

## HENRY L. STIMSON

### FROM *War Is an Illegal Thing* (1932)

*In 1931 Japanese forces invaded and took control of Manchuria, renaming it Manchukuo. This action violated the Kellogg-Briand Pact, several of the treaties Japan had signed at the Washington Conference in 1921–1922, and the Covenant of the League of Nations. On January 7, 1932, Secretary of State Henry L. Stimson sent a dispatch to Japan and China condemning the Japanese invasion and announcing that the United States refused to recognize the legitimacy of the Japanese action in Manchuria. On March 11, 1932, the League of Nations, which the United States never joined, approved Stimson's nonrecognition principle. In August, Stimson delivered a speech to the Council of Foreign Relations in which he explained the logic of his nonrecognition stance and expressed his faith in the Kellogg-Briand Pact as a peacekeeping mechanism.*

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When the American Government took the responsibility of sending its note of January 7, it was a pioneer. It was appealing to a new common sentiment and to the provisions of a Treaty as yet untested. Its own refusal to recognize the fruits of aggression might be of comparatively little moment to an aggressor. But when the entire group of civilized nations took their stand beside the position of the American Government, the situation was revealed in its true sense. Moral disapproval, when it becomes the disapproval of the whole world, takes on a significance hitherto unknown in international law. For never before has international opinion been so organized and mobilized.

Another consequence which follows the development of the Briand-Kellogg Treaty . . . is that consultation between the signatories of the Pact when faced with the threat of its violation becomes inevitable. Any effective invocation of the power of world opinion involves discussion and consultation. As long as the signatories of the Pact of Paris support the policy which the American Govern-

ment has endeavored to establish during the past three years of arousing a united and living spirit of public opinion as a sanction to the Pact, as long as this course is adopted and endorsed by the great nations of the world who are signatories of that Treaty, consultations will take place as an incident to the unification of that opinion. The course which was followed in the Sino-Japanese controversy last winter conclusively proves that fact. The moment a situation arose which threatened the effectiveness of this Treaty, which the peoples of the world have come to regard as so vital to the protection of their interests, practically all the nations consulted in an effort to make effective the great peaceful purposes of the Treaty. . . .

I believe that this view of the Briand-Kellogg Treaty which I have been discussing will become one of the great and permanent policies of our nation. It is founded upon conceptions of law and ideals of peace which are among our most cherished faiths. It is a policy which combines the readiness to cooperate for peace and justice in the world, which Americans have always manifested,

while at the same time it preserves the independence of judgment and the flexibility of action upon which we have always insisted. I believe that this policy must strike a chord of sympathy in the conscience of other nations. We all feel that the dreadful lessons taught by the World War must not be forgotten. The determination to abolish war which emerged from that calamity must not be relaxed. These aspirations of the world are expressed in this great Treaty. It is only by continued vigilance that it can be built into an effective living reality. The American people are serious in their

support and evaluation of the Treaty. They will not fail to do their share in this endeavor.

## REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Is moral indignation an effective response to international aggression? Explain.
2. What assumptions about the behavior of nations led to the belief that reliance upon moral indignation and legal requirements could ensure peace and stability?