In his spare time, the young man was eager to learn. He kept many of the books used in the business, as well as collected others where he could, and became self-taught. “My

¹² Jeansonne, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker*, 2.

¹³ Smith, *An Uncommon Man*, 65-66.

¹⁴ Hoover, *Years of Adventure*, 11-12.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 12.

boyhood ambition,” he later said while President, “was to be able to earn my own living, without the help of anybody, anywhere.”¹⁶ Time and time again the Quaker virtue of self-reliance steered Herb along the road of life.

In the summer of 1891, Leland Stanford, Central Pacific Railroad magnate, politician and philanthropist, decided to found a university in memory of his son who died of typhoid. Stanford University was born. Against the wishes of his own family, who preferred he attend a Quaker college, Herb decided to take the entrance exams. He failed. After being allowed to take the exam again, this time failing some subjects but excelling in others, which impressed the professor that administered the exam, Hoover was admitted to the university as a member of the inaugural class. Arriving that fall ahead of his classmates, and at only seventeen years of age, Herb became Stanford’s first and youngest student. With spirituality and faith, he was destined to succeed due to his own individual effort.¹⁷ Hoover shined at Stanford. His determination to succeed on his own accord began with his first course, Geology 1, taught by world famous Professor John Caspar Branner. Herb savored the course five days a week and earned money for room and board by typing for Professor Branner.¹⁸ Hoover’s resolve continued as he became class treasurer, student body treasurer, managed the baseball and football teams, wrote the student body constitution and became well known on campus for his hard work, stamina and dedication.¹⁹

¹⁶ Smith, *An Uncommon Man*, 67.

¹⁷ Herbert Hoover, *American Individualism* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Page and Company, 1922), 26; Hoover, *Years of Adventure*, 16; Jeansonne, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker*, 3; Wilson, *Herbert Hoover: Forgotten Progressive*, 10-11.

¹⁸ Smith, *An Uncommon Man*, 69.

Hoover graduated from Stanford in 1895 with a degree in Geology and went to work as a mining engineer. Again, the diligent hard work of his Quaker upbringing would present itself as the newly minted engineer was forced to take a job shoveling ore and pushing handcars in the bowels of a mine in Grass Valley, California. After such accomplishment at Stanford, Hoover certainly did not think he would begin his career in this fashion. In his memoirs he tells of his expectations immediately after graduation:

On leaving college, I needed at once to find some person with a profit motive who needed me to help him earn a profit. At the risk of seeming counter-revolutionary or a defender of evil, I am going to suggest that this test for a job has some advantages. It does not require qualifications as to ancestry, religion, good looks or ability to get votes.²⁰

The optimism present in Hoover quickly met reality when the prospects for a white-collar job were soon exhausted. The engineer instead had to be content earning two dollars per every ten hour nightshift, working alongside “good mining men [who] had rooted skepticism concerning ‘them college educated fellers.’”²¹ This work did not bother Hoover in the least. He was happy to be supporting himself, even if just barely.

Salvation from the deep bowels of that California mine came soon enough. In October 1897, the London firm of Bewick, Moreing and Company asked Hoover’s boss to recommend someone “thirty-five years of age with seventy-five years of experience” to help bring American mining technology to the newly capitalized mines of Australia.²² Although lacking those prerequisites, the young engineer was given the job and he was at once off to the desolate mining town of Coolgardie, where it rained less than one inch per

¹⁹ Ibid, 70; Jeansonne, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker*, 4; George H. Nash, *Herbert Hoover and Stanford University* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1988), xi-xii, 15-19.

²⁰ Hoover, *Years of Adventure*, 25.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Smith, *An Uncommon Man*, 73-74.

year, the aborigines scraped out a primitive existence and there was plenty of “red dust, black flies and white heat.”²³ Hoover said of the place, “Every man here talks of when to go home. None come to stay except those who die....”²⁴

The Coolgardie mine thrived under the command of the young engineer. The mine earned \$65 million in ore and interest for Bewick, Moreing and Company. The firm’s owners were pleased and showed their appreciation by raising Hoover’s salary to \$10,000 annually. By the end of 1898, Hoover was given the opportunity to oversee a huge new mining operation in China. He was eager to set out on this new enterprise, there was one matter left to do however. Prior to his leaving for China, Hoover proposed to and married the love of his life, Lou Henry, whom he had met during his senior year at Stanford.

Hoover succeeded in China, much like he did in Australia, and was rewarded with \$250,000 of stock in his company’s firm.²⁵ Although very successful with Bewick, Moreing and Company, when his contract expired in 1908, Hoover decided not to renew it and instead set out as an independent consultant. By the time he was twenty-eight years old, the Quaker had traveled the world, specialized in resurrecting failing mining ventures and proved that the virtues and qualities taught to him as a child had helped steer him to where he was as a young man.²⁶ The pinnacle of Hoover’s “selfless humanitarianism, organizational virtuosity, stamina and fortitude” was still yet to come.²⁷

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid, 74, 76; Jeansonne, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker*, 5.

²⁶ Jeansonne, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker*, 4-6.

²⁷ Ibid, 1.

The engineer was living in London at the outbreak of World War I in 1914. Over the course of the next several years, Hoover mounted massive efforts in multiple campaigns of humanitarian service and relief. His dedication, fortitude and will to succeed aided in saving millions of lives of many nationalities. When Germany declared war on France on August 3, 1914, and sent an army of more than 2 million soldiers to invade Belgium, Great Britain was pulled into the conflict. Treaties had been signed to ensure Belgium's neutrality and when Germany violated these treaties, Britain declared war on Germany. Suddenly all British sailings to America were suspended, leaving thousands of Americans stranded in Europe and seeking a way back to the United States as a safe haven from the brewing war on the European mainland. Hoover and nine of his associates began to organize funds to help their fellow countrymen. Over the course of the next six weeks, Hoover's group distributed food, clothing, transatlantic tickets aboard steamships and cash to more than 120,000 Americans. They guaranteed more than \$1.5 million, much of it in personal checks, for the evacuation effort. Less than \$400 of the loans went unpaid in the end.²⁸ This short rescue effort did not go unnoticed.

When the Allies mounted a counterattack, they were able to push the Germans back to a line about 400 miles long, stretching from the Belgian front to the Swiss frontier. They would stay locked there for the next four years. All of Belgium, with its 7.5 million people, along with Northern France's population of 2.5 million was now occupied by the Germans. The British and French immediately blockaded Germany, its allies and occupied Belgium and Northern France as a means of controlling the flow of materials and war supplies to the enemy nations. One consequence of this blockade was

²⁸ Ibid, 6; Smith, *An Uncommon Man*, 80-81; Herbert Hoover, *An American Epic: Introduction, The Relief of Belgium and Northern France, 1914-1930, vol. 1* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1959), xxi.

that it also blocked all imports to the occupied areas. Belgium and Northern France were highly industrialized. Because of this, they depended on imports for seventy percent of their food, almost all textiles and clothing and most other raw materials. Thus, over 10 million Europeans were desperately caught between the “millstones of the German Army and the Allied blockade.”²⁹

Belgium and Northern France needed help. In his memoirs Hoover gives examples of just how desperate the situation was. An excerpt of a telegram from American Minister to Belgium Brand Whitlock to United States Secretary of State Robert Lansing says, “...now a grave situation confronts the land. In normal times Belgium produces only one-sixth of the foodstuffs she consumes. Within two weeks, there will be no more food in Belgium.”³⁰ Whitlock also appealed directly to President Woodrow Wilson stating, “In two weeks the civil population of Belgium, already in misery, will face starvation...”³¹ Because of his outstanding work in organizing and successfully rescuing the trapped American nationals, Hoover was approached by the American Ambassador to the United Kingdom, Walter Hines Page, and a delegation of Belgian and other European leaders and asked to lead a mission to save those people from starvation.³²

It would be a daunting task due to one specific challenge: diplomacy. The relief effort had to be organized and negotiated directly with hostile military and civilian leaders on both sides of the war. There had to be assurances that the relief was

²⁹ Hoover, *An American Epic*, xxi-xxiii.

³⁰ *Ibid*, 6.

³¹ *Ibid*.

³² Jeansonne, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker*, 6-7.

completely neutral. It would be very costly and that high cost had to be sustainable for the duration of the war, however long that may be. Hoover had to devise a plan to raise the money, purchase the supplies and then distribute all the food.³³ The infrastructure to accomplish such a feat would be nothing short of miraculous. On October 21, 1914, Hoover pondered the reality of the situation. He personally stood to lose his financial wealth if he invested in the effort and it failed. Hoover ignored this possibility and again, as he had so many times in his life, called upon his Quaker upbringing and moral code. Innocent people were in need and he was going to do anything in his power to help. “Let the fortune go to Hell,” said Hoover, and on October 22, 1914, the CRB was born.³⁴

Immediately Hoover went into action as the Chairman of the CRB. Since no effort of such had ever been undertaken, this job demanded improvisation. Over 350 volunteers were recruited.³⁵ On one occasion, the Chairman selected a volunteer by chance. On an inspection trip to the countryside assessing how best to begin the relief, Hoover came across a man and asked, “Hello there, can you make cornbread?” The man replied that he in fact could make cornbread. “You have a job,” said the Chairman. It turned out the man was once a cook in the United States Navy. Hoover procured him a uniform and the man began giving baking lessons to Belgian mothers trying to feed their children.³⁶

Food was bought or donated in the United States, brought to the coast by railroad, shipped across the Atlantic, unloaded in Rotterdam and sent from there to local

³³ George H. Nash, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: The Humanitarian, 1914-1917* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1988), 29-33.

³⁴ Smith, *An Uncommon Man*, 81.

³⁵ *Ibid*, 84.

³⁶ *Ibid*, 87.

distribution points.³⁷ Hoover also requisitioned dozens of mills, bakeries, factories, railways and warehouses throughout Great Britain in order to meet demand for food shipments. He tapped into funds held in Belgian banks to continue financing the commission. It was a tough job and Hoover held up to it. As the stress to maintain the relief effort rose, he stretched himself as Chairman. As President, he would later write, “No day went by without a fight to keep part of the mechanism from breaking down.”³⁸ In keeping with the Quaker faith, when the community encounters hard times, neighbors are there to help. Hoover was merely helping his earthly neighbors. By the thirtieth day after its formation, the CRB had shipped some 25,000 tons of food into Belgium, and another 60,000 was en route.³⁹

Again, harking back to his Quaker upbringing and the values of self-reliance and humility, Hoover instructed his aids and volunteers to play up the CRB itself as the true hero. He denounced reporters that praised him, refused foreign decorations and dreaded the day when “elderly ladies riding double-decker buses in London might tap him with their umbrellas and say, ‘Oh, you are the Relief man, aren’t you?’”⁴⁰ He never asked for, nor did he wish for credit in leading this massive relief effort. Hoover simply saw himself as a man with a mission to save others. Reporter William Allen White said he came away after a meeting with Hoover during the relief project in Belgium and Northern France “mesmerized by the strange low voltage of his [Hoover’s] magnetism.”⁴¹

³⁷ Jeansonne, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker*, 7.

³⁸ Smith, *An Uncommon Man*, 83-84.

³⁹ Hoover, *An American Epic*, 12.

⁴⁰ Smith, *An Uncommon Man*, 86.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 87.

Ambassador Page said of Hoover, “He’s a simple, modest, energetic little man who began his career in California and will end it in Heaven; and he doesn’t want anybody’s thanks.”⁴²

By the time the fighting ended, Hoover and his men had spent over \$1 billion, protected millions of Europeans from malnutrition, starvation and nakedness. The CRB had dispensed over 5 million tons of food. Administrative overhead for the entire project was only four-tenths of one percent.⁴³ The CRB was the largest privately organized relief operation in history.⁴⁴ As the commission wound down it poured more than \$24 million in profits back into the reconstruction of Belgium and Northern France. This included the rebuilding of universities, a scholarship fund for Belgian-American exchange students and an ambitious program of scientific research for a better tomorrow.⁴⁵

The Chairman reflects in his memoirs on his work with the CRB:

...none of us thought that the war would last longer than until next summer. Therefore, if we could tide the Belgians over for eight months until the next harvests that would end the job. The knowledge that we would have to go on for four years, to find a billion dollars, to transport five million tons of concentrated food, to administer rationing, price controls, agricultural production, to contend with combatant governments and with world shortages of foods and ships, was mercifully hidden from us. I did not know it but this was to be not only a great charity to the destitute, but it was the first Food Administration of a whole nation in history.⁴⁶

⁴² Jeansonne, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker*, 7; Nash, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: The Humanitarian*, 96.

⁴³ Nash, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: The Humanitarian*, 82, 87.

⁴⁴ Jeansonne, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker*, 7.

⁴⁵ Smith, *An Uncommon Man*, 87; Hoover, *Years of Adventure*, 235-237.

⁴⁶ Hoover, *Years of Adventure*, 156.

The CRB brought Hoover to the attention of the world, including President Wilson who, when America entered the war in 1917, named him United States Food Administrator.⁴⁷ He became responsible for feeding American troops, their allies and the people of war-torn Europe for the remainder of the conflict. “The Food Administration is called into being,” Hoover announced at its inception.⁴⁸ His chief motivation for feeding the nations of Europe was to protect young children from starvation.⁴⁹ He writes of the sorrowful sight of witnessing hungry children waiting to be fed:

The Belgians had spontaneously, as in older crises, organized soup committees in the poorer districts, and my depression was not lightened by them. There were lines of children waiting for a bucket of soup and a loaf of bread, which was the food for the family.⁵⁰

Hoover’s love for children and his want to protect them stemmed back to his childhood years as an orphan as well as from his faith. He was deeply affected by his youth and felt that if he could reduce misery in other’s lives then he was contributing to an overall moral goodness.

The Food Administrator rallied the American people to help. Restaurants took wheat products off their menus in order for more bread to be produced for troops and civilians in the war. People started backyard gardens. Hundreds of thousands signed pledge cards admitting them to membership in the Food Administration. Slogans such as “Food Will Win the War” were created. All of this occurred with Hoover’s leadership. Reporter Walter Lippmann wrote that Hoover “incarnates all that is at once effective and

⁴⁷ Jeansonne, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker*, 7-8.

⁴⁸ Smith, *An Uncommon Man*, 89.

⁴⁹ Jeansonne, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker*, 8.

⁵⁰ Hoover, *An American Epic*, 13.

idealistic in the picture of America.”⁵¹ Within one year, the Food Administration could boast of having doubled American food shipments to Europe, without ration cards and without interruption of economic freedoms or heavy expenses. Administrative costs for the project totaled less than \$8 million. Again, the Great Humanitarian did not wish for any thanks or recognition, personally directing his publicity department to always refer to “the Food Administrator” and not to himself.⁵²

Hoover’s relief efforts did not end there. When peace finally settled over Europe in 1919, he helped organize and became Administrator of the American Relief Administration (ARA). The administration helped feed twenty-one prostrate nations after the war, including Germany.⁵³ Hoover attended the Paris Peace Conference at Versailles as President Wilson’s food adviser. The Allies wished to withhold food from the defeated Germans as a way of forcing them to sign the treaty. Hoover was instrumental in opposing this. The ARA Administrator argued that would sow the seeds of resentment that may result in a new war later on.⁵⁴ When the Russian famine of 1921 broke out, Hoover and the ARA led the charge to save 15 million Russians from starvation as well as diseases such as typhus, cholera and dysentery. Hoover persuaded President Warren G. Harding and Congress to appropriate \$20 million for Russian relief stating, “Our people who enjoy so great liberty and general comfort, cannot fail to sympathize to some degree with these blind gropings for better social conditions.”⁵⁵

⁵¹ Smith, *An Uncommon Man*, 89-90.

⁵² Ibid, 90.

⁵³ Ibid, 92.

⁵⁴ Herbert Hoover and Hugh Gibson, *The Basis of Lasting Peace* (New York: D. Van Nostrand Company, 1945), 31-33; Jeansonne, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker*, 8.

That same year, when Hoover was appointed Secretary of Commerce under Harding, he took that same philosophy to the domestic sphere in America. Hoover envisioned the Commerce Department as the hub of the nation's growth and stability. He oversaw, coordinated and completely revamped departments and sub-committees in order to regulate the entire country from manufacturing to air travel. Hoover revolutionized relations between business and government and sought to make his department a powerful service organization. He forged new cooperatives in voluntary partnerships between government and business; all centered on eliminating waste, increasing efficiency and demanding a self-reliance from business owners, making them less dependent on government aid. Even Hoover's "Own Your Own Home" campaign was based on the promotion of new long-term mortgages to allow families to purchase first-time homes, both stimulating the construction industry and instilling a sense of pride of ownership in Americans.⁵⁶

These various and colossal relief efforts were taken on by Hoover as part of his Quaker make-up. The moral code instilled in him as a child lasted throughout his adulthood. His relief work allowed him a glimpse of those less fortunate and that insight made an impact on the man. Hoover recollects on his experiences and thoughts during his days on the battlefields and in the countryside of Europe. He writes, "As I passed through the suburbs of Antwerp, I saw the remnants of burned homes and buildings from the battle for that city standing gaunt and naked – my first vision of the war."⁵⁷ He goes on to describe his depressing and somber feelings as well as his growing hatred of war:

⁵⁵ Smith, *An Uncommon Man*, 92.

⁵⁶ Wilson, *Herbert Hoover: Forgotten Progressive*, 110-111.

But even more depressing was passing through the ruins of Louvain, where its homes, its ancient church and its university library, with its precious records of centuries, had been destroyed, not in battle, but by militarists to terrorize a free people.⁵⁸

The “warring men”, militarists, the aristocratic military elite, the officials who chose to wage war and cause death and terror to so many could not even earn sympathy with the Great Humanitarian. Only a few weeks after the armistice was signed, two German officials wished to see Hoover but he refused them. He directed his aide to tell them, “You can describe two-and-a-half years of arrogance toward ourselves and cruelty to the Belgians in any language you may select. And tell the pair personally to go to Hell, with my compliments.”⁵⁹ Later, while making his way across a battlefield in France where “the soil had yet to swallow up soldiers’ shoes and boots,” Hoover sat silent. On that day, among the vestiges of death, he saw graphic, gruesome evidence of what he called “the stupidity of war.”⁶⁰

From a lowly farm cottage on the great plains of the Midwest, to Stanford labs, to the arid depths of Australian mines and to the battlefields of Europe, Hoover remained a man of virtue.⁶¹ His ingenuity and moralistic fervor allowed him to make his way in the world. His “selfless humanitarianism, organizational virtuosity, stamina and fortitude” allowed him to accomplish feats of relief against overwhelming odds.⁶² The onslaught of barbarous memories of war and famine scared him, yet perhaps helped bring forth his

⁵⁷ Hoover, *An American Epic*, 13.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ Smith, *An Uncommon Man*, 90.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 90; Hoover, *American Individualism*, 14.

⁶¹ Smith, *An Uncommon Man*, 86.

⁶² Jeansonne, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker*, 1.

Quaker “Inner Light”. Hoover would strive for the rest of his days to avert war and curb the rise in armament competition. He would use the Quaker practices of humility, charity, equality and treatment of all as equals as a humanitarian vehicle for change and as a leading motive for future foreign policy decisions.

Chapter 1: Good Neighbor Policy

“A nation is visualized abroad by the man who’s running it.”¹ This quotation, spoken by Henry P. Fletcher, who in 1929 was the United States Ambassador to Italy and former Ambassador to Mexico and Chile, answered the question of why Herbert Hoover first sought to embark on his Latin American “good will” tour. President-elect Hoover, already a world figure due to his relief efforts in Belgium, Northern France and Russia, would soon become the most recognizable symbol of the United States and in doing so, would shape how the world viewed his country. The quotation appeared in an article written by Edwin S. McIntosh, a *New York Herald Tribune* special correspondent who accompanied Hoover’s party on the six-week voyage of Latin America. McIntosh’s article analyzed the trip and gave a summary of its “net results.” The most lasting and far-reaching result was that of the rapport built between Hoover and the people of Latin America. Hoover went without power, and sought to receive no obligations of any kind; he only hoped to build a mutual esteem and confidence between himself, the United States and its “neighbors” to the south. McIntosh continued:

Wherever, whatever vision Latin America has of us, whatever her increased admiration or dislike may be as a result of Mr. Hoover’s visit is embodied in the Latin-American impression of Mr. Hoover, and he is himself the answer to the popular question. If Central and South America liked him and trusted him, he left with them that impression of his own country.²

By sowing good will and creating and nourishing a mutual trust, Hoover was able to make an impression that spoke well of not only himself and his character, but that of the

¹ *New York Herald Tribune*, January 13, 1929, Clippings Files (hereafter CF), Herbert Hoover Presidential Library (hereafter HHPL).

² Ibid.

American people as a whole. This he succeeded in doing, and because of it, a better background was created for future relations.

When President Calvin Coolidge made his announcement on August 2, 1927, stating, "I do not choose to run for President in 1928," Hoover, who was serving under Coolidge as Secretary of Commerce, was attending the annual Bohemian Club encampment at Bohemian Grove in the California Redwood Forest.³ Within hours of this announcement, hundreds of publishers, editors, and public officials from around the country descended on "the Grove" demanding to know if Hoover was to announce his candidacy for the upcoming election. The Secretary did not have an immediate answer. He wished to speak with Coolidge and find out if he truly intended not to seek a second term. Over the course of the next few months, Hoover tried to convince Coolidge to run again. He indicated that he would much rather serve another term as Secretary of Commerce under the incumbent. However, Coolidge was sincere in his statement and in early 1928, Hoover was nominated by the Republican Party to run in the election and he accepted. On November 1, 1928, Hoover was elected President. He won in a landslide, polling fifty-eight percent of the vote against New York Governor Al Smith. Hoover received over 21 million popular votes and 444 electoral votes.⁴ The President-elect entered the interregnum with three major tasks at hand. First, he needed to assemble his administrative staff. Second, he had to formulate his major policies for the next four

³ Herbert Hoover, *The Memoirs of Herbert Hoover: The Cabinet and the Presidency, 1920-1933* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1952), 190.

⁴ *Ibid*, 210.

years. Third, he and the soon-to-be first lady, Lou Henry, would embark on a six-week speaking tour of Latin America.⁵

United States – Latin American relations during the period preceding Hoover’s interregnum were tense, stressed and unstable. Since the days of President Theodore Roosevelt and his “big stick” ideology, Latin American nations were suspicious and even feared the United States. This fear was aggravated by American domination, economically and militarily. United States policies appeared intimidating. Roosevelt popularized the adage “speak softly and carry a big stick,” meaning the United States should negotiate peacefully all the while enforcing its policy forcefully. This ideology played many roles in Latin America, including the United States’ construction of a canal across Central America. The United States was insistent on building the Panama Canal and after it was built, of operating it with its military. Another aspect of “big stick” policy was the Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine. Cited in Roosevelt’s State of the Union Address of 1904, the Roosevelt Corollary stated that the United States could intervene in any conflict between European powers and the nations of Latin America. This declaration was meant to ensure that European claims in the Western Hemisphere did not lead to the use of force by the Europeans. Military intervention in conflicts in Central and South American occurred under Presidents Woodrow Wilson, Warren G. Harding and Calvin Coolidge. At the time of Hoover’s tour, American troops were stationed in Haiti and Nicaragua.⁶

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid; Henry L. Stimson, *American Diplomacy in Nicaragua* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1927), 93.

Hoover believed such policies made the United States appear like a “colossus of the north” that acted like a “bully” or a “big brother” to Latin America.⁷ As Secretary of Commerce, he developed and voiced his increasing dissatisfaction with United States foreign policy toward its neighbors to the south. President William Howard Taft’s “Dollar Diplomacy” also added fuel to the fire as many Latin American economies were supported by investors from the United States. Dependence on these investors led to hostility and the belief that there was interest in exploiting Central and South America purely for financial gain, at the expense of its people. As Hoover states in his memoirs, “The United States, to put it mildly, was not popular in the rest of the hemisphere.”⁸

Hoover regarded an improvement in Latin American relations as vital to his pre-Presidential plans. The United States and Latin America shared mutual interests, common threats and a proximity to one another. It was crucial that these relations take a turn for the better. The Quaker embarked on this mission with idealistic fervor. He gathered as much information on Latin American people and their cultures as he could. The President-elect hoped by better understanding his neighbors, he could earn a respect from them. Hoover did not see himself as the sole “good will” ambassador of the United States; he saw every member of his party traveling with him as such. A memorandum was distributed to everyone in the entourage describing the tour and its purpose. The “mission” of the tour as described in the memo was the “good will of Latin American republics.” The “method of attainment” for this mission included an “expression of good

⁷ Hoover, *The Cabinet and the Presidency*, 210-211.

⁸ Ibid.

will by the very fact of the trip which is itself a compliment” and an “expression of good will by bringing out the fact of identical interests along many lines.”⁹

Also included in this memorandum were instructions to Hoover’s party on how to act and treat the Latin American people. “All members of the party will make the tour’s mission their mission,” the memo stated. It continued, “The event of the visit is so important to these countries that those who may have had unfavorable impressions of North Americans are prepared to date a new attitude from this time.” The memo goes on to state that each member will not carry with him or her any attitude of superiority and will treat any person they meet as a fellow American of the Western Hemisphere.¹⁰

Mrs. Hoover even made it her business to spread the word as to the “good will” nature of the tour. She received a letter from Mrs. E.M. Phillips of West Union, Iowa inquiring as to the purpose of such a journey to the south. Lou Henry replied through her secretary in a return letter, “I can state the purpose of the trip no better than to quote Mr. Hoover: ‘Our trip to Latin America was conceived for the purpose of paying friendly calls upon our neighbors to the South.’”¹¹

On the eve of the tour, the *New York Times* published an article headlined “Stress Hoover Trip as Friendly Move.” The article explained that although Hoover intended to deal with problems such as boundary disputes, oil interests and interpretation of the Monroe Doctrine, the larger aspect of the trip will be the possibility of “cementing cordial relations existing between the United States and the countries to the south...”¹²

⁹ Campaign and Transition Files, Box 147, HHPL.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² *New York Times*, November 18, 1928, CF, HHPL.

The primary focus of Hoover's journey will be to better relations between the United States and Latin America. The President-elect, his wife and many members of their party boarded a special train from Palo Alto, California at 7:30 p.m. Pacific time on Sunday, November 18, 1928, and headed for San Pedro, California. President Coolidge granted Hoover the use of the Navy steamships *USS Maryland* and *USS Utah*; the *Maryland* for the southbound route of his trip and the *Utah* for his return trip north. The *Maryland* made rendezvous with Hoover's party in San Pedro and set sail the following morning. On Monday, November 19, 1928, President-elect Hoover set out on the first leg of his "Good Will Tour."¹³

The tentative plan was for Hoover to visit Nicaragua, Panama, Peru and Chile on his southbound trip and then on his return north, to stop in Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil and Mexico.¹⁴ Nicaragua had been turbulent since the Taft Administration. Implementing his "Dollar Diplomacy" policy, President Taft dispatched troops to protect American investments. President Coolidge temporarily removed the troops, but returned them during a civil war in 1927. Secretary of State Henry L. Stimson helped resolve the civil war but left the American troops in Nicaragua to help insure order. In 1928, there were 5,000 Marines stationed in that country.¹⁵ Hoover hoped to negotiate the removal of the Marines. He was received in Nicaragua with open arms. A recent election had been held with the aid of American Marines and Jose-Maria Moncada was elected to replace President Adolfo Diaz. Hoover met with both men and vowed to begin

¹³ *New York Herald Tribune*, November 18, 1928, CF, HHPL.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Glen Jeansonne, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker, 1928-1933* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 341; William Starr Myers, *The Foreign Policies of Herbert Hoover, 1929-1933* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1940), 47-49.

withdrawing the Marines after Moncada's inauguration on January 1, 1929 (the withdrawal actually began about two-and-a-half years later on June 3, 1931). Only a small detachment of Marines would remain to aid in training the Nicaraguan National Guard. Upon his settlement of the troop issue, "prominent Nicaraguans" stated that Hoover's visit "clinched the spirit of good will."¹⁶

Hoover's next major engagement came in Peru and Chile, where he sought to ease the tension from the Tacna-Arica Affair. The Tacna-Arica Affair was a territorial dispute between Peru and Chile over the provinces of Tacna and Arica. It went all the way back to the War of the Pacific between Peru, Chile and Bolivia from 1879 to 1883. Chile won the war and conquered both provinces. When Chile began to colonize the two territories in 1909, Peru responded by breaking off diplomatic relations with Chile. In 1925, President Coolidge attempted to arbitrate the dispute; however, the deadlock remained unbroken. Now it was incumbent upon the Quaker to try negotiating peace. Hoover developed a plan he hoped would satisfy both nations and restore friendly relations. After meeting with officials from both Peru and Chile, a solution was reached. In a compromise Chile returned the Tacna province to Peru and kept Arica. Chile also compensated Peru monetarily for damages incurred over the four decade old dispute.¹⁷ Hoover's poise and tact secured a simple solution when others had failed earlier.

Part of the Quaker's plan for good will called for an improvement in economic relations between the United States and Latin America. An expansion of trade between the two continents was one goal Hoover aimed to achieve. In Argentina, Hoover

¹⁶ *New York Times*, November 29, 1928, CF, HHPL; Stimson, *American Policy in Nicaragua*, 42-60.

¹⁷ *New York Times*, November 18, 1928, CF, HHPL; Hoover, *The Cabinet and the Presidency*, 215; Ray Lyman Wilbur and Arthur Mastick Hyde, *The Hoover Policies* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1937), 589.

discussed tariffs with government officials. Argentina produced similar crops to those grown in the heartland of America. In order to protect Midwest farmers, the United States Tariff Commission had considered increasing tariffs on agricultural products imported from Argentina. This caused tension between the two nations and threatened to disrupt economic relations. Hoover promised to do what he could as President to keep tariffs to a level both nations would accept.¹⁸ Hoover also discussed increasing imports and exports between the United States and Latin America. His massive road building plan called for the development of continuous roads from the United States to points in the far south of Latin America as a way for goods to travel quickly and freely.¹⁹ This improvement in transportation routes led to a growth in Latin American trade. At the time of Hoover's trip, United States trade with Latin American nations totaled \$959 million annually. The President-elect hoped his policies and reforms could increase this number exponentially, building a stronger economic relationship.²⁰

The incoming President's final stop on his tour was in Brazil. If "glad" and "friendly" are words to be used in describing his reception in other Latin American countries, "overjoyed" and "jubilant" can describe the feelings extended to him in Brazil. There were no major issues to discuss and no conflicts to resolve in Brazil. Instead, this stopover can be seen as the pinnacle of Hoover's good will message, merely a neighborly visit. The citizens of that nation showed "expressions of delight" and felt honored to be visited by Hoover. Tens of thousands crowded into a square in Rio de Janeiro's coffee

¹⁸ *New York Times*, November 18, 1928, CF, HHPL.

¹⁹ *New York Herald Tribune*, November 19, 1928, CF, HHPL.

²⁰ *New York Herald Tribune*, November 20, 1928, CF, HHPL.

district to hear the President-elect speak. The Brazilian Foreign Minister Octavio Mangabeira said of this important moment:

The visit of President-elect Hoover to Latin America is one of those great events which are apparently very simple, but may have, nevertheless, incalculable effects. Brazil, which rejoices in the great splendor of the United States of America and sincerely wishes to see them upheld by the esteem of all American nations, believes that this trip will be a decided forward step on the road to mutual concord and confidence, two things which will make for the greatness and glory of the American continents and the general service of humanity.²¹

Those words wrapped up Hoover's tour of Latin America. The following day, January 24, 1929, the *USS Utah* put to sea and began steaming for Old Point Comfort, Virginia. As he left the Brazilians with the spirit of good will and friendship, Hoover could rest assured knowing he accomplished his mission.

The results of Hoover's Good Neighbor Policy are far-reaching in their long-range implications. They are best described when divided into two categories: tangible and intangible. The tangibles are obvious and can be seen immediately when analyzing his trip. Many Latin American nations asked Hoover's advice about their domestic problems. His frankness and expertise helped him answer their requests.²² He was true to his word and the Quaker's talks with Nicaragua early in his journey promised the withdrawal of American troops from that nation. No longer would the military dictate policy there. Hoover settled the territorial conflict between Peru and Chile after countless other leaders had failed over more than forty years.²³ The President-elect crystallized the demand for an intercontinental air service, finally connecting many areas of Latin

²¹ *New York Times*, November 21, 1928, CF, HHPL.

²² *New York Herald Tribune*, December 29, 1928, CF, HHPL.

²³ Hoover, *The Cabinet and the Presidency*, 333-334; Wilbur and Hyde, *The Hoover Policies*, 588.

America to the United States. This air link made it possible to fly from New York to the southern tip of South America at Buenos Aires, Argentina in four days. This trimmed travel time by as much as twelve days, allowing more efficient business to take place as well as for the greater interchange of cultures between the continents.²⁴

Hoover aggressively urged an opening of exchanges in the field of education. Upon his return, the President-elect set up a system for exchanging students, professors, teachers, scientists, artists and other professional leaders between universities in Latin America and the United States. This plan was intended to introduce more North Americans to their neighbors to the south. It was meant to expand knowledge and share ideas. By blending cultures in such a way, a better understanding could be achieved and a greater degree of respect deserved.²⁵

Hoover boldly promised that there would be no more United States military intervention in Latin American affairs, unless the lives of American citizens were in danger. The good will ambassador squelched the Taft policy of “Dollar Diplomacy” by declaring that American citizens investing their capital and energies in Latin America were doing so at their own risk, and that the government of the United States would only intervene on their behalf if they were unjustly treated. Hoover expresses this promise in an address on April 13, 1929:

I mention one sinister notion as to policies of the United States upon our relationships with our Latin American neighbors. That is, fear of a [past] era of the mistakenly called dollar diplomacy. The implications that have been colored by that expression are not a part of my conception of international relations. I can say at once that it ought not be the policy of the United States to intervene by force to secure or maintain contracts

²⁴ *New York Herald Tribune*, December 29, 1928, January 13, 1929, CF, HHPL.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

between our citizens and foreign states or their citizens...far more than this, it is the true expression of the moral rectitude of the United States.”²⁶

Furthering his abandonment of the policies of his predecessors, Hoover directed the State Department to issue a revised interpretation of the Monroe Doctrine, eliminating the idea that the United States was concerned with the domestic affairs of other Latin American republics. This was aimed at combating the belief that the United States was the “colossus of the north,” preying commercially upon Latin America and its citizens. Edwin S. McIntosh writes that Hoover dispelled the perception that the “giant of the north” was instituting a program of imperialism and aggression.²⁷

As stated previously, prior to embarking on his journey, Hoover attempted to gain as much information as he could and learn as much as possible about the people, customs and cultures of all Latin American nations. As a final good will gesture and as a means of advancing relations between the United States and Latin America, the Great Humanitarian removed all political appointees as ministers and ambassadors to the southern neighbors. Many of these appointees were not well suited to serve as representatives of the United States. They were not fluent in Spanish or Portuguese; they were unfamiliar with Latin American traditions as most of them were used to serving in European countries. In addition, to them, this may as well be just one more “stop” on their career paths. Hoover chose instead to send “private, independent, career men” who possessed a background of experience with the country which they were serving, with knowledge of its “people, language, customs and culture.”²⁸ These tangible results of the

²⁶ Hoover, *The Cabinet and the Presidency*, 333-334; Wilbur and Hyde, *The Hoover Policies*, 589.

²⁷ *New York Herald Tribune*, January 13, 1929, CF, HHPL; Hoover, *The Cabinet and the Presidency*, 333-334; Myers, *The Foreign Policies of Herbert Hoover*, 53.

Quaker's policy were advanced and practical. Their significance became evident almost immediately and entirely transformed United States – Latin American relations.

The intangible results of the visit, which better represented the meaning and purpose of Hoover's policy, assisted in mending the tattered relations of the Western Hemisphere. Hoover describes these results as relating to the "moral field."²⁹ Reporter Mark Sullivan writes:

Mr. Hoover's South American journey was an important national service, a tour of duty accompanied also through the nature of the case by pleasure to both the hosts and the guests...the journey has had scores of different kinds of usefulness, all of which are important and some of which will continue as long as South America and North America sit side-by-side.³⁰

The good will ambassador represented the United States with courtesy and respectfulness. He helped to dissipate the predisposed belief of diplomacy as a sinister shadow looming over Latin America. He created confidence between continents that extended far into the future. Sullivan goes on to explain that one of the greatest characteristics of the President-elect's experience in the south, was his ability to convey cordial feelings to government officials, political and business leaders and citizens in the streets. He accomplished this through hours of informal, but intensive, conversations and visits. The President-elect also made fourteen speeches during his trip voicing his mission of peace and good will. "I come to pay a call of friendship," he stated. "In a sense I represent on this occasion the people of the United States extending a friendly greeting to our fellow democracies on the American continent," adding, "I would wish to symbolize

²⁸ Hoover, *The Cabinet and the Presidency*, 333-334.

²⁹ *Ibid*, 332.

³⁰ *New York Herald Tribune*, January 1, 1929, CF, HHPL.

the friendly visit of one ‘good neighbor’ to another.”³¹ This set a “strikingly successful precedent doubtless to be renewed by some future presidents.”³²

Latin America knew Hoover as a humanitarian because of his relief in Belgium, Northern France and Russia. This gave him a uniquely favorable standing that offset the suspicion commonly held against the United States. His humanitarianism continued toward Latin Americans. In 1928, a devastating hurricane struck Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, leaving destruction and a three year drought. Hoover visited these countries in March 1931, making relief and economic development his priority. The President used \$600,000 from ARA surplus funds and another \$150,000 raised privately to provide milk for infants. He secured \$7 million from Congress for relief. Hoover expanded lunch rooms to help feed thousands of children who would otherwise go hungry. Latin America had heard of the Great Humanitarian’s work far across the Atlantic, and they now experienced his good will first-hand.³³

Hoover traveled to Latin America seeking “mutual prosperity.” He sought to extend an olive branch of friendship from one neighbor to another. He effectively pushed back against typical American foreign policy of the time and eagerly wiped out the existing barriers between the two continents. He “demanded a better understanding of character, habits of mind, manner of living and characteristics” of the nations he visited.³⁴ Hoover felt this could be achieved only through personal observation and contact. An article titled “This Good Will Business” appeared on the front page of the *The Catapult*,

³¹ Hoover, *The Cabinet and the Presidency*, 213.

³² *New York Herald Tribune*, January 1, 1929, CF, HHPL.

³³ Jeansonne, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker*, 340-341.

³⁴ *New York Herald Tribune*, January 13, 1929, CF, HHPL.

the official newspaper of the *USS Maryland*. It was published mid-way through Hoover's journey and gives an excellent synopsis of the intangible results of "good will." "The best things in life are free," begins the article, "You give your neighbor good will, which costs only the trouble of expressing it, and receive in turn his good will which has for you a value beyond conversion to material terms."³⁵ The need for this "free good will" existed for years prior to the President-elect's tour; he was, however, the much needed vehicle to secure it. In his memoirs, Hoover ends the discussion on his Latin American "Good Will Policy" with this quote, "As a result of these policies, carried on throughout my administration, the interventions which had been the source of so much bitterness and fear in Latin America were ended. We established good will...under the specific term 'good neighbors.'"³⁶

³⁵ [United States Ship Maryland] *The Catapult*, December 25, 1928, Lou Henry Hoover Papers, Box 110, HHPL.

³⁶ Hoover, *The Cabinet and the Presidency*, 334.

Chapter 2: Disarmament

World disarmament was consistently a central theme present in Herbert Hoover's life since the days of World War I and the atrocities he witnessed on the battlefields. Disarmament, along with finding a way to settle disputes peacefully through mediation and arbitration, became pillars of his foreign policy. For those who believe Hoover was a passive president, the issues must be reviewed again. He was the most active world leader when it came to directing initiatives toward disarmament and he considered preserving peace in the world as humankind's greatest challenge.¹ That challenge, Hoover believed, must be taken on by all nations, and the United States would lead the way. He states in his memoirs, "My ambition in our foreign policies was to lead the United States in full cooperation with world moral forces to pressure peace."²

As part of his program for world peace, the President tried to "encourage settlements of disputes through treaties, arbitration and international organizations." He also strived to curb the escalating arms race between the major world powers, namely the United States, Great Britain, France, Italy and Japan.³ The Quaker believed that an uncontrolled arms race would eventually lead to another war. Instead, military forces should be limited and used for defensive, rather than offensive purposes. "My policies in national defense and world disarmament had one simple objective. That was to insure freedom from war to the American people," Hoover writes in his memoirs. He continues,

¹ Glen Jeansonne, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker, 1928-1933* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 156-157, 166, 338.

² Herbert Hoover, *The Memoirs of Herbert Hoover: The Cabinet and the Presidency, 1920-1933* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1952), 330.

³ Jeansonne, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker*, 157.

“The American concept had always been arms for defense, not for aggression....”⁴

Hoover was not for unilateral disarmament however. He believed that the evil forces present in the world were a major threat to peace and prosperity. Weakness in defense would invite war. He therefore suggested disarmament to the lowest level necessary to maintain an adequate defense.⁵ “The size of naval and military forces required to insure our country against aggression rests partly upon our foreign policies and partly upon the relative strength of possible enemies,” writes Hoover. The President expressed these ideas in his acceptance speech at Palo Alto, California on August 11, 1928, again at his inauguration on March 4, 1929, as well as in three subsequent speeches.⁶ It became clear that Hoover intended to pursue peace through disarmament from the outset of his presidency.

Next to world peace, a second reason for the President’s desire for disarmament was to save money during hard economic times. Hoover viewed armaments as an impediment to economic rehabilitation because arms expenditures weighed heavily on government finances. By 1931, the world was spending over \$5 billion annually on arms, an increase of seventy percent since World War I.⁷ Arms buildup, the President felt, would lead to military conflict. Hoover focused on naval disarmament as the logical place to begin. The United States had the world’s second largest navy, behind only Great Britain, and the highest military budget in the world. Twenty-five percent of tax dollars

⁴ Hoover, *The Cabinet and the Presidency*, 338.

⁵ Jeansonne, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker*, 157.

⁶ Hoover, *The Cabinet and the Presidency*, 338.

⁷ Melvyn P. Leffler, “Herbert Hoover: The ‘New Era’ and American Foreign Policy, 1921-1929,” in *Herbert Hoover as Secretary of Commerce: Studies in New Era Thought and Practice*, ed. Ellis W. Hawley (Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press, 1981), 157.

were devoted to defense. The President believed this was excessive, drained money from productive purposes and that it led to increased taxes. The savings from trimming the military budget could be put toward job creation. The Quaker felt that the United States should lead this charge of naval reduction, yet it could not go it alone. America needed a strong ally, one that would support and assist in pressuring and mobilizing world opinion against aggressors. Hoover found this ally across the Atlantic Ocean; Great Britain therefore became the latchkey to naval reduction.⁸

The United States and Britain had been engaged in competitive naval building for years. The goal became one of simply “outbuilding” or possessing a greater military force than that of the other. Britain maintained that it needed a large navy in order to preserve and protect its vast empire. America on the other hand, reasoned it must continue to build and maintain a navy because it was responsible for protecting the entire Western Hemisphere from aggression. This naval race was spiraling out of control. International naval limitation and reduction was inaugurated in 1921 by Secretary of State Charles Evans Hughes. The Washington Naval Conference of that same year hoped to stop the needless, expensive and dangerous naval arms race. The conference was attended by nine nations, including the United States, Britain, France, Italy and Japan. During the course of three months from November 1921, to February 1922, the major powers hashed out an agreement on ratios of tonnage limiting battleship, or capital ship, construction. The ratio was set 5:5:3 for the United States, Britain and Japan respectively, with an allowance considerably lower for the other nations. This, however,

⁸ *Washington Post*, October 13, 1929; *New York Times*, April 22, 1929; *New York Evening Post*, July 24, 1929, Clippings Files (hereafter CF), Herbert Hoover Presidential Library (hereafter HHPL); Jeansonne, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker*, 158-167, 338.

left out all other categories of ships, which at the time accounted for seventy percent of all naval tonnage.⁹

A more general attempt at disarmament was initiated by President Calvin Coolidge at the Geneva Naval Conference of 1927. The President called upon the Big Five Powers of the United States, Great Britain, France, Italy and Japan to again convene and extend the limits of the Washington Conference to cruiser, destroyer and submarine class vessels. Britain and Japan accepted, while Italy and France declined the invitation. The United States and Britain entered the talks on completely opposite ends of the spectrum and their disparity was never resolved. American delegates demanded parity with Britain and Japan wished for seventy percent of that relative strength. The conference was a complete failure and adjourned without meeting any commitments. A major cause of the failure was the lack of preparation between the United States and Great Britain.¹⁰ Had both nations attempted to solve some of their discrepancies prior to the actual conference, the results may have been favorable. The problem was there, the issues were set and two attempts failed; now it was up to the pragmatic Quaker to succeed where others could not.

Prior to his inauguration, Hoover asked the American Ambassador to Belgium and his close friend, Hugh S. Gibson to work with him in drafting a speech on global disarmament and deliver it to the League of Nations' Committee on Disarmament. In this speech, the President and Gibson developed a new formula for rating naval strength

⁹ Jeansonne, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker*, 166; Hoover, *The Cabinet and the Presidency*, 340; L. Ethan Ellis, *Republican Foreign Policy, 1921-1933* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1968), 143; Margot Louria, *Triumph and Downfall: America's Pursuit of Peace and Prosperity, 1921-1933* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001), 41-47.

¹⁰ Hoover, *The Cabinet and the Presidency*, 340; Ellis, *Republican Foreign Policy*, 137-153; William Starr Myers, *The Foreign Policies of Herbert Hoover, 1929-1933* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1940), 54-57.

among the major powers. The accepted formula at the time was based upon a principle of measuring “yardsticks,” or raw tonnage of naval vessels. Hoover’s plan called for a “flexible yardstick” approach. This revolutionary idea would take several different statistics into account such as: tonnage, type of vessel, size of guns on the ship and the number of ships in each category. Hoover believed this recipe would facilitate compromise. Gibson delivered the speech to the League of Nations in Geneva, Switzerland on April 22, 1929, and a new disarmament conference was proposed to take place in London early the following year.¹¹

The President, not wanting to repeat the mistakes of his predecessors, and wanting the conference to succeed, insisted it not assemble until the proper “preliminary” steps took place. “Adequate preparedness,” he claimed, “is one of the assurances of peace.”¹² He hoped that the major powers could agree on basic principles first and then only meet to hammer out the final details. The first step in the London Conference preliminaries was for the United States and Britain to come closer together in agreement in order to facilitate the conference. Hoover sent an invitation to British Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald asking him to sail to America for a face-to-face summit. The immediate purpose for this invitation was to settle the remaining questions prior to London. There were hopes of laying down a firm foundation for agreement. The technical problems of the “flexible yardstick” would be ironed out. Other problems to be discussed included Great Britain’s air bases in the Western Hemisphere and debts owed to the United States from World War I. The visit also had broader intentions. Both men would try to

¹¹ Hoover, *The Cabinet and the Presidency*, 340.

¹² “Foreign News: Hoover Knows He Needs To Keep Sure Defense,” *Time*, September 30, 1929, CF, HHPL.

eliminate much of the friction between the United States and Britain. This friction had built up as suspicion and antagonism on both sides led to naval arms buildup. Before departing for America, MacDonald delivered a speech in which he announced his objectives. "I go on a voyage of exploration and the object of my quest is the united voice of the United States and Great Britain in behalf of world peace," he stated.¹³ The Prime Minister continued that he hoped this visit would employ the most important yardstick of all, the "yardstick of friendship." By establishing an Anglo-American friendship, peace and security could be ensured.¹⁴

MacDonald and his daughter, Isabel, sailed for America on September 28, 1929, arriving in New York on October 4. Secretary of State Henry L. Stimson met MacDonald's ship and accompanied the Prime Minister through ticker tape parades in New York City and again in Washington. MacDonald stayed in the White House's Lincoln Bedroom and was the guest of honor at the Hoover Administration's first state dinner.¹⁵ The newspapers hailed this summit as groundbreaking. Never before had an English Prime Minister traversed the Atlantic to pay a visit to America. "The true significance of the MacDonald visit...is to produce an atmosphere which will make it possible for both countries to banish the thought of competitive armament..." explained the *Washington Star*, "and to enable them to assume a leadership in world affairs making for world peace."¹⁶ MacDonald believed personal contact between those actually responsible for government was essential to understanding and developing a successful

¹³ *New York Times*, September 28, 1929, CF, HHPL.

¹⁴ *New York Times*, September 29, 1929; *Washington Post*, September 28, 1929, CF, HHPL.

¹⁵ Jeansonne, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker*, 168-169.

¹⁶ *Washington Star*, October 4, 1929, CF, HHPL.

future conference. He also hoped his summit with Hoover would help form a preparatory commission on disarmament for the League of Nations, allowing the League to later summon a general disarmament conference.¹⁷

Upon MacDonald's arrival in Washington, he and the President traveled to Camp Rapidan, Hoover's fishing retreat in the bucolic Blue Ridge Mountains of Madison County, Virginia. This country outing was meant to be very casual. Hoover wished to show the Englishman "American informality." Only one state department official made the trip; otherwise no reporters or advisors from either side were present. Although the British Admiralty urged MacDonald to take a technical advisor with him, the Prime Minister refused because he "wished to say things to the President in furtherance of understanding between the two countries which he would not be able to say before a naval officer, British or American."¹⁸ This informality allowed for camaraderie between the two men, without the bickering that often occurs between political and military professionals.¹⁹

Over the next several days, the Prime Minister and the President spent virtually every daylight hour together. They walked along creek paths, fished and even chatted for a time sitting on opposite ends of a log overlooking the Rapidan River. They discussed only a few major issues but covered other topics as well.²⁰ Hoover offered to erase British war debt in exchange for England's withdrawal from Bermuda, Trinidad and

¹⁷ *New York Times*, September 19, 28 1929; *New York World*, September 28, 1929; *Washington Daily News*, September 24, 26, 1929, CF, HHPL.

¹⁸ President's Personal Files, Box 170, HHPL.

¹⁹ Louria, *Triumph and Downfall*, 157.

²⁰ *New York Herald Tribune*, October 7, 1929; *New York Times*, October 4, 5, 1929, CF, HHPL; Jeansonne, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker*, 169.

British Honduras, which he wanted for defensive purposes. MacDonald was reluctant but agreed not to dispatch English warships to the Western Hemisphere. Both men concurred that the upcoming London Conference should expand on the work done at the Washington Conference.²¹ Freedom of the seas was also discussed. Hoover proposed that in times of war, food ships be immunized from attack in the same manner hospital ships were. This would save millions from starvation, particularly innocent women and children. The Prime Minister was sympathetic to the idea but when he put it before the British Admiralty it was vetoed. Traditional British military policy was to win wars by starving the enemy through a blockade, including the sinking of enemy food ships.²² MacDonald later informed the President about the rejection with what Hoover felt was “genuine regret.”²³ Being a man of impeccable moral character and constantly looking to help his fellow earthly neighbors by any means possible, the Quaker balked at starving civilians and after World War II wrote in his memoirs:

When historians come to write the true history of the Second World War, to explore its causes, to examine the useless slaughter of millions of women and children and weigh the minor military advantages of the renewed blockade, they will agree that this proposal would have diminished the causes of war, reduced its horrors and saved millions from starvation. And had the proposal been in force, it would not have changed the outcome of the war one iota as soldiers, officials and war workers get their food anyway.²⁴

MacDonald felt quite the same way. In fact, this became a measure of common ground and understanding between the two leaders. Hoover faced a constant struggle

²¹ *New York Evening Post*, October 8, 1929, CF, HHPL; Louria, *Triumph and Downfall*, 156-158.

²² Myers, *The Foreign Policies of Herbert Hoover*, 109, 121-123; Hoover, *The Cabinet and the Presidency*, 343-347; Jeansonne, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker*, 169.

²³ Ellis, *Republican Foreign Policy*, 161.

²⁴ Hoover, *The Cabinet and the Presidency*, 347.

with American military leaders over what they perceived as a weakening of foreign policy. The Prime Minister also encountered resistance and animosity from the British Admirals, of whom a MacDonald secretary called “old salt-sea dogs of war.”²⁵ The Admirals were suspicious of MacDonald’s summit with Hoover. They believed both men wished to completely sacrifice naval superiority in the name of world peace. They thought of the two world leaders as “two welfare workers” involved in a “conspiracy to injure that greatest safeguard of world peace and world stability, an impregnable navy.”²⁶

Upon returning to Washington from Rapidan on October 7, 1929, MacDonald issued official invitations to five major naval powers including the United States, Britain, France, Italy and Japan to convene at the London Naval Conference in early 1930; a conference that was called “one of the greatest since the armistice” as well as a “giant stride for peace.” London was picked rather than Washington because Great Britain was a member of the League of Nations whereas the United States was not.²⁷

The Hoover – MacDonald summit was a success. Again, as was the case with Hoover’s Latin American “good will” tour, the intangible accomplishments are more significant than the tangible results. The visit contributed to a better understanding between the President, Prime Minister and their respective nations. MacDonald was quoted as saying of his meeting, “I have achieved more than I hoped in the way of peace, parity and good will....”²⁸ The principle aims of moral over material results were achieved through informal, friendly talks; a personal contact that “contributed

²⁵ Ibid, 341.

²⁶ President’s Personal Files, Box 170, HHPL.

²⁷ *New York Herald Tribune*, October 6, 7, 1929, *New York Times*, October 7, 1929, CF, HHPL.

²⁸ *New York Times*, October 10, 1929; *New York World*, October 12, 1929; [Washington, D.C.] *Evening Star*, October 10, 1929, CF, HHPL.

immeasurably” toward lasting peace and success. A significant foundation was established that would help ensure success at the upcoming London Conference. The symbolism and bonding between the two men increased their world-wide popularity and called greater attention to their mission. The event became the featured journalistic event of the entire month of October, gaining greater recognition in American newspapers than the stock market crash.²⁹ Historian L. Ethan Ellis writes, “MacDonald’s obvious sincerity, his artfully homespun manner...the idea of the two statesmen mulling over great matters in a sylvan glade, caught the popular fancy as few things had done in many months....”³⁰

The greatest achievement of this face-to-face summit however, became the precedent it set. It broke through the barrier that was the Atlantic Ocean. No longer would diplomats and world leaders simply speak to the President via the transatlantic telephone, through ambassadors and representatives or with telegrams; a new world in summitry was opened up. A peacetime summitry was created. Hoover would receive two other foreign dignitaries during his tenure in office, French Prime Minister Pierre Laval in October 1931, and the Italian Foreign Minister Count Dino Grandi one month later.³¹ This summitry would transcend Hoover’s Presidency and continue to play a major role in United States foreign policy during every successive administration.

With the preliminaries complete, the stage was set for the London Naval Conference to convene in January 1931. This marked the third attempt at solving the delicate problem of harmonizing naval armaments with political necessities. At the

²⁹ Jeansonne, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker*, 169.

³⁰ Ellis, *Republican Foreign Policy*, 162.

³¹ Jeansonne, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker*, 335-336.

Washington Naval Conference political concessions were traded for naval considerations under civilian control, at the Geneva Conference the opposite occurred; a surrender of civilian control led to discussions by professional negotiators. Both conferences failed. Neither technicians nor politicians could muster sufficient acumen for an agreement. Still the main difficulty was finding parity. Great Britain wanted strength with a higher number of lightly armed vessels to better protect its empire, while the United States demanded equality at the lower tonnage level vessels, with an emphasis on larger gun caliber and longer range. France and Italy, engaged in a battle for control of the Mediterranean, wanted a greater number of smaller vessels. Ellis writes, "Technical and strategic factors thus pushed each side toward equally irreconcilable and inflexible positions." He continues, "Fundamentally the conferences failed because neither of the chief antagonists would surrender previously assumed and mutually incompatible positions."³²

At London, things were different and Hoover was adamant that previous failures would not be repeated. New leadership on both sides paved the way for accommodation. The engineer in Hoover pressed him to work towards a union on the issues in the name of wasted money. His Quaker background predisposed him to seek solutions in terms of international good will. His ideas are explained in a speech given prior to the conference:

The time has come for all governments to take steps and adopt policies in conformity with the earnest and wise desires of their nationals to organize the world on a peaceful basis. The roads leading to peace and disarmament do not lead in opposite directions. They are parallel. War machines will only be reduced and preparations for war will only cease as peace machines are built up. [Rather than rely on brute force], nations should pool their moral resources and concentrate their efforts in the promotion of peace and the prevention of war. War machinery is needed if disputes are to be settled by force, but if disputes are to be settled by

³² Ibid, 167, 170; Ellis, *Republican Foreign Policy*, 137-153.

peaceful processes, instead of violence, machinery for conference and conciliation must be built up and used by all the nations.³³

Prime Minister MacDonald took a similar stance when it came to using “moral resources” rather than force to resolve conflicts. Taking what historian Raymond G. O’Conner phrased “probably the most important concession made by any statesman” during the London Conference, MacDonald expressed his willingness to extend a compromise on the American issue of parity. This moral, good will gesture would, in effect, surrender Britain’s longtime supremacy over the seas.³⁴

The American delegation departed for London on January 7, 1930. The delegation was picked by Hoover with the goal of public support and keeping in mind that any treaty drafted would require ratification by Congress. Heading the delegation was Secretary Stimson, in his first great challenge as Secretary of State, and Secretary of the Navy Charles Francis Adams. Also among the American representatives was Ambassador to Mexico Dwight W. Morrow, Ambassador to Britain Charles G. Dawes, Ambassador Gibson, Democratic minority leader Joseph T. Robinson and senior Republican David A. Reed.³⁵

From the outset the discrepancies began to appear. The United States and Great Britain were generally in concert except for American insistence on arming cruisers with larger eight-inch guns, whereas most cruisers of the time carried only six-inch guns. Britain preferred a greater quantity at the lower caliber. Japan, already stretched by limited resources, was amenable and only opposed the proposed ban on submarines.

³³ Presidential Papers, Foreign Affairs, Box 1002, HHPL.

³⁴ Ellis, *Republican Foreign Policy*, 158.

³⁵ Hoover, *The Cabinet and the Presidency*, 348; Jeansonne, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker*, 169-170; Louria, *Triumph and Downfall*, 159; Henry L. Stimson and McGeorge Bundy, *On Active Service in Peace and War* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1947), 166-167.

Japan also sought a more comparable ratio of submarines with the other powers, deeming this necessary for defense of its island nation.³⁶ The issue of six-inch versus eight-inch guns was eventually resolved when the United States' delegation reduced its demand for a cruiser fleet of twenty-one vessels to eighteen. This compromise came as a direct result of Hoover's newly developed "flexible yardstick" formula. The American delegation found the British willing to use the term "yardstick" more optimistically than ever before. Other facets of this accommodation included a combination of factors such as speed, armor, maneuverability and age of the fleet. These statistics were aimed to arrive at a balance of effectiveness among categories of vessels. This allowed for an extension of the battleship ratios developed at the Washington Conference to smaller vessels.³⁷

With the United States, Britain and Japan coming to agreements and helping to ensure a general success of the London Conference, the most difficult challenges came from France and Italy. The French and Italians were engaged in competition in the Mediterranean. This Franco-Italian rivalry caused an intense amount of friction. Both wanted to keep negotiations of smaller vessels out of the conference because they deemed these types of ships essential to their fleets. France also insisted on superiority over Italy due to its larger empire, yet Italy demanded parity with France. As a smaller nation, realistically, it could neither afford to achieve nor maintain such status.³⁸

France was suspicious of what it termed the "Anglo-American yardstick." The French delegates feared that the United States and Great Britain were furthering their

³⁶ Jeansonne, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker*, 167; *New York Times*, October 12, 1929, CF, HHPL.

³⁷ Stimson and Bundy, *On Active Service in War and Peace*, 168, 171-174.

³⁸ Ibid; Ellis, *Republican Foreign Policy*, 158, 167, 174; Jeansonne, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker*, 168.

domination of the seas, leaving France vulnerable. France was concerned that Germany would again rise to be a major military power and threaten peace in Europe. Therefore the French were almost inflexible about disarmament. With the events of the Great War still present in French minds, they distrusted the existing peace machinery. The Locarno Treaties of 1925, intended to calm the European diplomatic climate, failed to bind Great Britain securely enough to protect France, and the Kellogg-Briand Pact of 1928 was all but toothless when it came to preventing war, the French believed.³⁹ Therefore, France insisted on a security pact with the United States and Britain. The French delegates were seeking guaranteed protection in exchange for naval reduction. The British, fearing the potential for being dragged into another land war on the European mainland, were reluctant and ultimately rejected the idea. Stimson recommended that the United States accept the proposal. Hoover was against the idea. The President was not opposed to such a pact per se; however, he believed that if the United States was forced to sign this “consultation” pact as a means of barter for French reduction in their naval fleet, then in the event France found itself in a war, America would be morally bound to give military assistance. He had no belief in such “camouflaged” obligations. Hoover was also aware that Congress would never ratify such a treaty, so he dismissed it saying he did not care if France limited its “inferior” navy or not, the major purposes of the conference would be accomplished with or without them.⁴⁰

³⁹ Hoover, *The Cabinet and the Presidency*, 348; Jeansonne, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker*, 170; Ellis, *Republican Foreign Policy*, 171-173; Louria, *Triumph and Downfall*, 133-134.

⁴⁰ *New York World*, March 25, 1930; *Pittsburgh Post Gazette*, February 22, 1930, CF, HHPL; Hoover, *The Cabinet and the Presidency*, 348-349; Jeansonne, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker*, 170; Ellis, *Republican Foreign Policy*, 171-173.

The London Conference was set back when the French government fell on February 17, 1930. The delegates agreed to recess for one week to allow the French diplomats to return home and attend to this matter. This short break allowed Stimson and MacDonald to work together quietly and iron out other issues. This furthered the improving relationship between the two nations. Following the resolution of the collapse of a second government in France on February 27, the talks resumed with all parties present at the table.⁴¹ However, with the French and Italians still at odds, by mid-March 1930, talks were breaking down. On March 19, MacDonald issued a memorandum in which he expressed his disapproval toward the French attitude.⁴² Stimson and MacDonald both threatened to adjourn the conference and lay blame on the French doorstep. At the close of March 1930, the early optimism present prior to negotiations had eroded. Instead the United States, Britain and Japan found themselves willing to settle on a Three-Power rather than a Five-Power Treaty.⁴³

The London Naval Conference concluded on April 22, 1930, with the United States, Great Britain and Japan as signatories. France refused to sign the major agreements. This eliminated the possibility of the Italians signing because parity with the French was not reached. The treaty resulted in resolutions and ratios in the categories of cruiser, destroyer and battleship fleet size and overall tonnage.⁴⁴ America achieved most of its objectives, including expanding the Washington agreements to all categories of ships. The United States also gained parity in fleet strength with Britain. The American

⁴¹ *Pittsburgh Post Gazette*, February 22, 1930, CF, HHPL; Ellis, *Republican Foreign Policy*, 171.

⁴² Presidential Papers, Foreign Affairs, Box 1000, HHPL.

⁴³ Presidential Papers, Cabinet Offices, Box 50, HHPL; Stimson and Bundy, *On Active Service in Peace and War*, 169, 171-172.

⁴⁴ Presidential Papers, Foreign Affairs, Box 1000, HHPL.

fleet remained about the same size with the British fleet reduced by 70,000 tons and the Japanese by 40,000 tons. Submarines were limited to 2,000 tons and aircraft carriers to less than 10,000 tons. The overall ratios in all categories except submarines was set at 10:10:6 for the United States, Great Britain and Japan respectively. All five powers signed an agreement to keep submarine warfare within bounds.⁴⁵

The signed treaty was sent by the American delegation to the President. Hoover submitted the London Naval Limitation Treaty to the Senate on May 1, 1930. There were a handful of senators, big-navy men on one side and staunch isolationists on the other, opposed to the treaty. The Senate took no action and the session expired without a vote on July 7. Within twelve hours, Hoover summoned the Senate back into a special session and threatened to keep them there in the sweltering summer heat of Washington until they voted stating, "If we fail now the world will be again plunged backward from its progress toward peace."⁴⁶ It took two more weeks before the treaty was brought to a vote. Wrangling ensued during those two weeks, as every conceivable objection was raised. Some isolationists believed secret agreements embedded in the treaty threatened to drag the United States into a future European war. The President invited any senator who suspected these secret arrangements, to review the extensive stacks of letters and memoranda and see that no such conspiracy existed. Hoover also pointed out that the treaty did not weaken the United States in any way; in fact, the American Navy actually gained slight strength in comparison to the British fleet. After two weeks of litigious

⁴⁵ *New York Times*, April 11, 1930; Hoover, *The Cabinet and the Presidency*, 351; Jeansonne, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker*, 171; Ellis, *Republican Foreign Policy*, 179-180; Louria, *Triumph and Downfall*, 158-164.

⁴⁶ Hoover, *The Cabinet and the Presidency*, 352.

debate, the Senate finally ratified the treaty with an overwhelming vote of 53-4 on July 21, 1930. The President signed the treaty the following day.⁴⁷

The Hoover Administration's first international negotiation was complete and ended as a first-rate success. It consummated months of planning and execution. The President, becoming increasingly concerned with the Great Depression, claimed that in the interest of the American people, as well as the people of other nations, the treaty would save "literally billions of dollars;" approximately \$1 billion in the United States alone over the following six years. He stated that had the treaty not been ratified, the United States would be forced to spend greatly and gain nothing from competitive arms races with other nations. "It is folly to think that because we are the richest nation in the world we can out build other countries," the Quaker explained. "Other nations will make any sacrifice to maintain their instruments of defense against us, and we shall eventually reap in their hostility and ill-will the full measure of the additional burden...."⁴⁸ Great Britain and Japan waited for the United States to act first, then followed suit by submitting the treaty to their governments, all of which approved it. The Anglo-American breach was healed. Hoover, continuing to remain true to his Quaker ideals, contributed to world peace by seeking to reduce war and misery. He also reassured the world of his country's peaceful intentions and renewed the faith of the world in the forces of moral leadership.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Ibid, 351-352; *New York Herald Tribune*, July 22, 1930; *Washington Post*, July 22, 1930, CF, HHPL; Jeansonne, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker*, 171-172; Stimson and Bundy, *On Active Service in Peace and War*, 172-173.

⁴⁸ Hoover, *The Cabinet and the Presidency*, 351.

⁴⁹ Ray Lyman Wilbur and Arthur Mastick Hyde, *The Hoover Policies* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1937), 593; Jeansonne, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker*, 172; Ellis, *Republican Foreign Policy*, 168, 180.

Chapter 3: The Manchurian Crisis

For Herbert Hoover, his experiences with the Far East began in March 1899 when he and his wife, Lou Henry, arrived in Peking, China. Hoover was working as a mining engineer for Bewick, Moreing and Company and traveled to China to take over the operation of a newly opened mine. He and Mrs. Hoover decided to settle in the small town of Tientsin. Over the course of the next several months, the Quaker excelled as an engineer. Although not unearthing any rarities such as gold or diamonds, he did discover the largest coal deposit in the world; greater in size than all other coal fields combined. The Hoovers were enjoying their time in China and both had even taken up learning to speak Chinese.¹

However, their prosperity would soon meet trouble. In the winter and spring months of 1900, the engineer and his group began to hear of a new society named the I Ho Tuan, or the mailed fist. The I Ho Tuan's, more commonly known as the Boxers, avowed purpose was to expel all foreigners from China. They intended to root out all connection to foreigners; houses, railways, telegraphs and mines. They even included Chinese Christians and all Chinese who had associations with foreign things. The threat of attack from the Boxers had grown so great that by May, the engineer had called in all geological expeditions from the interior of China. This recall came just in time. A month later, in June, the Boxers laid siege to the mining settlement in Tientsin. For an entire month, the Hoover's were trapped in Tientsin. Ill equipped and with only a small number of United States Marines, the village rallied together to withstand the attack. Hoover

¹ Herbert Hoover, *The Memoirs of Herbert Hoover: Years of Adventure, 1874-1920* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1951), 35-48.

enlisted the help of his mining staff to fortify the walls of the village. He also held a vast knowledge of the topographical details of the local terrain due to days of horseback riding around the area, and was recruited to help as a guide to Marines in an attack against the Chinese Army. Finally, sufficient forces arrived and repelled the attackers. In early August 1900, the Hoover's departed China and arrived back at the mining firm in London. The future President and his wife had survived the Boxer Rebellion.²

This early experience in China no doubt added to the Quaker's continued interest in the Far East years later in his presidency. One of his administration's first experiences in foreign policy came in Manchuria during the interregnum in late 1928 and continued through the early months of Hoover's first year in office. Manchuria, a region located in Northeast China and Southeast Russia, was a land of value for several nations of the Far East, namely Russia, China and Japan. It was coveted because it offered a place for colonization. Manchuria also contained vast coal and iron deposits, as well as timber and fertile soil. Connecting these economic resources was a railroad system comprised of the Chinese Eastern Railway and the South Manchuria Railway. The former line was constructed by Russia with financing through a French loan beginning in 1898. During World War I, it fell under allied control. After the war, Russia and China operated the railroad through a joint ownership, yet this ownership was consistently a matter of dispute. The Eastern Line stretched for about 1,000 miles and held significant strategic importance for both Russia and China.³

² Ibid, 48-54.

³ Glen Jeansonne, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker, 1928-1933* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 165; L. Ethan Ellis, *Republican Foreign Policy, 1921-1933* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1968), 323-325.

Both the Soviets and the Chinese were also eager to gain the upper hand in controlling this coveted railway; however, China was the closest in proximity to it and became the most aggressive in defending its interests. The ambitious Chairman of the National Government of China, Chiang Kai-shek, sought to manipulate a local warlord in Manchuria into provoking a war with Russia. If he won, the Chinese would gain territory. If he lost, a potential rival to Chiang would be eliminated. In either case China would benefit and stood to consolidate its claims on the railway. The Chinese successfully provoked hostilities that erupted into a skirmish in December 1928. China seized a local telephone line and threatened to take over strategic telegraph communications. The situation escalated in July 1929 when China confiscated the railroad. The Soviets and the Chinese immediately severed diplomatic relations and a war appeared all but inevitable.⁴

Word of the growing conflict spread to America and Hoover, along with his Secretary of State, Henry L. Stimson, began to make plans to intervene to help solve the clash. Both men sought to employ the newly minted Kellogg-Briand Peace Pact as a tool of rationale aimed at a ceasefire. Since Russia and China were both signatories to the pact, Stimson declared they were obligated to observe it.

The Kellogg-Briand Peace Pact, ratified in August 1928, was a treaty renouncing and outlawing war as an instrument of national policy and pledging all signatory nations to solve their disputes by peaceful means. Negotiation for the pact began in early 1927 when French Foreign Minister Aristide Briand suggested a bilateral treaty of perpetual

⁴ *New York Post*, July 18, 1929, Clippings Files (hereafter CF), Herbert Hoover Presidential Library (hereafter HHPL); Robert H. Ferrell, *American Diplomacy in the Great Depression: Hoover-Stimson Foreign Policy, 1929-1933* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1957), 45-51; William Starr Myers, *The Foreign Policies of Herbert Hoover, 1929-1933* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1940), 153-154.

friendship between France and the United States. The treaty came out of Briand's proposal, sent to United States Secretary of State Frank B. Kellogg, on April 6, 1927, but its antecedents are more complex than a mere gesture of an idea. The foundation of the treaty lay in the hope of people everywhere in the western world for peace following the Great War. The war had a lasting effect on those nations that were involved in it. The trauma experienced transcended the boundaries of nations and made the quest for world peace and the elimination of war a common theme in the 1920's. This became prevalent with institutions such as the World Court as well as in such arbitration treaties as the Draft Treaty of Mutual Assistance of 1923, the Geneva Protocol of 1924 and the Locarno Treaties of 1925.⁵

The United States was no exception when it came to a desire for peace and in America, a grass-roots campaign against war became a driving force behind Briand's proposal. Separated from Europe by an ocean, popular sentiment was that America should remain isolationist and never again become involved in another international conflict. Moreover, another conflict should never occur. Major proponents of this idea included two private groups: the American Committee for the Outlawry of War and the Carnegie Endowment of International Peace. Created by a prominent Chicago lawyer, Salmon O. Levinson, the American Committee for the Outlawry of War established a movement with the belief that if war was declared illegal then nations would not resort to using it as a means to resolve conflicts. The thinking held that if nations tried to follow

⁵ Robert H. Ferrell, *The American Secretaries of State and Their Diplomacy*, Vol. XI, *Frank B. Kellogg and Henry L. Stimson*. Series edited by Robert H. Ferrell (New York: Cooper Square Publishers Inc., 1963), 105-106; Margot Louria, *Triumph and Downfall: America's Pursuit of Peace and Prosperity, 1921-1933* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001), 125, 128; Manley O. Hudson, *By Pacific Means: The Implementation of Article Two of the Pact of Paris* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1935), 47-50.

international law, they would not break it knowing they could be punished. Levinson expresses these ideas early in his thesis, published on March 9, 1918:

Since war is a sanctioned procedure for resolving international conflicts, its validity has bred as an inevitable fact of life, permanent military preparedness, inescapable competition in arms and constant frictions between nations. When, and only when, punitive measures are applied to the international sphere in the same manner that nations penalize offenders within their own borders can the world feel safe from aggression. War, though made illegal, might still conceivably occur, but it would be branded as a crime and the force of the world would be organized to deal with the criminal.”⁶

The members of this movement became known as “outlawrists” and included such notables as Christian leader Dr. Charles Clayton Morrison, philosopher and pragmatist Professor John Dewey and Senator William E. Borah, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.⁷

The Carnegie Endowment of International Peace, with two of its officers, Nicholas Murray Butler, who was then president of Columbia University, and professor of history at Columbia, Dr. James T. Shotwell, also contributed significantly to the eventual peace pact. Butler traveled throughout Europe every summer on behalf of the Carnegie Endowment with over half-a-million dollars to dispose of annually in noble projects of peace. In his autobiography Butler states that he met with Briand in 1926 and discussed his ideas about a peace pact.⁸ Butler’s assistant, Shotwell, also traveled across the Atlantic and met with Briand in early 1927 and suggested the notion of renouncing

⁶ Ferrell, *The American Secretaries of State and Their Diplomacy*, 107; Louria, *Triumph and Downfall*, 126-127.

⁷ David Bryn-Jones, *Frank B. Kellogg: A Biography* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1937), 223; Louria, *Triumph and Downfall*, 126-127.

⁸ Nicholas Murray Butler, *Across the Busy Years* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1935), 202-203; Ferrell, *The American Secretaries of State and Their Diplomacy*, 108; John Chalmers Vinson, *William E. Borah and the Outlawry of War* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1957), 176-178.

war “as an instrument of national policy,” which would become the central theme of the Kellogg-Briand Peace Pact.⁹

With the seed planted, Briand looked to act. He sought a treaty with the United States as a complement to France’s existing system of European alliances. France was still very concerned about Germany’s ability to make war. Heavy reparations and a severe weakening of Germany’s military did not seem to be enough for the French. As a supplement they designed a series of treaties to ensure there would be enough allied support to keep Germany at bay. If France could add the mighty United States to a similar treaty, they hoped it would add a greater deterrence. Aforementioned, Briand dispensed a proposal to Secretary Kellogg on April 6, 1927, the tenth anniversary of American entry into the World War I. An official draft of the treaty titled “Draft of Pact of Perpetual Friendship between France and the United States” was sent by Briand on June 22, 1927. It included a preamble, three brief paragraphs pertaining to the renunciation of war and the settlement of disputes by pacific means. The opening paragraph also asked for the assurance that the United States would vow never to go to war against France. Kellogg demurred on the latter point, which was in fact a “negative military alliance,” viewing it as irrelevant because it was almost inconceivable that the two nations would ever find themselves at war with one another. “We have never been at war with France and I know of no conditions which would bring on a war...,” stated Kellogg.¹⁰

⁹ James T. Shotwell, *War as an Instrument of National Policy* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1929), 12; Ferrell, *The American Secretaries of State and Their Diplomacy*, 108.

¹⁰ Louria, *Triumph and Downfall*, 128-130; Ferrell, *The American Secretaries of State and Their Diplomacy*, 109-113; Bryn-Jones, *Frank B. Kellogg*, 224, 227-229.

Secretary Kellogg, as well as President Calvin Coolidge, was immediately skeptical of Briand's proposal, fearing France's motives might not be altruistic. After all, if France was truly sincere in promoting peace, why had they not accepted Coolidge's invitation to attend the Geneva Naval Conference? Kellogg suspected, correctly, that France was attempting to lure the United States into an alliance in which it could push American neutrality to the utmost in the event France became involved in a war. Kellogg had no intention of chaining the United States to such a pact. He deferred from responding to Briand for six months while trying to think a way to reply. At a Senate Foreign Relations Committee meeting on December 28, 1927, Kellogg believed he could delay no longer. He, along with Senator Borah, decided to counter Briand by proposing a "multilateral, rather than bilateral, treaty renouncing war as an instrument of national policy." The phrase "outlawry of war" was changed to "renunciation of war" by Kellogg, a lawyer by profession, because he felt the term "outlawry of war" lacked validity and precise meaning.¹¹

The Secretary proposed a multilateral treaty for two reasons. First, it would drive Briand into the open, revealing his true intentions for the original draft. Second, a multilateral pact would have greater bearing for enforcement and not force the United States into such a tightly bound contract.¹² "It has occurred to me that the two governments, instead of contenting themselves with a bilateral declaration of the nature suggested by Mr. Briand," Kellogg professed, "Might make a more signal contribution to word peace by joining in an effort to obtain the adherence of all the principal powers of

¹¹ Louria, *Triumph and Downfall*, 131-132; Ferrell, *The American Secretaries of State and Their Diplomacy*, 113-114.

¹² *Ibid.*

the world to a declaration renouncing war as an instrument of national policy.”¹³ The treaty would now contain no reservations or qualifications; there would simply be no more war between the signatories, and in this sense became what Senator James A. Reed of Missouri termed “an international kiss.”¹⁴

Briand was outraged at the American counterproposal. Signing with the United States was one thing, but to do it with many nations he felt it put too great a faith in words rather than armaments. However, if France now declined to sign such a treaty, world opinion threatened to deem them insincere towards methods of world peace. Briand sent a counter back to Kellogg demanding the treaty only apply to “wars of aggression” rather than all wars. This would leave “wars of self-defense” as a viable option should France find the need to go to war, in particular against Germany. The French still felt vulnerable to the political unrest in postwar Europe and the instrument of war may become necessary for practical defensive purposes. Kellogg, again harking back to his legal roots, objected that there was no clear definition for what constituted “wars of aggression” versus “wars of self-defense.” Nonetheless, the clause was left in and with the French reluctantly agreeing to the American’s changes, Kellogg set about committing other nations to join in the pact.¹⁵

One by one the major powers of the world signed on to the treaty. Kellogg wrote his to his wife in May 1928 announcing his fervor for getting the pact ratified, “If I can only get that treaty made, it will be the greatest accomplishment of my

¹³ Bryn-Jones, *Frank B. Kellogg*, 230-238; Ferrell, *The American Secretaries of State and Their Diplomacy*, 116.

¹⁴ Ferrell, *The American Secretaries of State and Their Diplomacy*, 115-116.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 116-118; Louria, *Triumph and Downfall*, 132-133; Bryn-Jones, *Frank B. Kellogg*, 239-246.

administration....”¹⁶ The Kellogg-Briand Peace Pact renouncing war as an instrument of national policy was signed at the Quai d’Orsay Palace in Paris on August 27, 1928. The same horseshoe-shaped table, covered in green baize that serviced the Versailles peace negotiators nearly a decade earlier was used by the fifteen signatories that day. Eventually a total of sixty-three nations signed the pact. Ratification and proclamation in the United States Senate passed without incident on January 15, 1929, with a vote of eighty-five to one, with nine senators abstaining. The only dissenter was Senator John J. Blaine of Wisconsin. President Coolidge signed the treaty two days later on January 17 as one of his final acts as Commander-in-Chief. President Hoover, now in office, declared it effective on July 24, 1929. The pact would rely on moral sanctions and good will. Deterrence from breaking the pact would be the knowledge that in the event a nation violated the treaty, the other signatories would be released from their obligations to the treaty breaker. In other words, the remaining signatories would be just in making war against the aggressor and that nation would lose all benefits furnished by the treaty. The pact was a product of the Great War, of the rising worldwide revulsion against war and its miseries and destruction. It became a milestone in the struggle for world peace and earned Kellogg the Nobel Peace Prize for 1929. The secretary stated just prior to Hoover’s declaring the pact in effect, “I have never said that a treaty like this would be a sure guarantee against war...but it is an additional safeguard and a great moral obligation.”¹⁷

¹⁶ Ferrell, *The American Secretaries of State and Their Diplomacy*, 119.

¹⁷ Ibid, 118, 121-123; Louria, *Triumph and Downfall*, 136-137; Bryn-Jones, *Frank B. Kellogg*, 246-251; Hudson, *By Pacific Means*, 93-95.

As it would be, the Kellogg-Briand Peace Pact did not prevent war. No sooner had the President declared it effective, than war broke out in Manchuria. When the situation between Russia and China escalated in July 1929, Hoover and Stimson attempted to intervene by invoking the pact and distributing messages to the Soviets and the Chinese declaring the two warring nations cease hostilities. As historian Glen Jeansonne states, “Stimson stirred a hornet’s nest.”¹⁸ The United States had no formal relations with Russia and therefore Stimson had to relay the message through France. A direct message was sent to China. Stimson also attempted to obtain collaboration from the League of Nations, as they possessed the necessary means to enforce the treaty. These efforts proved fruitless. The Soviets and the Chinese promptly responded that the Secretary of State should mind his own business and claimed the United States wished to get involved because it held capitalist and imperialistic aims. Thirty-seven of the sixty-four signatories followed Stimson’s appeal but these results were negligible as well. Japan was also upset that Stimson had not consulted them on the issue prior to sending out appeals. Japan, after all, held vital interests in the region and was close in proximity whereas the United States sat half a world away.¹⁹

Not only did the Kellogg-Briand Peace Pact fail to hinder war from breaking out, but it was now proving ineffective in halting conflict. Prior to his effecting the treaty, Hoover proposed a clause be added indicating that if a nation violated the pact, the other signatories would sever relations with the violator, set up an investigative commission and refuse to recognize any territory gained by the aggressor. Kellogg disagreed with this and it was left out. Had it been added, it may have given some teeth to the pact.

¹⁸ Jeansonne, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker*, 165.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 165; Ellis, *Republican Foreign Policy*, 325-327.

Hoover's proposal would eventually become the policy of non-recognition in the later Stimson Doctrine, however as it was now, neither side took the treaty seriously. Both Russia and China also claimed that each was fighting a defensive war, which was permitted under the pact. Kellogg's initial hesitation toward the hazy definition of defensive versus aggressive wars had come to fruition.²⁰

The fighting continued, although it was relatively light, throughout the summer of 1929. Neither country was prepared for a war. The Russians were still recovering from World War I and the Chinese Army was disorganized, undisciplined and poorly armed. Then in November, Soviet troops invaded Manchuria, encountering very little resistance. Following the invasion, Russia said it was willing to settle the dispute on the basis of the status quo ante, going back to before the incident of December 1928. Eventually both sides resolved the conflict themselves on the basis of the status quo ante, which meant Russian ownership of the Chinese Eastern Railway. The Sino-Soviet Pact was signed on December 3, 1929, nearly one year to the date of the outbreak of hostilities.²¹ This first attempt of Hoover and Stimson to promote the Kellogg-Briand Peace Pact into a consultative agreement was a laudable effort but proved that the treaty was powerless against hostilities.

A second attempt would come soon enough. Ironically it was Manchuria that again became the hotbed of conflict, however this time it would be the Japanese fighting with China. Manchuria had been an old battleground for Japan. Formally, the region belonged to China, but it was ruled by independent warlords (the same warlords Chiang

²⁰ Ellis, *Republican Foreign Policy*, 325-326.

²¹ Ibid; *New York Times*, July 19, November 28, 29, December 5, 1929; *New York Herald Tribune*, August 25, 1929, CF, HHPL; Jeansonne, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker*, 166; Myers, *The Foreign Policies of Herbert Hoover*, 154.

Kai-shek sought to provoke into war with Russia). Japan wished to use Manchuria as a source of raw materials, as a buffer against the Soviets and as an outlet for expansion. In 1905, the Treaty of Portsmouth gave Japan rights to capital investments in Manchuria, as well as railroad claims there. The Chinese viewed this as a threat to their sovereignty, stating that the Japanese were simply replacing the Soviets. To the Japanese, the ownership of railways and other material holdings were clusters of “vital interest,” partly strategic and partly economic.²² Japan also believed that maintaining these vital interests in Manchuria could be done either by peace (“friendship” policy) or determined aggression (“positive” policy). In 1931, the Japanese Foreign Minister, Baron Kijuro Shidehara, was a proponent of peace and the “friendship” policy; more interested in Manchuria for economic, rather than military purposes. The majority of Japan’s military however, still following the ideology of Shidehara’s predecessor, Baron Tanaka Giichi, believed in Manchuria for the indefinite expansion of the Japanese Empire and in maintaining that right forcefully through a “positive” policy.²³ Until the fall of 1931, Shidehara had managed to restrain the military and other proponents of force. Secretary Stimson explains the Baron’s policy at the time:

Instead of seeking markets by force, [he] had been following the entirely opposite plan of commercial expansion and political good neighborliness. [He] had followed this course patiently and in the face of considerable difficulty and provocation.²⁴

²² David Burner, *Herbert Hoover: A Public Life* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf Publishers, 1979), 293-295; Myers, *The Foreign Policies of Herbert Hoover*, 153-158; Jeansonne, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker*, 342; Richard Current, *Secretary Stimson: A Study in Statescraft*. (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1954), 67; Ellis, *Republican Foreign Policy*, 328.

²³ Henry L. Stimson and McGeorge Bundy, *On Active Service in Peace and War* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1947), 220-225.

²⁴ Henry L. Stimson, *The Far Eastern Crisis* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1936), 36.

On September 18, 1931, Japanese troops guarding a small section of railroad track approximately three miles north of the city of Mukden claim to have been startled by an explosion. Upon investigating the explosion, the Japanese troops claim they saw Chinese troops running from the area and, upon pursuing the retreating troops, were fired upon. The Japanese maintained that the explosion was the result of a bomb set by the Chinese, intending to destroy the railroad. Later investigations by the Lytton Commission would reveal that in fact there was no explosion, no damaging of track and that what came to be referred to as the “Mukden Incident” was actually a fabricated story. In reality, a small faction of the Kwantung Army, operating without authorization from Tokyo, took it upon themselves to launch an attack on the Chinese in apparent retaliation for the killing of a Japanese guard by the Chinese on the South Manchurian Railway. The attack had another genesis as well. The strong military party of Japan had taken it upon their own accord to reverse the “friendship” policy, aiming not only at a “positive” policy but at a complete reorientation of Japanese foreign policy toward a program of active imperialism. Their reasoning behind this was that the worldwide depression had discredited Shidehara’s policy and cut Japanese foreign trade nearly in half. The military leadership now sought to correct this problem by expanding trade through force. These were perhaps the first shots fired of the Second World War.²⁵

Although the Mukden attack was more or less an act of mutiny, the Japanese government did not respond to halt it. By the following day, Japanese troops occupied

²⁵ *New York Times*, September 20, 1931, CF, HHPL; Hoover, *The Cabinet and the Presidency*, 365; Stimson and Bundy, *On Active Service in Peace and War*, 225; Current, *Secretary Stimson*, 72; Ellis, *Republican Foreign Policy*, 330-331; Dorothy Borg, *The United States and the Far Eastern Crisis of 1933-1938: From the Manchurian Incident Through the Initial Stage of the Undeclared Sino-Japanese War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1964), 1-2; Jeansonne, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker*, 342; Manley O. Hudson, *The Verdict of the League: China and Japan in Manchuria* (Boston: World Peace Foundation, 1933), 10-12, 25-26; James William Christopher, *Conflict in the Far East: American Diplomacy in China from 1928-1933* (Boston: E.J. Brill Publishing, 1950), 220-241.

Mukden and four other Manchurian towns: Newchang, Changshun, Antung and Kaopangtzu.²⁶ Hoover and Stimson immediately began following the crisis. At first both men hoped the situation could be resolved internally and the stray military offensive put down without United States intervention. Stimson said on September 22, “It is apparent that the Japanese military have initiated a widely extended movement of aggression only after careful preparation with a strategic goal in mind.” He continued on this threat to world peace, “If the military party should succeed in having its way...the damage to the new structure of international society provided by post-war treaties would be incalculable.”²⁷ The Secretary of State also gave indication of the “hands off” approach the United States was going to take while giving the Japanese government an opportunity to reel in the aggressors before an expansion of the war occurred:

The evidence in our hands points to the wisdom of giving Shidehara and the Foreign Office an opportunity, free from anything approaching a threat or even public criticism, to get control of the situation. My problem is to let the Japanese know that we are watching them....²⁸

The Quaker’s interest in the Far East crisis goes back to his engineering days. Already mentioned, he had spent time working closely with the Chinese three decades earlier. Also reason for the interest, not only in Hoover but as far as the United States was concerned, was China’s relationship with America. During the first half of the twentieth century the United States had become a world power and subsequently took an interest in world affairs. As a result, America became a leader in developing the Open Door Policy in China. The policy was first enunciated in 1899 by United States Secretary

²⁶ *New York Times*, September 20, 22, 1931, CF, HHPL.

²⁷ Stimson, *The Far Eastern Crisis*, 37; Vinson, *William E. Borah*, 180-182.

²⁸ Stimson and Bundy, *On Active Service in Peace and War*, 227.

of State John Hay and was later enlarged by the Nine-Power Treaty of Washington in 1922. In the treaty, the major powers of the United States, Great Britain, France, Japan and all other nations holding territory in the Pacific, with the exception of Soviet Russia, agreed to ensure the territorial and administrative integrity of China and that free access of commerce there would be respected by all nations.²⁹ Also during this time, America had developed an extensive interconnection with China. This relationship came in the form of missionary and educational undertakings for the exchange of knowledge and culture. As author and later National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy writes, “China was an important friend of the United States.”³⁰ It was only prudent that America should maintain vigilance of the growing situation in support of the Chinese.

The Japanese invasion of Manchuria was a flagrant violation of both the Kellogg-Briand Peace Pact and the Open Door in China. The problem for the Quaker was how far would, or could, he go to cope with this threat? Again, the President hoped the situation could be kept localized, but if it did spread, the United States was a major defender of world peace and would be expected to respond. Rising economic concerns such as the Great Depression, Britain jumping off the gold standard and the Hoover Debt Moratorium were increasingly taking more and more of Hoover’s attention and time.³¹ The great distance between the United States and the Far East also added to the question of the degree of intervention the President could make. He believed, however, that it was

²⁹ Ibid, 225-226; Ferrell, *American Diplomacy in the Great Depression*, 138; Hans J. Morgenthau, “The United States and China,” in *China in Crisis*, Vol. 2, *China’s Policies in Asia and America’s Alternatives*. Series edited by Tang Tsou (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 97.

³⁰ Stimson and Bundy, *On Active Service in Peace and War*, 226.

³¹ *New York Evening Post*, October 23, 1931, CF, HHPL; Stimson and Bundy, *On Active Service in Peace and War*, 230; Ellis, *Republican Foreign Policy*, 333; Ferrell, *American Diplomacy in the Great Depression*, 141-143.

again his, and the people of his nation's, moral obligation to aid in keeping world peace. Therefore, when on September 21, 1931, China formally appealed to the League of Nations, the President instructed his Secretary of State to cooperate fully with the League. If Geneva would take the lead, Hoover, Stimson and the United States were prepared to follow in support. Stimson relayed a message to the Secretary General in Geneva stating, "On its part the American government, acting independently through its diplomatic representatives, will endeavor to reinforce what the League does...." This marks a groundbreaking initiative in United States foreign policy; America would act together with the League of Nations for the first time.³²

Secretary Stimson began considering courses of action. He would support Geneva's direct Sino-Japanese negotiations but would favor submission of any policies toward the Far East as a joint measure taken by the League and its members along with the United States. In this sense, America's actions would parallel but still remain independent from the League. This also ensured that the League did not try to "pass the buck" on the issue to the United States, as Stimson was wary they might do. It also confirmed to a nation still greatly concerned with remaining isolationist that America was not considering joining the League of Nations. Over the course of the next two months, the State Department followed this course of action. On September 24, America exerted its influence on behalf of peace when identical notes were sent from Geneva and Washington protesting Japanese action in Manchuria and demanding aggressions cease.

³² *New York Times*, September 22, 24, 1931; *New York Herald Tribune*, October 12, 1931; [Washington, D.C.] *U.S. Daily News*, November 1, 1931, CF, HHPL; Hoover, *The Cabinet and the Presidency*, 365; Ellis, *Republican Foreign Policy*, 333; Current, *Secretary Stimson*, 72; Myers, *The Foreign Policies of Herbert Hoover*, 154; Ferrell, *American Diplomacy in the Great Depression*, 140-144.

These notes were followed by similar ones dispatched by France, Britain and Italy. The notes went unheeded. Hoover and Stimson were proceeding with caution.³³

Early October 1931 marked a turning point in the Manchurian Crisis as well as in the President's and Secretary of State's course of action. Despite promises from Japanese Ambassador to the United States Katsuji Debuchi that Japan would begin withdrawing troops from Manchuria, on October 8, Japanese aircraft began bombing the city of Chinchow, which was far removed from the area of original hostilities. Thousands of civilians were killed and this indicated a Japanese intent to expand rather than contract its operations in Manchuria. Suddenly Hoover and Stimson found themselves in a position where escalation on the part of the United States might be necessary in order to keep the conflict from spreading. Stimson noted in his diary, "I am afraid we have got to take a firm ground and aggressive stand toward Japan."³⁴ The Secretary now believed he would "probably push forward the Kellogg Pact" in order to facilitate an eventual peace between China and Japan. The Quaker still had no intention of employing any drastic measures. The United States had no interest in Chinese or Manchurian soil; at least not enough to justify deploying troops for a war. However, the American role gradually increased and a rift began to form between the President and his Secretary of State.³⁵

At the outbreak of the conflict, Stimson sought to be gentle with Japan. However, as events changed and the Japanese took a more aggressive path, the Secretary's

³³ *New York Times*, September 24, October 14, 1931, CF, HHPL; Hoover, *The Cabinet and the Presidency*, 365; Jeansonne, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker*, 343; Ellis, *Republican Foreign Policy*, 335; Current, *Secretary Stimson*, 73; Stimson and Bundy, *On Active Service in Peace and War*, 227-228.

³⁴ *New York Times*, October 1, 1931, CF, HHPL; Current, *Secretary Stimson*, 75-76; Stimson and Bundy, *On Active Service in Peace and War*, 228; Jeansonne, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker*, 343; Ellis, *Republican Foreign Policy*, 336.

³⁵ Jeansonne, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker*, 343; Stimson and Bundy, *On Active Service in Peace and War*, 228; Current, *Secretary Stimson*, 76.

approach hardened. Shortly after the bombing of Chinchow, Stimson presented Hoover with two courses of action; both alternatives to the “hands off” approach the United States was currently taking. Stimson proposed that Hoover either implement economic sanctions against Japan or exercise some form of diplomatic pressure in an attempt to mobilize world opinion against the Japanese. Stimson firmly believed in the former alternative while the President favored the latter.³⁶ The President believed sanctions would only inflame the situation. He stated that action such as an “embargo or an attempt to put on economic pressure” was “a step which would be proactive and lead to war.”³⁷ Hoover asked Stimson what other option he would have, short of war, in the event sanctions failed. The Secretary sat in silence, unable to provide an answer. The Quaker believed ever since Versailles the term “economic sanction” or “boycott” meant war. He associated war with starvation, broken spirits and a demoralized nation, and he was not about to be the cause of such suffering.³⁸

Still Stimson believed this was the best course of action to take. When the League of Nations spoke of an economic embargo on November 19, Stimson brought it up for the President’s consideration again. Hoover again declined to take such action. Still the Secretary brought the subject up for discussion three subsequent times: on November 27, December 6 and in early February 1932. Each time the Quaker stood unwaveringly in opposition. In a memorandum to Stimson dated February 23, 1932, the President informed his Secretary of State that he would no longer hear any further talk of

³⁶ *New York Evening Post*, October 9, 1931, CF, HHPL.

³⁷ Ellis, *Republican Foreign Policy*, 338.

³⁸ Hoover, *The Cabinet and the Presidency*, 366.

“sanctions, either economic or military, for those are the roads to war.”³⁹ In that same memo Hoover stated that in order to declare sanctions, he would need congressional approval. In order for Congress to approve, they would have to declare war and that was “wholly unjustified.”⁴⁰

This became a major dividing point between the President and the Secretary of State. In reality, Hoover and Stimson battled on most issues for the duration of the conflict. Historian Richard Current writes that during the Manchurian Crisis, the United States was engaged in a sort of “dual diplomacy.” Hoover looked to diplomatic channels as the proper means to implement peace, while Stimson favored economic warfare. The President writes later in his memoirs that he had to wrestle with Stimson for days to get his point across to the Secretary and that Stimson always wanted to go with force. Hoover realized that his Secretary of State was more the hawk than dove.⁴¹

Stimson did give way however. He admitted that Hoover was the President and therefore was in command. The United States continued to take action by supporting the League’s lead. On October 17, 1931, Prentiss Gilbert, the American Consul General in Geneva, was invited to sit in on meetings of the Council of the League of Nations in order to create a “united front” and help apply the Kellogg-Briand Peace Pact toward a resolution in the Far East. With Hoover’s approval, Gilbert attended the sessions and on October 24, Geneva issued a resolution demanding the Japanese withdraw by November 16. Gilbert had aided with the first positive League action of the crisis.⁴²

³⁹ Ellis, *Republican Foreign Policy*, 341.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 341-342; Hoover, *The Cabinet and the Presidency*, 375; Stimson, *The Far Eastern Crisis*, 161.

⁴¹ Current, *Secretary Stimson*, 104, 106-107; Hoover, *The Cabinet and the Presidency*, 375.

As November 16 approached, it became apparent that the League of Nations had overreached itself. The day came and went with Japan in full defiance. Three days later, on November 19, Japanese troops advanced and overran the city of Tsitsihar in northern Manchuria. Simultaneous with the invasion of Tsitsihar, the Shidehara government fell, leaving Stimson to say, “The Japanese government which we have been dealing with is no longer in control; the situation is in the hands of virtual mad dogs.”⁴³ On January 2, 1932, the Japanese Army moved again and completely occupied the bomb-ruined city of Chinchow. With that the conquest of Manchuria was complete. Japanese troops stood poised at the Great Wall and threatened to take the conflict into China proper. Also with this climax, Hoover and Stimson’s attempts at “conciliation by restraint” were ended for good. A wholly new phase of American foreign policy began.⁴⁴

The Quaker in Hoover led him to be a profoundly peaceful man. Although he was outraged by the continued Japanese aggression in Manchuria, he continued to seek pacific means for a resolution. The President was “opposed, in every fiber of his being, to action which might lead to American participation in the struggles of the Far East.”⁴⁵ Now, with Japan aggressively taking territory in Manchuria against the policies of the League of Nations and the Kellogg-Briand Peace Pact, Hoover had a catalyst for a new plan and went into action developing it as a means of applying brakes to the Japanese war machine. The United States would not condone the tearing up of or the forgetting of

⁴² *New York Times*, October 17, 18, 1931, CF, HHPL; Hudson, *The Verdict of the League*, 32-33.

⁴³ Current, *Secretary Stimson*, 79.

⁴⁴ *New York Times*, November 19, 20, 1931, January 2, 3, 1932; *New York Evening Post*, November 19, 1931, CF, HHPL; Current, *Secretary Stimson*, 79-80; Jeansonne, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker*, 343; Stimson and Bundy, *On Active Service in Peace and War*, 231.

⁴⁵ Stimson and Bundy, *On Active Service in Peace and War*, 233.

treaties and it would not take any economic or military action in the Far East. The question Hoover asked himself in the winter of 1931 was, “What would the American government do?” In early December 1931, Hoover suggested to Stimson the idea of “non-recognition.” The President’s proposition being that since the Japanese had directly violated the Kellogg-Briand Peace Pact, the nations of the world simply refuse to recognize any territorial gains made in Manchuria. Hoover tasked Stimson with drafting the initial doctrine of non-recognition.⁴⁶

In his diary, the Secretary of State writes that he woke up on the morning of January 3, 1932, with his “mind rather clarified” on how he would construct his canon. As he worked through the morning, he developed a letter that was to be sent to the governments of China and Japan. The letter was designed to reassert Hoover’s conviction that absolutely no good whatsoever could come from a breach of peace treaties. It was designed to express total disapproval to what the Japanese were doing in Manchuria. Lastly, the Stimson letter was meant to add “moral teeth” to the Kellogg-Briand Peace Pact. When the draft was completed it was sent to the President for approval and Hoover accepted it. The Stimson Doctrine of Non-Recognition was dispatched to the Far East on January 7, 1932. Hoover announced to the world on January 8, the policy of non-recognition. He would use this policy as a moral weapon and effectively, the United States stepped to the forefront of the nations opposing Japanese aggression. In essence, the Stimson Doctrine stated that the United States did not intend to recognize, as legally valid, any situation, treaty, agreement, territory or government claimed or effectuated by force in Manchuria. It also solidified that the

⁴⁶ Hoover, *The Cabinet and the Presidency*, 372-373; Jeansonne, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker*, 343.

sanctity of existing treaties must remain intact. In the words of Secretary Stimson, “Non-recognition might not prevent aggression, but recognition would give it outright approval.”⁴⁷

The doctrine of non-recognition fully safeguarded the moral position of the United States, at least as far as could be done without warlike action. It put America on the record in terms of world support of the League of Nations and it went further by calling to attention the threatening of such peace machines as the Kellogg-Briand Peace Pact. Ideologically it encompassed Hoover’s designs of peace. It was announced under high hopes and with a sincere effort to halt aggression. It was, however, unsuccessful. As historian L. Ethan Ellis states, its effectiveness can be likened to “a pebble which failed to halt a rushing stream.”⁴⁸ The Stimson Doctrine was announced unilaterally by the United States and therefore left Hoover as a leader without followers. It failed to win adherence from any other major power, although Great Britain and France eventually sent similar dispatches of disapproval. These letters however, left out the idea of non-recognition. Japan saw this division between the allies and jumped on it. In their response dated January 16, 1932, Japan replied with what Stimson later referred to as “cool cheek.” The Japanese government agreed with Stimson about the sanctity of treaties (no doubt having their own treaties with China in mind) and cordially thanked the United States for its willingness to “support Japan’s efforts” to see that treaties were observed. Japan also claimed that its aims in Manchuria were for peace only and not based on territorial expansion, that Japan was supporting the principle of the Open Door

⁴⁷ Current, *Secretary Stimson*, 87-89; Stimson and Bundy, *On Active Service in Peace and War*, 234-236; Jeansonne, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker*, 343; Morgenthau, *The United States and China*, 97.

⁴⁸ Ellis, *Republican Foreign Policy*, 344.

and that the breakup of China was so far advanced that a “little further” breakup was justified. Stimson felt slapped in the face.⁴⁹

The Japanese did not halt their operations at the announcement of Stimson’s plan. Instead Japan expanded the war. During the final week of January 1932, Japanese troops completed the conquest of Manchuria and stood at the Great Wall. On January 28, the city of Shanghai was bombed and subsequently invaded and occupied. The war was now carried into China proper, the land where the Open Door principle was first applied. Stimson was outraged. Undersecretary of State William R. Castle, who felt the Japanese had “less justification in Shanghai than in Manchuria,” described Stimson, saying, “The Secretary is in a high state of excitement about the situation in Shanghai.”⁵⁰ Stimson now began to show an eagerness to use naval action to put down the Japanese. He met with Secretary of War Patrick J. Hurley to discuss the issue and came to agreement that forceful sanctions must be made. Stimson’s line here again became a fissure between himself and the President. Hoover too was livid that Japan failed to heed many repeated appeals to cease aggression. To the President, the Japanese attack on Shanghai was as evil as the German invasion of Belgium. He now saw the fight more clear-cut; as right versus wrong.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Presidential Papers, Foreign Affairs, Box 1024, HHPL; Stimson and Bundy, *On Active Service in Peace and War*, 237-238; Ellis, *Republican Foreign Policy*, 344-347; Current, *Secretary Stimson*, 88-89.

⁵⁰ Current, *Secretary Stimson*, 93.

⁵¹ Hoover, *The Cabinet and the Presidency*, 374; Current, *Secretary Stimson*, 92-93, 97; Stimson and Bundy, *On Active Service in Peace and War*, 243; Christopher, *Conflict in the Far East*, 281-299.

The Quaker's line of action differed from his Secretary's however. Hoover immediately vetoed Stimson's and Hurley's suggestion to invoke military sanctions.

Stimson writes in his diary:

He [Hoover] pointed out strongly the folly of getting into a war with Japan on this subject; that such a war could not be localized or kept in bounds, and that it would mean the landing of forces in the Far East, which we had no reason or sense in doing. He said he would fight for Continental United States as far as anybody, but he would not fight for Asia.⁵²

Hoover foresaw the danger of a prolonged war in Asia. He knew the American public would never support such a war, nor could they afford one. The Quaker also knew that taking aggressive action would only be a detriment to the peace initiatives and "great moral forces" of the Kellogg-Briand Peace Pact and the Stimson Doctrine. He refused to "dispense with police force" stating, "The only police force I have got to depend upon today is the American Navy."⁵³ He did deploy troops and ships from the Asiatic Fleet to China as well as reinforced American bases in Hawaii and the Philippines. Hoover's purpose for this was far different from Stimson's though. The Quaker did this "to protect the lives of Americans" and to prepare in the event the Japanese moved against United States possessions in the Pacific. The President issued "strict orders...that our forces should confine themselves to the task of protecting Americans."⁵⁴

The battle between Hoover and Stimson continued. Hurley was in concert with the Secretary of State, arguing that the United States should "put up or shut up;" either use the fleet forcefully or say and do nothing at all. Hoover believed this show of force

⁵² Ray Lyman Wilbur and Arthur Mastick Hyde, *The Hoover Policies* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1937), 599-601.

⁵³ Eleanor Tupper and George E. McReynolds, *Japan in American Public Opinion* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1937), 319.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 241-245; Current, *Secretary Stimson*, 94.

was inherently dangerous and possessed the threat to start a new war. Stimson openly criticized Hoover over his “pacific policy” on several occasions saying he “lacked appreciation of the real nobility of the tradition and standard American doctrine towards China of the Open Door.” When Stimson proposed the United States, at the very least, make a bluff of strength as a way to scare Japan into thinking America would use force, Hoover vetoed the suggestion. The President was so much a man of peace that he did not even favor the notion of unspoken threats. For this Stimson told other members of the administration, “He [Hoover] has not got the slightest element of even the fairest kind of bluff.” In a cabinet meeting the Secretary requested “that there should be no talk or action by anyone which should indicate that we were not going to use any weapon that we might have, whether it be the fleet or the boycott [economic sanctions].”⁵⁵ Hoover was the President, however, and therefore the policy of his nation would be his decision. He was always willing to listen, but never persuaded by Stimson on the issue of forceful sanctions. On February 20, 1932, he told Stimson, “I hope my mind is not closed on anything, but it is as much closed as possible on the question of calling sanctions.”⁵⁶ The Quaker was constantly pushing back against what was seen as the normal United States policy and course of action. He was locked in a battle with his Secretary of State, a battle he would win.

Hoover continued to seek moral pressures for the solution to the current problem. In late January 1932, another attempt was made for conciliatory ways to end the fighting in the Far East. Hoover suggested that both he and King George of Britain send open

⁵⁵ Stimson and Bundy, *On Active Service in Peace and War*, 245; Current, *Secretary Stimson*, 95-97.

⁵⁶ Stimson and Bundy, *On Active Service in Peace and War*, 244.

appeals to the Emperor of Japan. This plan was rejected by Britain on the grounds that it would go against royal etiquette for the King to participate in direct negotiations. The idea was scrapped.⁵⁷

The President and Secretary of State still had one more string left to pull. Stimson was determined to strike a resounding blow for the nobility of the Open Door Policy, while Hoover continued to fight for the morality of the issue. What they had in mind was a restatement of the non-recognition doctrine, this time with an emphasis on the Nine-Power (Open Door) Treaty. Stimson would write an “open letter” (one that is made public) setting forth the ideas of the United States as to the Open Door. By making it an open letter, Stimson believed he would rouse public support and at the same time show the world just how far America was willing to go. This was an old practice used by President Theodore Roosevelt on several occasions.⁵⁸

The Borah Letter, as it was called because it was written to Senator Borah, was published on February 23, 1932. It was sent one day after Japan openly repudiated the idea that China was strong and independent saying, “The Japanese government does not and cannot consider that China is an organized people within the meaning of the Covenant of the League of Nations.”⁵⁹ With Stimson’s letter coming immediately following this statement, the lines were drawn. On one side stood the United States, insistent on maintaining China’s independence and integrity. On the other side, Japan was determined to impose a unilateral solution on the grounds that “she believes that she

⁵⁷ Current, *Secretary Stimson*, 95; Hoover, *The Cabinet and the Presidency*, 375-376.

⁵⁸ Current, *Secretary Stimson*, 95, 97-99; Stimson and Bundy, *On Active Service in Peace and War*, 246.

⁵⁹ Stimson and Bundy, *On Active Service in Peace and War*, 254-255.

is naturally and necessarily in a far better position to appreciate the facts than any distant power can possibly be.”⁶⁰ Japan would continue to “fix” the situation on its own. This “fix” meant expansion and industrialization in China.

The Borah Letter began by explaining the Open Door Policy. It then came to a point and denied Japan’s contention that the Nine-Power Treaty needed to be revised (Japan felt that the United States’ Open Door in China was unfair because the West should keep out of the Far East. Japan proposed the treaty be revised to be made more favorable). The letter continued by reaffirming the non-recognition principle and recommended that “other governments of the world” adopt it so as to announce a “caveat” which would “effectively bar the legality of any right or title sought to be obtained by pressure or treaty violations.”⁶¹ Stimson went a step further by adding a distinctive element. He suggested that the three treaties of the Washington Conference of 1922, the Four-Power, Five-Power and Nine-Power Pacts, were “interdependent and interrelated.” By this Stimson claimed that the United States had agreed to limit its navy in the Pacific in return for Japan’s agreement in respecting the Open Door and integrity of China. He indicated that if Japan was to continue in violating Chinese integrity, the United States would consider itself released from limitations of the treaty and subsequently be justified to increasing its naval presence in the Pacific.⁶²

Hoover was far from enthusiastic over Stimson’s later point. Again he felt that it was a “forward step” toward implied force and that the United States was willing to go to

⁶⁰ Ibid, 255.

⁶¹ Current, *Secretary Stimson*, 99.

⁶² Ibid; Stimson and Bundy, *On Active Service in Peace and War*, 248-256; Marian C. McKenna, *Borah* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1961), 347-348.

war. He was correct to a point. Stimson did have the thought of war present in his mind when he drafted that article. The Secretary had begun to believe that an eventual war between the United States and Japan was inevitable. He even warned Hoover that he “better keep his powder dry.” In response to this, and while Stimson was away at the Second Geneva Naval Conference, the President instructed Undersecretary Castle to prepare a statement announcing to that “under no circumstance” was America going to war and had ruled out any sanctions. Hoover and Stimson quarreled further upon the Secretary’s return. In Japan, the letter was denounced immediately. The United States Ambassador to Japan, William C. Forbes, stated that it made the Japanese people view the United States as “their enemy.”⁶³ Stimson later wrote that the Borah Letter “was intended...and designed to encourage China, enlighten the American public, exhort the League, stir up the British and warn Japan.”⁶⁴

The Borah Letter did little except raise public opinion, though only marginally. Peace eventually came in Shanghai in early May 1932, with Japan withdrawing its troops. Friction continued in Manchuria with Japan again consolidating its position there. On September 15, the puppet state of Manchukuo was created and recognized by Japan. The Lytton Commission published its report on October 1, asserting that Japan had indeed violated the League Covenant but it did not recommend any sanctions. The British did place an arms embargo on China and Japan, but this made little impact on the Japanese. Geneva debated the Lytton Commission’s findings for months before finally adopting them on February 23, 1933. This did nothing and Japan quit the League of Nations. What Ellis calls “the successful Japanese adventure in Manchuria,” and what

⁶³ Stimson, *The Far Eastern Crisis*, 166-175; Current, *Secretary Stimson*, 100-102.

⁶⁴ Stimson and Bundy, *On Active Service*, 249.

the League, with its toothless documents, did was furnish a happy example to follow by future pupils like Benito Mussolini and his conquest of Ethiopia and Albania as well as Adolf Hitler's absorption of the Rhineland.⁶⁵

What the Manchurian Crisis offers is a fascinating study in conflicting personalities. Hoover, the Quaker, the opponent of war and sanctions, did not waver one bit in his position. Stimson's repeated and resourceful maneuvers around what Ellis terms "an almost monolithic stand," earn him high marks for persistence. Ultimately Hoover was the Commander-in-Chief and his policies prevailed. The rift created between Hoover and Stimson lasted well after the conflict was over. Stimson was not Hoover's first choice for Secretary of State. Stimson was opinionated, stubborn and lacked the President's imagination. Hoover had more disagreements with Stimson than with any other cabinet member. Hoover's Press Secretary, Theodore Joslin, once said, "Stimson is a mill stone around the neck of the President."⁶⁶ After his defeat to Franklin Delano Roosevelt in November 1932, Hoover met with Undersecretary Castle at Camp Rapidan and asked him to write a book about his administration's foreign policy. The outgoing President admitted that he knew Stimson would feel he should be the one to write it, but as Castle said, "[He] does not want Stimson to make himself the center of the book because, as Hoover said, 'He would have had us in a war with Japan before this if he had his way.'"⁶⁷ The Quaker admitted to Castle that "he was always afraid Stimson would get us into real trouble through his earnest and entirely laudable desire for

⁶⁵ *New York Times*, February 12, 1933; *New York Evening Post*, February 18, 1933, CF, HHPL; Current, *Secretary Stimson*, 110; Jeansonne, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker*, 345; Ellis, *Republican Foreign Policy*, 361.

⁶⁶ Jeansonne, *Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker*, 160.

⁶⁷ Current, *Secretary Stimson*, 109.

sanctions.”⁶⁸ Although the division was always present, both men respected one another. Stimson always yielded the final say to the President. McGeorge Bundy later wrote that to Stimson, “Mr. Hoover was...one of the great Americans of his time, and one of the most unjustly maligned.”⁶⁹

More important than the eventual outcome of Japanese aggression, the Manchurian Crisis highlighted how much of a man of peace Hoover was. He looked upon disarmament rather than economic or military warfare as the proper means to implement a pact for peace. He looked to non-recognition as an attempt to settle a dispute by pacific means, spread peace and protect the world of the future. The doctrine of January 7, 1932, was meant to be a new, alternative viewpoint against sanctions of force and a “moral disapproval” of aggression. Non-recognition itself could be called the “Hoover-Stimson Doctrine.” To Hoover, it could be considered as a final and sufficient measure and a substitute for economic pressure and military force. It is a policy of conciliation and peace, relying on moral power for effect. It was sparked and implemented by a man who used peace so his nation did not have to face war in his time.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Stimson and Bundy, *On Active Service in Peace and War*, 195.

⁷⁰ Current, *Secretary Stimson*, 104, 107-109, 113; Jeansonne, *Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker*, 345.

Chapter 4: War Debts and Reparations

One of the international problems President Hoover inherited when he took office was the multifaceted question of Allied debts owed to the United States and, indirectly, German reparations payments made to the Allies following World War I. Both were linked. The European Allies collected payments in the form of reparations from Germany, and many of them in turn forwarded these payments to America as partial payment of their war debts. American loans started early in the war, when the hard-pressed Allies borrowed heavily from private United States citizens to finance the conflict. When America entered the war in 1917, the burden of loans shifted to the United States government. At war's end, the debts accumulated by the European nations totaled over \$12 billion. Europe had accepted the fact that debts to the United States could only be paid to the extent that Germany paid the reparations. The flaw in this thinking was that reparations could only be made if Germany was prosperous and possessed a strong economy; however the very nature and harshness of reparations made this virtually impossible.¹

Following the end of the Great War, the Reparations Commission, dominated by France, began calculating the cost of the war, right down to every bullet fired. In April 1921, the commission presented a bill to Germany totaling over \$32 billion plus interest. This total was far less than France, who claimed to have lost the most during the conflict,

¹ *Chicago Daily News*, December 18, 1929, Clippings Files (hereafter CF), Herbert Hoover Presidential Library (hereafter HHPL); Glen Jeansonne, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker, 1928-1933* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 174; L. Ethan Ellis, *Republican Foreign Policy, 1921-1933* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1968), 191-193; Robert H. Ferrell, *American Diplomacy in the Great Depression: Hoover-Stimson Foreign Policy, 1929-1933* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1957), 32-33.

wanted but was far more than economists at Versailles deemed just. Germany accepted under duress, and so a triangular cycle of exchanges began between Germany, the European Allies and the United States. The plan was doomed to fail from the beginning because Germany would never be able to maintain a healthy economy this way. Scheduled payments failed to even meet the interest. Germany was able to make full payments only through August of that year, and then made partial payments through the early months of 1922 before finally defaulting. With the Allies collecting so much of Germany's diminutive revenue, the defeated nation was unable to invest in its own industrial infrastructure. Without that, economic growth was impossible and reparations payments were nothing but a plan on paper.² The driving force behind such callous reparations was France. The memories of the Great War were still fresh in French minds. France sought revenge and was determined to hold Germany responsible and deliver to the Germans what it deemed a deserved punishment. France believed Germany would continue to be a potential threat unless weakened economically and militarily. Therefore, reparations were implemented along with severe restrictions on the size and strength of the military Germany was allowed to maintain. This French militant attitude would only serve later on to inflame German citizens and add to the rise of nationalism and resentment within that small nation.³

Soon after Germany defaulted on payments, Great Britain proposed, along with France, Italy and Belgium, to ask the United States to help study the depth of the reparations problem. This study produced several commissions. The first was the World

² Ellis, *Republican Foreign Policy*, 196-198.

³ *New York Times*, July 8, 1931; [Washington, D.C.] *U.S. Daily News*, June 10, 23, 1931, CF, HHPL; Jeansonne, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker*, 330.

War Foreign Debt Commission, which Hoover served on as a flexible moderate.⁴ While serving on the commission, the Quaker suggested canceling all debts contracted before the armistice. When the commission informed him that neither Congress, nor the American people, would approve of such an accord, Hoover instead developed a strategy of lowering interest rates and stretching out payments on the principle over a longer period of time. He also, along with his colleagues, formulated the principle of reducing debts based on each nation's capacity to pay. Later, as President, Hoover negotiated agreements with individual debtor countries based on their ability to pay. He also wanted to use the debts as leverage to obtain concessions from the Europeans on issues such as arms reductions.⁵

Although the United States did not ask for and did not receive reparations from the Central Powers, two commissions headed by Americans also convened to study the reparations problem. Both delegations adopted similar plans in regards to scaling down payments. The first worked from January to April 1924, and consisted of a committee of experts including industrialist, businessman and lawyer Owen D. Young, novelist and philosopher Henry Morton Robinson, and was chaired by banker and future Vice President of the United States Charles G. Dawes. The product of this commission became known as the Dawes Plan. It was admittedly an interim scheme dependent upon restoration of a viable German economy. The plan attacked the problem from the angle of allowing Germany to pay a reasonable amount of what was owed. If properly rehabilitated, Germany could begin paying 1 billion German marks (\$250,000,000) the

⁴ Ellis, *Republican Foreign Policy*, 200-201.

⁵ *New York Herald Tribune*, July 7, 1929, CF, HHPL; Ellis, *Republican Foreign Policy*, 197, 200; Jeansonne, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker*, 174.

first year and increase, over a four year period, to a maximum of 2.5 billion marks (\$625,000,000). The arraignment was open-ended and contained no termination date. In order to help jumpstart its economy and industry, Germany received a loan of 800 million marks (\$200 million). The Dawes Plan was finalized and went into effect on August 30, 1924.⁶

Again the plan was only temporary. It provided short-term economic benefits and softened the blow of reparations. Even with the reduced payments and a loan, Germany was unable to maintain a secure economy. A vicious cycle ensued. Germany was forced to borrow greater amounts of money to help keep its industry afloat and make payments. As slight prosperity began to return, the urge to borrow more increased. American bankers were more than willing to lend in order to match this desire to borrow. Historian L. Ethan Ellis explains:

A routine was thus established: American investment dollars were transmitted into gold marks in the German industrial and commercial complex; these were funneled through the reparations hopper to Western Europe, emerging thence as pounds, francs and lira in satisfaction of war debt obligations.⁷

The cycle never balanced out and the debtor never caught up. By the end of the fourth Dawes Plan year, Germany had paid \$1.25 billion in reparations, but had borrowed \$1.5 billion. During this time Germans also became restive. The machinery of collection placed foreigners on their soil in derogation of their sovereignty. The absence of a date for the termination of payments inflicted a burden of unknown duration. The original reparations total of \$32 billion, assigned in 1921, coupled with French insistence on

⁶ Ellis, *Republican Foreign Policy*, 200-201; David M. Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1919-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 72.

⁷ Ellis, *Republican Foreign Policy*, 202.

complete repayment, reminded Germany of France's vindictiveness and an Allied lack of realism.⁸

As early as 1927, suggestions began circulating on the importance of negotiating a permanent settlement to the reparations problem. However, it was not until early 1929 that a committee convened to revise the Dawes Plan in the hopes of putting reparations on a definitive and realistic base. Sessions ran from February 11 to June 7, eventuating in an agreement that was to be called the Young Plan after the committee's American chairman, Owen D. Young. The Young Plan scaled down the reparations total from \$32 billion to just over \$8 billion. It also set up a designated repayment schedule that meant Germany would complete reimbursement in fifty-eight-and-a-half years at an interest rate of five-and-a-half percent. The total for Germany, with principle plus interest, would amount to around \$26 billion, substantially less than the 1921 amount. The Young Plan became effective in the spring of 1930. After nearly a decade, it now seemed as if a solution to the reparations problem had been found. Germany would be permitted to pay without undue hardship and the Allies would be able to meet their balances owed to the United States. The plan did however still depend on one thing: a healthy German economy.⁹

By the spring of 1931, the economy of the United States appeared to be bouncing back from the collapse of October 1929. During the first quarter of that year, employment had not dipped below the level of 1921-22. Industrial output grew by five percent, payrolls by ten percent and stock prices by ten percent. The Great Depression seemed to be bottoming out. Then setbacks in Europe staggered the upswing and sent the

⁸ Ibid; Ferrell, *American Diplomacy in the Great Depression*, 108-109.

⁹ Ferrell, *American Diplomacy in the Great Depression*, 202-203.

United States and world economies into a downward spiral. Hoover's hopes of ending the collapse in a single term faded. Germany strained under the burden of debts. Although it had received help in the form of the Young Plan, Germany continued to live far beyond its means; floating long-term loans at unrealistically high interest rates. When the debts began to fall due, Germany covered them by being issued short-term securities at even higher interest rates, a practice which Hoover had warned against since the early 1920's. This policy of floating high interest loans was commonplace in many other European countries as well. However, almost none of the money was spent on self-sustaining projects or productive enterprises that generated jobs or consumer products. The majority of the loan money was being put into armaments. Money from the United States, in the form of loans, continued to pour into Germany and by the spring of 1931, Americans held of over \$2 billion in German obligations. Since the global economy was linked in common dependency, the failure of securities in one nation brought down creditors in another. As historian Glen Jeansonne puts it, "World investors were riding a merry-go-round that must either stop or spin faster and faster until it spun them off."¹⁰

Austria was experiencing economic disturbances similar to those in Germany. Hoover writes in his memoirs that by the early 1930's both nations had been reduced to "a gigantic poorhouse." Already mentioned, loan money was not being used to create any self-sustaining economies. The only hope for salvation in the two countries was if they formed a customs union, which they did on March 21, 1931. It lit an explosion in Europe. This was forbidden by the Versailles Treaty because of the possibility it would

¹⁰ Ibid, 204; Herbert Hoover, *The Memoirs of Herbert Hoover: The Great Depression, 1929-1941* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1952), 61, 75; Jeansonne, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker*, 329-330; Eugene Lyons, *Herbert Hoover: A Biography* (Garden City, NY: Easton Press, 1964), 256; Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear*, 71-72; David Burner, *Herbert Hoover: A Public Life* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf Publishers, 1979), 300.

make Germany stronger militarily. France and Britain declared such a merger would not be allowed. Hoover felt that a union between a small state of six million people and a great state of sixty million people was scarcely a menace and the world economy as a whole would benefit rather than be threatened by such a venture. Nonetheless, the European powers won and the union was vetoed. This would only serve to the rising feelings of nationalism and resentment present in Germany.¹¹

The crisis continued further when on May 13, 1931, Austria's largest bank, the Kreditanstalt, collapsed. At the time, the bank held over half of all Austrian deposits and its liabilities were six times its assets. It could not withstand a bank run. France also contributed to the crumble by withdrawing its gold held there, even though France already held Europe's largest reserves of bullion. With the Kreditanstalt's collapse, economies all over Europe crashed due to investors' fear and further runs on banks. Less than a month after the Kreditanstalt's closing, the German Reichsbank lost over forty percent of its reserves. The panic swept across the Atlantic and reverberated in the United States. American banks held between \$1.2 billion and \$1.5 billion in European securities. Foreign orders for American commodities fell as well. Thousands of banks stood threatened and American investments would be jeopardized if the collapse was not arrested. Hoover now found himself faced with the task of saving the world economy. He began to think of solutions, instructing the United States Ambassador to Germany, Frederic M. Sackett, to relay a message to the German government saying the United States would endeavor to be helpful and that the whole reparations and debt complex would be reviewed in the light of capacity to pay under depression conditions. The

¹¹ Hoover, *The Great Depression*, 62-66; Ellis, *Republican Foreign Policy*, 204; Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear*, 72-74.

President consulted with economists and members of his cabinet, particularly Secretary of State Henry L. Stimson, Secretary of the Treasury Andrew W. Mellon and Undersecretary of the Treasury Ogden L. Mills. In early June, the Quaker proposed a one year moratorium on all governmental debts, excluding private debts. As the largest creditor, the United States would make the biggest sacrifice.¹²

The Hoover Debt Moratorium, as it came to be called, was the first major policy to meet the shock of the European collapse. When the President first proposed it to his secretaries on June 5, 1931, Stimson and Mills showed support while Mellon objected, saying the debt crisis was Europe's mess and America should not get involved. Hoover reminded him that the strain was worldwide. Reparations payments totaled more than \$1 billion per year, of which the United States received roughly \$250 million in the form of war debts payments. The crisis was indeed linked between continents. Tensions were high. Congress, not the President, controlled debt policy. They were not in session however. The moratorium would have to be ratified by Congress and approved by all the nations included. The President spent days interviewing and speaking with members of Congress and foreign leaders, via the transatlantic telephone, the first true diplomatic use of this instrument. Remembering the failure of President Woodrow Wilson's Versailles Treaty, he wanted to ensure there was enough support for his plan before announcing it publically. In a fit of pique, Congress later billed Hoover for all international calls. Most members of Congress approved with the major dissenters being Joseph Taylor Robinson,

¹² [Washington, D.C.] *U.S. Daily News*, June 10, 1931, CF, HHPL; Hoover, *The Great Depression*, 65; Ellis, *Republican Foreign Policy*, 206; Jeansonne, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker*, 331; Ferrell, *American Diplomacy in the Great Depression*, 112-113.

Democratic Leader of the Senate, and John Nance Garner, Speaker of the House, also a Democrat. Internationally there was much support; naturally France was opposed.¹³

On June 18, Hoover received a cablegram from German President Paul von Hindenburg stating that the Weimar Republic was in dire straits and requesting the Quaker's intervention:

...Germany has urgent need for relief. The relief must come at once if we are to avoid serious misfortune for ourselves and others.... You Mr. President, as the representative of the great American people, are in a position to take steps by which an immediate change in the situation threatening Germany and the rest of the world could be brought about.¹⁴

Hoover's statement was nearly complete. He had gained enough support, both domestically and internationally, and planned to release it on June 22. He urgently impressed upon all members of Congress that the subject must be kept confidential until he could present his course of action. Utah Senator William H. King leaked it "off the record" to the press however, forcing the President to announce it two days sooner, on June 20, 1931. The moratorium was a bold move that paid off.¹⁵

Most nations approved, as the moratorium would save Germany, Austria and most of Eastern Europe. The French balked at the idea, raising a host of technical self-serving difficulties. They were annoyed at its premature announcement and stood to lose \$79 million in reparations payments during the moratorium year. France also did not want to see its brutal enemy strengthened in

¹³ [Washington, D.C.] *U.S. Daily News*, June 23, 1931; *New York Times*, July 8, 1931, CF, HHPL; Ray Lyman Wilbur and Arthur Mastick Hyde, *The Hoover Policies* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1937), 408; Hoover, *The Great Depression*, 67-70; Ellis, *Republican Foreign Policy*, 206-207.

¹⁴ Hoover, *The Great Depression*, 68-69.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

any way. The French knew however that if Germany's economy failed, theirs would be dragged down as well. French Prime Minister Pierre Laval and Foreign Minister Aristide Briand supported the accord, but ultimately the decision lay with the French Chamber of Deputies. A three week wrangle ensued. Meanwhile, further runs on Central and Eastern European banks became rampant. The President knew the longer the delay, the less effective an impact the moratorium would make. Finally, on June 5, Hoover instructed the United States Ambassador to France, Walter Evans Edge, to inform the French government that he had secured enough support and did not require the inclusion of France on the moratorium. Hoover said the French might continue to exact payments from Germany when they fell due; however, other nations would do the same to France. This meant that the United States would continue to expect French payments of war debts. The Quaker stated that this would leave France little better off than if it accepted the moratorium and would serve to isolate the French from world opinion. Upon receipt of Hoover's final message, the French Cabinet hurriedly reversed itself and accepted the debt moratorium on July 6, 1931.¹⁶

It was a historic accomplishment. On that day, the President proclaimed, "I breathed easier in the hope that it [the debt moratorium] might still save the situation." Britain hailed it as evidence the United States was taking a greater leadership role in Europe. The mayor of Berlin suggested Hoover for the Nobel

¹⁶ *New York Times*, June 22, 23, July 4, 8, 1931, *New York Herald Tribune*, June 22, 1931, *New York Evening Post*, June 22, 1931, CF, HHPL; President's Personal Files, Box 17, HHPL; Hoover, *The Great Depression*, 70-72; Jeansonne, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker*, 331-332; Ellis, *Republican Foreign Policy*, 207-208; Wilbur and Hyde, *The Hoover Policies*, 411; William Starr Myers and Walter H. Newton, *The Hoover Administration: A Documented Narrative* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), 88-96; Theodore G. Joslin, *Hoover Off the Record* Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Page and Company, 1934), 96-105.

Peace Prize. The stock market temporarily stabilized and there was a momentary lift in the economies of the world. When Congress returned to session in the winter of 1931, the Quaker set about getting them to ratify the moratorium. Congress convened on December 7, only eight days before the next installment of war debts was due. Hoover announced to foreign leaders that they would not be held in default if Congress failed to ratify by the due date. The President worked with individual members and committees. Some were worried that if the moratorium was approved, Germany might never pay. Hoover countered that if the agreement was killed, they would surely never pay. A potential default later was better than an immediate and absolute one now. Ultimately Congress agreed with Hoover and the House enacted the moratorium by a vote of 317-100 on December 19, with the Senate approving on December 22, by a vote of 69-12. Both added the stipulation that the debts were only to be postponed and never cancelled. A one year moratorium on payments of reparations and intergovernmental debts was made effective retroactively to July 1, 1931 (Hoover, in fact, had wanted to make the moratorium for two years but doubted it could be ratified). Based on the biannual schedule of repayment, this effectively postponed payments until December 15, 1932. Although the Hoover Debt Moratorium helped to save Germany from internal political and economic crisis, it succeeded only temporarily. However, Hoover's actions were unprecedented, courageous and flew in the face of domestic and international opposition.¹⁷

¹⁷ Jeansonne, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker*, 332; Ellis, *Republican Foreign Policy*, 208; Hoover, *The Great Depression*, 72; Jordan A. Schwarz, *The Interregnum of Despair: Hoover, Congress and the Depression* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1970), 80-87.

The President's work with debt relief did not end with the Hoover Debt Moratorium. The moratorium did nothing to relieve private debts owed to American and Western European bankers by the Germans. There was a huge international indebtedness hanging over the world in the form of short-term loans. These had been issued between banks at high interest rates that could not possibly be met. These loans were soon to fall due and cause major European banks to collapse. As with the moratorium, the choice lay between holding off and perhaps getting something later, or getting nothing at all when economies crumbled. Hoover and Congress however, lacked the constitutional authority to intervene in private debts.¹⁸

As the European banks began closing, Hoover asked Secretary Mellon what types and what value there was of American loans and deposits in the banks of the crisis area. Mellon gave an astonishing report. American interests in Central and Eastern European banks exceeded \$1.7 billion, most in short-term bills between sixty to ninety days. The United States also had another \$2 billion invested in the banks of Britain, Sweden, Norway, Holland, Denmark and Switzerland. These banks going into default comprised a major threat to American bank holdings. The problem arose when so much long-term debt accrued; governments began floating short-term loans as a means to pay for the long-term debts. Germany in particular had been making reparations payments with borrowed money. This "kiting" of bills, Hoover states, "Was the explosive

¹⁸ Jeansonne, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker*, 332; Hoover, *The Great Depression*, 72-73; Ellis, *Republican Foreign Policy*, 209-210; Wilbur and Hyde, *The Hoover Policies*, 411; Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear*, 73-74, 77

mine which underlay the economic system of the world.” It quickly became obvious that Europe was unable to meet its short-term obligations.¹⁹

Attempting to fend off the threat of further collapse, Hoover instructed Secretary Stimson to engage in conversations with Great Britain to effect a “standstill agreement.” This would do for private debts held in Germany and Europe what the moratorium did for intergovernmental debts. To the Quaker, the issue now went from helping foreign countries to the indirect benefit of all, to one of saving world economies. Hoover intended to take a strong hand. France countered with a proposal that a world loan should be granted to Germany in the amount of \$500 million to stave off collapse. Hoover rejected this, saying the debt crisis was banker-made and the bankers should shoulder the crisis, not the taxpayers. He also viewed the loan as only partial relief of the banks at the government’s expense. To him, it was a wholly inadequate solution as such a loan would not even be enough to cover the amount owed to the United States. The Bank of England was also against the loan. Hoover sent his “standstill” proposal before the London Economic Conference in July 1931, where it was debated before being accepted and then finalized in Basel, Switzerland in late August.²⁰

The London Economic Conference of 1931 was a meeting between economic experts and statesmen from the major powers to plan the tactical implementation of Hoover’s initiatives as well as to discuss Europe’s economic

¹⁹ Ellis, *Republican Foreign Policy*, 209-210; Hoover, *The Great Depression*, 73-75.

²⁰ Hoover, *The Great Depression*, 75-79; Jeansonne, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker*, 332; Myers and Newton, *The Hoover Administration*, 103-105.

future. The conference also attempted to salvage the German economy before it completely crumbled. Stimson and Mellon were already in Europe and represented the United States in London. Although the Standstill Agreement was negotiated there, the conference made no major breakthroughs. Germany had hoped to receive massive new loans but this proved to be impractical. Hoover said it would be “like pouring water into a bucket with holes,” as more money continued to leave Germany than the amount that entered it. The Germans were given \$100 million in credit for three months, which was spent in just nine days. As Hoover was an internationalist, he did favor the aggressive role the United States was beginning to play in European diplomacy, something that until then had been unprecedented in peacetime.²¹

The Standstill Agreement was an agreement among bankers, not governments, in which creditors would offer additional time before collecting on international private debts. The Wiggins Committee locked the agreement in and placed bank acceptances on a standstill until September 1, 1931. A second standstill was negotiated in early 1932, extending the agreement until March 1, 1933. This accord concluded the development of formal American policy toward war debts and reparations. The effects of the moratorium and standstill were nothing more than palliative, however. Hoover was, nevertheless, able to keep the panic of Central and Eastern Europe from spreading across the Atlantic and the world breathed a sigh of relief.²²

²¹ *New York Times*, July 24, 1931, CF, HHPL; Jeansonne, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker*, 333; Hoover, *The Great Depression*, 73, 77-78; Ferrell, *American Diplomacy in the Great Depression*, 116-118.

The Hoover Debt Moratorium and Standstill Agreement were only reprieves. The Quaker earned praise for at least making an effort to solve the problems of European politics. He gained good will toward the United States. Nonetheless, both agreements were followed by a collapse in Germany.²³

Europe continued its descent into the depths of the economic nightmare when Great Britain soon followed Germany off the “economic merry-go-round.”²⁴ The British pound sterling, which was the pillar of international finance, had been stressed to the breaking point by the crisis in Central and Eastern Europe. Following World War I, the pound had been pegged unrealistically high. As it began to decline, the British continued to live far beyond their means as well as sacrifice their own security by making loans to Germany. The Royal Treasury was drained. On September 21, 1931, Great Britain ceased redeeming domestic credits with gold bullion; effectively leaving the world gold standard.²⁵

In 1931, international commerce was supported by gold-backed currency. World currencies were based upon convertibility into gold. The central banking systems of each nation held substantial gold reserves to protect convertibility and foreign exchange. Since unbacked currency was theoretically worthless, a nation could not issue more currency than it could support with gold. Gold was placed at

²² *New York Times*, August 2, 17, 1931, CF, HHPL; Ferrell, *American Diplomacy in the Great Depression*, 117-118; Ellis, *Republican Foreign Policy*, 210-211; Hoover, *The Great Depression*, 80.

²³ *New York Times*, July 24, 1931, CF, HHPL; Jeansonne, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker*, 333.

²⁴ Jeansonne, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker*, 334.

²⁵ *Ibid*; Wilbur and Hyde, *The Hoover Policies*, 413-415.

a certain value that ensured predictability in foreign exchanges. The ebb and flow of trade and credit resulted in some movement of gold from one country to another for the settling of balances; however, the economies fluctuated but remained in check. It was a delicate balance that Hoover likened to “a loose cannon on the deck of the world in a tempest-tossed era.”²⁶

The immediate effect of Britain abandoning the gold standard was a violent fluctuation in the values of world currencies. The worldwide equilibrium was disrupted. The dominoes fell and more than two dozen countries followed Great Britain’s lead and suddenly there became no criterion to measure the worth of the world’s currency. Fearing the United States might be the next to leave the gold standard, foreigners started removing their gold from America while domestically United States citizens began withdrawing more of their own money. There was a run on the banks and by the end of 1931, some two thousand plus banks failed. Hoover feared he would have to announce to the public that the nation was dangerously close to losing control of its currency. Great Britain’s abandoning of the gold standard undermined the American and world banking systems. This, combined with the Hoover Debt Moratorium and the Standstill Agreement, meant that much of the world’s assets were frozen and the volume of global trade declined from \$39 billion in 1929 to just \$12 billion by early 1932. Hoover later concluded that the roots of the Great Depression were not in the

²⁶ Jeansonne, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker*, 335; Hoover, *The Great Depression*, 66-67, 81-83; Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear*, 76-79; Harris Gaylord Warren, *Herbert Hoover and the Great Depression* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1967), 141.

October crash of the American stock market, but in economic and political problems in Europe following the Great War.²⁷

As discussed in a previous chapter, the Quaker established the precedent of summitry in peacetime with foreign leaders and dignitaries when he welcomed British Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald to America in 1929. Hoover continued this model twice in the fall of 1931 when French Prime Minister Pierre Laval and Italian Foreign Minister Count Dino Grandi both redeemed invitations to parley with the President in Washington.

Laval was first, arriving in New York on October 22, 1931, then traveling by train, getting to Washington the following day. With no dramatic issues at stake, the talks focused mainly on economics and disarmament. The search for a solution to the problems of war debts and reparations continued. For the Prime Minister, the real purpose of the visit was to urge reduction of French war debt payments to the United States, even though France held enough gold on deposit to cover future debt payments for the next five to six years. Laval also sought the meeting because a state visit to America might help his stature domestically. Hoover assured Laval that the basis of American war debt settlements was based wholly on the capacity to pay; again seeking an agreement that was both firm but flexible. The Quaker attempted to impart his generosity upon the Prime Minister by urging him to ask the French government to relax some of the unnecessarily severe restrictions on Germany. This he asked for in the interest of maintaining the German democratic regime. Laval, acting hypocritically because he wished

²⁷ *New York Times*, September 25, October 1, 1932, CF, HHPL; Jeansonne, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker*, 335; Hoover, *The Great Depression*, 66.

the United States to reduce or cancel French war debts, rejected Hoover's request because France still saw a revived Germany as a threat. The President also claimed that Congress would never approve the reduction or cancelation of war debts. The American public would almost surely be against it as well; they would never agree to pay higher taxes in order to relieve Europeans. Both sides remained immovable on the issue but the Quaker promised to be as flexible as possible.²⁸

Hoover also took the opportunity during the conclave to seek French support for the upcoming Geneva Disarmament Conference. The Quaker explained that the French could benefit from arms reduction by saving money and resources. In fact, they actually stood to save more by reducing arms than from any annulment of war debts. Hoover emphasized that bigger armies did not guarantee peace, they only added to the carnage in the event a war actually came. Laval was sympathetic to the idea of disarmament but France as a whole refused to disarm without the creation of an alliance with the United States in the form of a consultative pact. Hoover said no president could agree to such a pact and even if he did, Congress would surely defeat it. Clearly France and the United States would not agree on disarmament issues.²⁹

The leaders canvassed the world's economic situation, and on these issues, there was some agreement between the two men. Hoover asked Laval to help stop the drain of gold used to back American currency. The Prime Minister

²⁸ Hoover, *The Great Depression*, 95-96; William Starr Myers, *The Foreign Policies of Herbert Hoover, 1929-1933* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1940), 179-189; Jeansonne, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker*, 335.

²⁹ Jeansonne, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker*, 336.

agreed with the President and said he had already taken steps to help save the gold standard in America. Both Hoover and Laval agreed that it was crucial to have as many nations as possible remain on the gold standard.³⁰

On the many matters, both men simply agreed to disagree. The President and Prime Minister issued a statement indicating that they both sought to use the moratorium period to seek a long-term agreement on the question of war debts. “Our especial emphasis has been upon the more important means through which the efforts of our governments could be exerted toward restoration of economic stability and confidence,” they said.³¹ They believed the starting point in approaching the debt question should be found in the initiative to solving the reparations problem. On a personal basis, the meeting was straightforward and cordial. Hoover found Laval to be amiable and logical, yet stubborn when it came to his own country’s interests. As Jeansonne states, “Laval gained domestic prestige from the summit, and Hoover made a friend.”³²

Hoover’s second visitor of that fall was the Italian Foreign Minister, Count Dino Grandi. As there were no major areas of disagreement between the United States and Italy, Grandi came with nothing to request and nothing to offer. His arrival in early November was purely a good will gesture. The Italians also wished to “keep up” with the French, so Grandi came in response to Laval’s visit. The young, charismatic Foreign Minister charmed the American press. He was

³⁰ Myers, *The Foreign Policies of Herbert Hoover*, 178-180; Richard Current, *Secretary Stimson: A Study in Statescraft* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1954), 64.

³¹ Hoover, *The Great Depression*, 96.

³² *New York Times*, October 25, 26, 1931; *New York Herald Tribune*, October 27, 1931, CF, HHPL; Ellis, *Republican Foreign Policy*, 211; Jeansonne, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker*, 336.

fluent in English, so there was no need for translators. Grandi was an advocate of world peace and had proposed a one-year moratorium on the manufacture of weapons. He wanted to cooperate with America at the Geneva Disarmament Conference and also helped try to persuade France that security lay in disarmament.³³

Grandi's visit was a social equivalent of a fireworks display, but it also included substance. He explained that the United States and Italy were the only well-armed nations willing to disarm. The Foreign Minister stated that overpopulation was a major concern in his homeland. The Italians imported much of their raw material and food, so he proposed that America could find a market for agricultural exports in Italy. Most important, Grandi's visit cemented the Italian-American friendship and it was praised and acclaimed worldwide. However, his trip made him too successful for his own good and Italian dictator Benito Mussolini became jealous and fired Grandi in July 1932. Nonetheless, it culminated Hoover's precedents for peacetime summitry.³⁴

The final attempt at solving the war debts and reparations problem during Hoover's time in office came at the European Conference at Lausanne, Switzerland from June 15 to July 8, 1932. The aim of the conference was to permanently resolve the reparations issue. The attendees included Great Britain, Germany and France. The United States was invited but did not formally attend because Hoover's hand was tied by Congress. However, Hoover did demonstrate

³³ *New York Herald Tribune*, November 19, 1931; *New York Evening Post*, November 18, 1931, CF, HHPL; Jeansonne, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker*, 336-337.

³⁴ Jeansonne, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker*, 337.

support of the conference's final agreement. The three powers finally conceded that Germany was bankrupt and hammered out a treaty providing a virtual end to reparations. This, they claimed, was of course dependent on a "gentlemen's agreement" that America would cancel European war debts. Again knowing that Congress and the American people would never approve of such action, Hoover argued that since his days at Versailles he had never considered reparations a good idea and that the United States had never asked for any. The Quaker did offer to negotiate individually with each debtor nation, based again on their capacity to pay. What really needed to happen was for Americans to abandon their pertinacious determination to collect and Europeans to concede that the President could not cancel war debts without Congressional approval. The Lausanne Conference did effectively end German reparations payments. As far as war debts payments to the United States, only token payments were made after the summer of 1932.³⁵ As a show of support for the cancellation of reparations, Hoover said in a statement through Undersecretary of State William R. Castle, "The American government is pleased that...the nations assembled at Lausanne have made a great step forward in stabilization of the economic situation in Europe."³⁶

The Quaker's work to resolve the problems of war debts and reparations was truly a noble effort. He never agreed with reparations and opposed them immediately after the Great War. On the matter of war debts, he held the nations

³⁵ Hoover, *The Great Depression*, 172-178; Wilbur and Hyde, *The Hoover Policies*, 513-517; Ferrell, *American Diplomacy in the Great Depression*, 116-118; Jeansonne, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker*, 337-338.

³⁶ Wilbur and Hyde, *The Hoover Policies*, 513.

of Europe accountable and expected those countries to repay what was owed; sparing the American people from being subjected to further hardship during an already difficult era. Hoover applied his Quaker virtues of compassion and aiding one's neighbor and continued his relief efforts by instigating his moratorium and standstill agreements. He attempted to add the glue of peace to a situation that was rapidly crumbling. These efforts were undermined by the collapse of the world gold standard and the growing chaos in Europe.

The crisis of economic turmoil in Germany and Austria brewed political instability. In Germany, threats from the Communists on the left and Nazis on the right added to the bedlam. Violence began to erupt. More than a decade of French political and economic harshness and inflexibility toward Germany took a toll on the people of that nation. They felt beaten, weakened and humiliated. Nationalism began to grow. Adolf Hitler claimed his party, the National Socialists, or Nazis, was the only alternative to Communism. As the Weimar Republic crumbled, a power vacuum developed. The Nazis grew stronger and Hitler consolidated his power. Prior to Hitler, France was the most nationalistic nation in Europe. Now Hitler used the French authoritative attitude to rally the German people. He announced that Germany deserved better than to be treated inhumanely. Hitler's programs helped Germany out of the depression sooner than most nations and when Hoover traveled to Europe in 1938, he met with Hitler and commented that the state of the German economy was better than that of the United States. This return to prosperity came at a price, however. Hitler cemented himself in a dictatorial role and began sowing the seeds of resentment

and bitterness in Germany. By the end of the 1930's, Germany was bent on revenge. The climate was ripe and the stage was set. Even in the Mediterranean, Mussolini had hardened Italian diplomacy and steered it towards a union with Berlin. A dark storm was brewing and there was nothing Hoover could do to avert the world's destiny: another brutal war was looming on the horizon.³⁷

³⁷ Jeansonne, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker*, 329-333, 337; Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear*, 72-74; Hoover, *The Great Depression*, 75;

Conclusion: Visions of a Lasting Peace

Polls of historians ranking United States Presidents from the 1930s-present, even those confined to conservative historians, consistently rank Herbert Hoover near the bottom of all Chief Executives. Polls of the general public rank him even lower. For most Americans, the only thing Hoover is remembered for is his failure to end the Great Depression.¹ This is beginning to change, however, especially since the opening of the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library and Museum in 1962. The library has opened up and made available a plethora of primary sources that are helping to revive Hoover's legacy. A few scholarly works also exist that add light to the Quaker. David Burner's 1979 biography, *Herbert Hoover: A Public Life*, gives a fair and balanced overview of Hoover's life and career. Richard Norton Smith's *An Uncommon Man: The Triumph of Herbert Hoover*, published in 1984, is an essential life study of the President. Smith was formerly the Director of the Hoover Presidential Library. *The Presidency of Herbert C. Hoover*, written by Martin Fausold and published in 1985, is the most valuable study confined to the thirty-first President's time in office. The most comprehensive of any books written on Herbert Hoover, and those of greatest value to this study, are *The Life of Herbert Hoover* series biographies. Authored by George H. Nash (three volumes), Kendrick A. Clements, Glen Jeansonne and Gary Dean Best (each with one to their credit), the series offers a complete overview of the Quaker's life from his birth and childhood, through his mining career, into his time as President and finally up to his later years and death. The final two volumes (Jeansonne and Best) were published in 2012

¹ Glen Jeansonne, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker, 1928-1933* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 451.

and 2013 respectively, and prove to be the most up-to-date sources of information on Hoover. These, coupled with other monographs, dissertations and articles favorable to the Quaker, are nowhere near comparable to the vast quantity of sources that denigrate him as a complete failure as President, however. This thesis not only tries to give an analysis of Hoover's foreign policy in relation to his humanitarian values, but it also adds to the small niche of sources attempting to rescue Hoover from the "graveyard of the presidents."²

Hoover was a pragmatist who possessed a lifelong idealistic streak. As President, he was more idealistic than either his immediate predecessor or his successor. Historian Glen Jeansonne writes, "History is a mixture of storytelling and analysis...historians are umpires, and sometimes umpires, however scrupulous, miss calls."³ So why is Hoover viewed poorly when studying the Presidency? He too often is compared to his predecessor, Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Images of the Great Depression are etched in people's minds. Black and white newsreels and photographs of breadlines, hobos, bonus marchers, the dust bowl and "Hoovervilles" have transcended time and end up at Hoover's doorstep. Roosevelt, on the other hand, had three complete terms and a few months into a fourth in office to secure a positive legacy. FDR's "bag of tricks" included his giant political machine, harnessing of the media and pushing blame off on others, particularly blaming the Great Depression on the Quaker.

The depression began before Hoover, worsened during the Crash of 1929 and ended at the start of World War II. Roosevelt is mistakenly credited with its ending. He is also held in high regards as winning the war, even though he died while in his fourth

² Ibid.

³ Ibid, 452.

term and the Second World War ended under President Harry S. Truman. Most presidents who are deemed successful in the latter half of the twentieth century, have been credited with winning a war, i.e. Roosevelt and Truman (and even Dwight D. Eisenhower to an extent) with World War II, Ronald Reagan with facilitating an end to the Cold War and George H.W. Bush with expelling Saddam Hussein and his forces from Kuwait during *Operation Desert Storm* of the Gulf War of 1990-1991. Conversely, presidents who have “lost” wars have had their presidency’s left in ill repute, such as Lyndon Baines Johnson with the Vietnam War.

Hoover, however, does not deserve to be pinned with blame for the Great Depression. When it comes to domestic policy, he was among the most active of all United States Presidents. He erected more public works projects than any previous president, including Boulder Dam (later renamed Hoover Dam). He negotiated agreements with business and labor, supported amendments to restrict child labor, maintain wages, and prevent strikes. He rearranged farming and home credits, created loan programs for banks and businesses, encouraged agricultural cooperatives, discouraged hoarding and expanded the currency. He accomplished all of this with a divided Congress in which his own party was factionalized. Hoover was realistic about the depression, treading the line between despair and false hope. Under his leadership, America did better economically than most of the Western world.⁴

Hoover did great things domestically; however, his foreign policy is the focus of this thesis. The Quaker devoted more time to foreign relations during his single term than Roosevelt did during his first term. He learned on the job and under circumstances that offered no precedents. The foundation of the Humanitarian’s foreign policy was

⁴ Ibid, 453.

establishing a lasting peace. He initiated the Good Neighbor Policy toward Latin America. Dispelling the policies of his predecessors, he repaired broken relations between the continents of the Western Hemisphere. Hoover broke President William Howard Taft's "Dollar Diplomacy" and instituted a systematic military disengagement in Latin America.

Hoover opposed war and instituted machinery aimed at maintaining world peace. He employed the leverage of public opinion against aggression through the use of the Kellogg-Briand Peace Pact. More tangible was disarmament, and his leadership during the London Naval Conference in 1930 led it to be largely successful. He was prudent, even-tempered and possessed sound judgment. There was a time to make things happen and a time to let them happen. If Hoover would have led the United States into a land war with Japan over Manchuria in 1931-33, America most likely would have lost. At best, the conflict might have produced bloody and drawn-out fighting, culminating in a stalemate. Instead, he approved of the Stimson Doctrine of Non-Recognition, warning that sanctions might lead to war.

Hoover was an internationalist. He instituted the Hoover Debt Moratorium and Standstill Agreement as measures to save world economies and prevent pain and suffering. He endorsed Versailles and the World Court, defying the position of many in his own party. He also favored the League of Nations, yet he was more realistic about it than Woodrow Wilson. The Humanitarian presented a proposal at the Geneva Disarmament Conference in 1932, and had it been accepted, it would have made offensive wars nearly impossible.⁵

⁵ Ibid, 454; Richard Current, *Secretary Stimson: A Study in Statescraft* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1954), 108.

The Geneva Disarmament Conference convened on February 2, 1932. More than forty nations assembled to broaden the details of the failed Geneva Naval Conference of 1927. Disagreement from the beginning, particularly on the part of France, ensured eventual failure. France proposed that the League of Nations should have an army, equipped with troops and arms, in order to preserve world peace. This proposal was contrary to everything the conference was hoping to accomplish. The usual wrangle between nations, similar that that of all previous disarmament summits, ensued. After more than four months of gridlock, Hoover took control and proposed a massive disarmament plan.

The “Hoover Plan” was to slash offensive weapons and tilt the advantage toward defensive arms. Hoover proposed his plan through American Ambassador to Belgium and his close friend, Hugh S. Gibson, on June 22, 1932. Gibson read the plan to the delegates, while Hoover released it to the press. In it, the Quaker proposed to ban mobile artillery, armor breaching guns, bombers, most submarines and long-range ships as well as reduce land armies by about one-third. Hoover estimated that, in addition to preserving world peace, his plan would save the nations of the world between \$10 and \$15 billion over ten years. It was the boldest plan ever presented and it made headlines worldwide.

Most small nations approved. France and Japan rejected the proposal. Italian Foreign Minister Count Dino Grandi was sympathetic, but Benito Mussolini was opposed. The Soviet Union announced hypocritically that it was a peaceful nation and the Hoover Plan did not go far enough. The Soviets then called for all nations to totally disarm. The Geneva Disarmament Conference died a slow death and ended in 1934

without any major agreements. Hoover knew his plan would never be adopted in its entirety, but he did hope to use it as a basis for negotiation. Still, it was revolutionary and not until Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev met at Reykjavik, Iceland in 1986, was more sweeping disarmament proposed.⁶

By the fall of 1932, Hoover was a lame duck president. The long and tough interregnum preceding Roosevelt's taking office saw a battle between the President and the President-elect and would cement Hoover as the scapegoat for Roosevelt and the Great Depression. FDR had no plans for anything in his upcoming administration. He was arrogant, uninformed, ignorant and in over his head intellectually. He did not understand any of the current issues facing the United States and the world. FDR refused to cooperate with anything Hoover was proposing to combat the depression, which was at its lowest point. Roosevelt was uncooperative because he did not want to see any improvements on the Quaker's watch, lest Hoover get credit for it. Being cynical and politically motivated, Roosevelt wanted to take over when things were the worst, blame Hoover, and then take credit for any revival that might occur. FDR also refused to cooperate with the World Economic Conference in 1933. He had not a single notion of how the world economy was interrelated; much less have any policy towards it. He changed his tune after inauguration and supported the conference but sabotaged it by changing United States policy in the middle of deliberations.

⁶ *Chicago Tribune*, February 10, June 23, September 15, 1932, *New York Herald Tribune*, June 23, 1932; *New York Evening Post*, June 24, 1932; *New York Times*, July 22, 1932, Clippings Files (hereafter CF), Herbert Hoover Presidential Library (hereafter HHPL); Jeansonne, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker*, 338-340; Henry L. Stimson and McGeorge Bundy, *On Active Service in Peace and War* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1947), 272-277; L. Ethan Ellis, *Republican Foreign Policy, 1921-1933* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1968), 183-184; Herbert Hoover, *The Memoirs of Herbert Hoover: The Cabinet and the Presidency, 1920-1933* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1952), 354-356.

On war debts, Roosevelt made no attempts to compromise with nations, as Hoover had. FDR claimed that war debts were “not his baby.” Consequently, the foreign nations defaulted and American lost greatly. Something could have been salvaged had Roosevelt acted. FDR also refused to lend a hand during the Banking Panic of January 1933, when the outgoing Hoover wanted to jointly declare a banking holiday. As a result of Roosevelt’s ineptness and attitude, the interregnum was wasted and the economic situation of the world suffered further. The *New York Herald Tribune* wrote of the discrepancies between Hoover and Roosevelt, saying, “Americans are so accustomed to having Mr. Hoover do the right and courageous thing...Mr. Hoover has now done his utmost...Mr. Roosevelt has felt unable to aid him....”⁷ The *Baltimore Sun* quoted, “...[war debts] may not be legally his baby until the third of March...but Mr. Roosevelt might wisely have given thought to the possibility that this baby, which is not now his, may soon develop into an unruly stepchild, permanently lodged under his roof....”⁸ Although Roosevelt would not cooperate, this marked the first time an outgoing president attempted to collaborate with an incoming president of an opposing party.

Hoover was also very wise and almost prophetic. He had the ability to see beyond the present, judge things and make decisions based on how things might one day be. The Quaker was more often ahead of his times than behind them. He predicted communism would implode, only being wrong on the timing.

The Humanitarian also foresaw another war, despite his attempts to avert it: the Second World War. By 1931, German President Paul von Hindenburg ruled by decree, but his control was slipping. Fighting between the Communists and Nazis grew

⁷ *New York Herald Tribune*, November 24, 1932, CF, HHPL.

⁸ *Baltimore Sun*, November 24, 1932, CF, HHPL.

pandemic. Reparations, an extremely weak global economy and the fleeing of gold from Germany were causing the partnership of von Hindenburg and German Chancellor Heinrich Brüning, the twin pillars of the old German order, to crumble. During the election of 1932, Adolf Hitler ran against von Hindenburg and lost, however, Hitler was hugely popular. Following meetings with von Hindenburg, on January 30, 1933, Hitler was appointed Chancellor of Germany, replacing Franz von Papen. This occurred within three months of Roosevelt's inauguration on March 3. Hitler immediately began to consolidate his power and would soon begin breaking treaties and moving towards war. Hoover had long since warned that the forces of the world were causing a storm to brew into a war. He attempted to prevent war but his actions were for naught and his fears came to fruition on September 1, 1939, when Hitler's army invaded Poland.⁹

Of all the world leaders of his time (FDR, Winston Churchill, Hitler, Joseph Stalin), only Hoover avoided some degree of recklessness. He led by example and with moral conviction. He kept true to his Quaker upbringing and never boasted or self-promoted. He did not cudgel, badger or browbeat people (as LBJ would come to so famously do), instead he preferred to reason and persuade them. Maintaining his Quaker virtues, he was uninterested in fortune and more interested in humanitarian relief. Hoover gave up his lucrative mining career to save Belgium and Northern France. As President, he did not take pay, instead redistributing his salary to charity. Hoover was the first of only two presidents to do this (John F. Kennedy was the other). The Quaker could be stubborn and principled, yet most often he was also flexible. Jeansonne writes, "He was a principled pragmatist."¹⁰ Hoover possessed a great mind, yet his

⁹ Jeansonne, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker*, 334, 453-454.

humanitarianism was greater.

Hoover left Washington in March 1933, a defeated man. He was disappointed that he was never appreciated by voters and that he was not credited for his best results. However, he still carried the flame of his virtues and continued to play a prominent role in world affairs. He traveled the world as a sort of unofficial ambassador for the United States. In March 1938, the same month as Hitler's *Anschluss* of Austria, he visited ten European countries, including Germany. The ex-President met with Hitler at the Reich Chancellery in Berlin, where both men discussed economic and social points. The meeting was not without dramatics, however. Hitler noted the difference between the president of a democratic nation and the leader of a dictatorial regime, telling Hoover, "You may be able to indulge in cooperation...I just order."¹¹ The Fuehrer also hinted at Germany's all too near expansion by claiming that Germany's need for additional food would ultimately lead to armed confrontation with the Soviets over the Ukraine's breadbasket.

Hoover admitted that Hitler was a seemingly rational man with considerable intellect who was capable of making his case. Also, references to democracy or communism prompted furious outbursts "complete with gutter language and purple-faced shouting" from the Fuehrer. Hitler leapt to his feet and ranted for several minutes without interruption before Hoover finally told him to sit down. "That's enough...I'm not interested in your views," said the ex-President. The Quaker concluded that an American jury would judge the German leader insane. Later, after the outbreak of World

¹⁰ Ibid, 455.

¹¹ Richard Norton Smith, *An Uncommon Man: The Triumph of Herbert Hoover* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984), 253-254.

War II, Hoover became an advocate for providing relief to Nazi-occupied nations. He was instrumental in creating the Commission for Polish Relief and the Finnish Relief Fund. He never lost touch with his humanitarianism.¹²

Hoover continued to take an interest in American politics for the remainder of his life. In 1936, he publically endorsed the Republican Governor from Kansas, Alf Landon, for president against Roosevelt. However, Hoover himself might as well have been the nominee as FDR's campaign virtually ignored Landon and ran against the former President, constantly attacking him in speeches and continuing to make him the scapegoat for the all things wrong in America. The Democrats even made the outrageous claim that if Landon was victorious, he would place Hoover back in the White House as a secret power manipulating Landon like a puppet. The Quaker was asked later in life how he was able to deal and cope with the constant attacks and the unrelenting blame others put on him. He replied with a humorous candor, "I outlived the bastards." That he truly did. The stress, and occasionally violence, of the presidency brought early deaths to Abraham Lincoln, Wilson, Roosevelt and Johnson, Hoover, however, lived to be ninety.¹³

The Hoovers moved out of the White House and lived for a time in New York's Waldorf-Astoria Hotel before returning back their residence in Palo Alto, California, where Hoover enjoyed returning to the Bohemian Club. When Lou Henry died of a heart attack at the age of sixty-nine in 1944, Hoover moved back to New York and lived the remainder of his life in the Waldorf Towers apartment 31-A. Lou Henry was the love of

¹² Ibid, 253-260.

¹³ Ibid, 229-238; Richard Norton Smith, "The Final Word," in *Uncommon Americans: The Lives and Legacies of Herbert and Lou Henry Hoover*, ed. Timothy Walch (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003), 247; Jeansonne, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker*, 468.

his life and the couple had been married for nearly half a century. Hoover was heartbroken and never dated or remarried.¹⁴

The Quaker lived out the remainder of his days as a simple man, but that is not to say he did not remain busy. Already an author of many books, Hoover continued to write extensively. He penned his three volume memoirs in 1951-1952. He also wrote a four volume work titled *American Epic*, about the various relief efforts he directed. In all, Hoover is credited with over 100 writings about politics, the world, relief and fishing. He also made time to answer personal letters from children. Hoover continued to love children, again harking back to his own painful childhood, and became one of the founding fathers of the Boys Clubs of America.¹⁵

The Sage of 31-A, as Richard Norton Smith calls Hoover, was not incompetent or inert. In his memoirs, Hoover lists a summary of his foreign policies. They include: a reorganization of the United States-Latin American relationship, the advancement of pacific methods of settling controversies by direct treaties, the doctrine of non-recognition, collaboration with the League of Nations, elimination of frictions between the United States and Great Britain and the ending of naval competition, the Hoover Debt Moratorium and Standstill Agreement, actively pushing for revision of war debts and reparations and striving to reduce world armies and aggressive weapons in a quest for world peace. Anyone who believes Hoover was a “do-nothing” president, need look no further than this list.¹⁶

¹⁴ Smith, *An Uncommon Man*, 329-330.

¹⁵ Jeansonne, *The Life of Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker*, 456.

¹⁶ Hoover, *The Cabinet and the Presidency*, 378-379.

Hoover was comfortable in silence and that is how he lived after the presidency. Ostracized by Washington he did not return to the White House until 1945, at the request of President Truman. He helped to oversee the transition from Truman to Eisenhower and warned IKE of the rough seas ahead. “You’re going to have one of the most frustrating jobs that any president ever had,” said Hoover. Eisenhower had to govern in the shadow of Roosevelt and was the first Republican executive in twenty years.

On a personal basis, there have been fewer kinder presidents. Historian William Eckley writes, “Hoover is preeminently a man of ideals...[he] was not willing to give up his optimistic faith...and also in that sense, his ideas are worth revisiting.” Indeed his life and presidency are worth revisiting and resurrecting. Hoover should be considered a near-great president because he managed insurmountable problems with unmatched dedication and deftness. The *South Pasadena News* published an article shortly before Hoover left office titled *President Hoover Carries On*. It states, “In the face of difficulties as great as those faced by Washington and Lincoln, he [Hoover] has stood steadfast at the helm, holding to those traditions that have kept our nation on a safe course.”¹⁷ Hoover held his nation together during a turbulent time. He was unselfish and accepted criticism. His public service did not begin or end at the presidency. From a small Iowa farming town, to Stanford labs, to the depths of mines in Australia and China, to the presidency and to old age and death, the poor orphan boy, Herbert Hoover, used his Quaker faith and virtue to aid his neighbors, family, friends, nation and the world with his policies of humanitarianism.

¹⁷ *South Pasadena News*, February 22, 1933, CF, HHPL.

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