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## BIOGRAPHIES OF THE SECRETARIES OF STATE: HENRY LEWIS STIMSON

### Introduction

Henry Lewis Stimson served as Secretary of State in President Herbert Hoover's Cabinet from March 28, 1929, until March 4, 1933.



Henry Lewis Stimson, 46th Secretary of State

### Rise to Prominence

Stimson was born into a wealthy New York family on September 21, 1867. He attended Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts, received his B.A. degree from Yale, and graduated from Harvard Law School in 1890.

Stimson rose to prominence first as a partner in the legal firm run by [Elihu Root](#), who served as Secretary of State and Secretary of War in the administration of Theodore Roosevelt. Stimson ran unsuccessfully as the

Republican candidate for Governor of New York in 1910, but was then appointed Secretary of War by President William Howard Taft in 1911. He served in the U.S. Army during the First World War as a colonel in the artillery.

Between 1918 and 1926, he served only as an occasional envoy to Latin America, mediating a dispute between Chile and Peru in 1925, and negotiating an end to the Nicaraguan civil war in 1927. President Calvin Coolidge appointed Stimson Governor General of the Philippines later that year, a post that he held until he was appointed Secretary of State in March of 1929.

After President Hoover's defeat in 1932, Stimson retired but was recalled to U.S. Government service by President Franklin Roosevelt, who appointed him Secretary of War in 1940. Instrumental in directing the atomic bomb program after 1943, he advised President Harry S. Truman to use it in 1945. He also helped develop plans for the trial of war criminals after World War II. He retired in September of 1945.

### Influence in American Diplomacy

Stimson succeeded [Frank Kellogg](#) as Secretary of State only a few days after the U.S. Senate had ratified the [Kellogg-Briand Pact](#). He attempted during his tenure to save that pact, but commented in 1933 that

Born 1867

Died 1950

### Career Overview

Non-career  
 appointee

**State of  
 Residence**  
 New York

### Secretary of State

Appointed: March  
 5, 1929

Entry on Duty:  
 March 28, 1929

Termination of  
 Appointment:  
 March 4, 1933

*"the situation in the world seemed to me like the unfolding of a great Greek tragedy, where we could see the march of events and know what ought to be done, but seemed to be powerless to prevent its marching to its grim conclusion."*

He headed the U.S. delegation to the [London Naval Conference](#) in 1930, which succeeded in limiting the naval race among the largest naval powers, although Japan would withdraw from the agreement in 1935. He also led the U.S. delegation to the Geneva Disarmament Conference in 1932.

Upon Japan's occupation of Manchuria in 1931, Stimson articulated what later became known as the "Stimson Doctrine," that the United States would recognize no diminution of U.S. treaty rights brought about by aggression. He also attempted, unsuccessfully, to limit the economic effects of war debts, but was thwarted by the U.S. Congress' adoption of the Hawley-Smoot Tariff.

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