The history of American foreign policy following World War I appears commonly to have suffered from a certain narrowness of perspective. Indeed, to a surprising degree, scholars of this subject seem to have focused their attention either on America's rejection of the League of Nations or on the post-war expansion of American business and finance. As a result, discussions too often revolve around such simplifications as "the retreat from internationalism" or "the growth of economic imperialism." And though an awareness of widespread postwar concern regarding bolshevism has recently developed, historians threaten to overdo this insight as well.

It seems sounder to conceive of American policies during this period in a more general way, centering them in the attempt of the American leadership to cope effectively with the impact of war. This effort to recreate and bolster the "natural," that is, liberal, order took a number of forms—multilateral and unilateral, political and economic, public and private. From our present vantage point, perhaps not much was undertaken, largely because most Americans ("liberals" as well as "conservatives") were slow to recognize that World War I had undermined rather than strengthened the relationships they considered natural. But such proposals as the French Security Treaty (1919) and the American mandate over Armenia (1920) indicate that Woodrow Wilson did ultimately do more to counteract "instability" than simply to preach self-determination and to champion a league of nations. And after the Republicans refused to ratify the presi-
dent's more ambitious projects, thereby severely complicating the cause of peace, they too began to develop stabilizing strategies. In fact, the Harding-Coolidge administration was inspired at times to innovate with considerable vigor, as demonstrated by the program of the Washington Conference (1921) and the establishment of the Dawes Plan (1924). If international "normalcy" was a long time in coming, refusing to make its appearance at least until 1925, Americans did play a crucial role in shaping it and in timing its arrival.

The central problem, of course, was the reintegration of Germany into the family of nations, a task that involved supervising that nation suitably, reinforcing its new government, and, in general, helping the country to relate to its neighbors. Unlike the victor states after World War II, Britain, France, and the United States did not on this occasion feel compelled to attempt a thoroughgoing and long-term intervention within the fabric of German society.* Nevertheless, because the French (and to some degree, the Belgians) possessed much more extensive notions than did their allies about the "managing" of Germany, British and American statesmen were confronted with a difficult challenge in creating a peace that they could endorse. Again and again, at the peace conference and later, they found themselves opposing French proposals and supporting more lenient territorial, military, and/or finan-

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* This is not to say that there were not parallels. The "first" American occupation of Germany was considered similar enough to the "second" in 1944-45, for example, that in the preparation of personnel for the latter, "Colonel I. L. Hunt's report on military government in the Rhineland became a sort of 'bible,' and had it been carefully heeded in practice, at least some of the later mistakes in Germany might have been avoided" (Harold Zink, The United States in Germany, 1944-1955 [Princeton, 1957], p. 12). See also United States, Army, Office of Military Government, Hunt Report Digest: American Military Government of Occupied Germany, 1918-1920 (United States Zone of Germany, 1946); Hajo Holborn, American Military Government: Its Origins and Policies (Washington, 1947), pp. 2-3; and Carl J. Friedrich et al., American Experiences in Military Government in World War II (New York, 1948), pp. 24-25.
cial arrangements for the defeated enemy. Moreover, following the Senate's rejection of the Treaty of Versailles, as Anglo-American coordination faltered, they found their efforts meeting with less and less success.

The American occupation in Germany from 1918 to 1923 presents a long-neglected opportunity for a study of developing American attitudes and contributions in this situation. Established without prior intent, prolonged through compromise and accident, perpetuated as much to restrain an ally as to impress a former foe, the American part of the Rhineland occupation mirrored in revealing fashion the way in which Americans came slowly to realize what they confronted in fostering peace. It also constituted the most direct and important means, aside from policies on trade and war debts, by which the United States influenced European affairs.

In the beginning, to be sure, most Americans could only view this occupation as a kind of unnecessary necessity. Their conceptions of the European world scarcely justified such an activity. They had acquired little desire to punish the Hun or forcibly to transform him. They found almost incomprehensible French fears of German power or French hopes that the Rhineland might be induced to leave the Reich. As a result, once Americans had agreed to participate (first under the armistice, later under the treaty), most of them wanted to be finished with the occupation as quickly as possible.

Yet Wilson, Harding, and many others ultimately saw good reasons for continuing to maintain the American establishment on the Rhine. Even before peace was signed, it was generally agreed that the army had become an example of considerable significance in moderating the occupation. In later months Americans discovered that their troops had also become a balance wheel in a precarious regional equilibrium, and that no one dared to dispense with them for fear of triggering a European explosion. Meanwhile, the existence of an American
zone had obviously been a useful tool for the United States in such negotiations as those regarding the separate peace or the repayment of the occupation costs. And, if the American public did not always understand what its military people were doing at Coblenz, American representation there was nevertheless recognized in the United States as important in re-establishing foreign markets.

All in all, the American occupation was widely acknowledged as performing a constructive international function. The tragedy was that, until the advent of the Ruhr crisis in 1922–1923, American leaders failed to take its accomplishment as a spur to a more vigorous attack upon the basic problems left unresolved since the war.

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