Christy Thornton
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A Revolution Uninvited:
Mexico, The Paris Peace Conference, and the Question of Sovereignty

Funding from the History Project and the Institute for New Economic Thinking (INET) allowed me to conduct research in the British National Archives in March/April 2013 for the first chapter of my dissertation, tentatively titled "A Revolution Uninvited: Mexico, The Paris Peace Conference, and the Question of Sovereignty," which examines the forgotten history of Mexico at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919. Detailing the fight over Mexico's economic and political sovereignty in Paris, I argue that the United States' relationship to Revolutionary Mexico, and to Latin America more broadly, played an important and overlooked role in the post-WWI debates regarding the future for U.S. power. At a moment when the possibilities for a new world order were emerging, Mexican state actors sought to intervene directly in questions of international governance, drawing from their experience with U.S. economic and military intervention as well as from the economic and social rights embodied in their revolutionary constitution. During the conference, Mexico mounted an "immanent critique" of the Wilsonian ideal that governed the League of Nations, arguing for an international order that respected absolute sovereignty, rejected intervention, and created a system of legal equality between small states and great powers. In so doing, Mexico initiated a struggle over U.S. power in international institutions that was to continue for decades (which I examine further in succeeding dissertation chapters).

Examining the actions of a broad array of actors—representatives of the victorious constitutionalist faction the Mexican revolutionary government under President Venustiano Carranza; their Mexican opponents at home and in exile throughout the world; members of the foreign relations departments of the U.S. and British governments; and foreign capitalists in the banking, mining, and petroleum sectors—the first part of the chapter uncovers and retraces two important historical debates that took place in public forums and private meetings: first, should the "Mexico Question," meaning the right of Mexico to enact its constitution, opposed by foreign governments and private interests, be a subject of discussion, and an object of policy, at the Conference? And second, should Mexico itself, through its delegation in France or some other representative, be invited to participate in the conference and in the new League of Nations? Following this, the second part of the chapter details Mexico's response, once these questions were seemingly settled through Mexico's exclusion from the Conference and from membership in the League. Arguing that historians have overlooked the central role that the Monroe Doctrine played in the U.S. domestic debate on the League, the second half of the chapter details Mexico's explicit rejection of the Doctrine as a non-conventional, but highly astute, diplomatic weapon that opened a larger debate on the role of U.S. power in multilateral agreements and institutions. Important recent scholarship has examined how Wilsonian principles inspired struggles for self-determination around the world, fostering and then dashing expectations for a hearing in front of the great powers gathered in Paris. This chapter complements the existing scholarship by providing an examination of the region where the U.S. had focused most of its foreign excursions, where Wilsonian idealism and Wilson's actual policy often

conflicted: Latin America and the Caribbean. By rejecting the Monroe Doctrine at just the moment when Wilson was forced to include it in the League Covenant by his domestic opponents in Congress, President Carranza laid bare the contradictions of Wilsonian liberal multilateralism, and brought a critique of those contradictions to the world stage.

I traveled to London to investigate holdings at the British National Archives not only to uncover the British role in the question of Mexico at Paris—which, it turned out, was crucial to the exclusion of Mexico from the Conference proceedings and from the League of Nations—but also to find a new lens through which to understand the U.S. role. Mexican state sources are somewhat sparse on the topic, which is perhaps not surprising given the ongoing political and military conflict at the time and given the unconventional nature of Mexico's diplomacy vis-à-vis the conference. Here in the United States, the official archives at NARA of the American Commission to Negotiate the Peace, as the U.S. delegation in Paris called, make almost no mention of Mexico, and have been organized according to the major geographic, economic, and military questions of the Peace Treaty. As a result, the kinds of historical questions that can be answered using that archive, whose structure is determined by the topics deemed important at Paris, are limited. The British National Archive, on the other hand, had extensive documentation on the question of Mexico at the Peace Conference, with multiple Foreign Office folders of correspondence between British representatives in Mexico and staff of the British Foreign Office and the U.S. State Department. As such, I was able to determine the crucial British role in actively excluding Mexico from the Peace Conference and from the League of Nations: In the face of U.S. refusal to intervene in Mexico before the war in

Europe was settled, the British hoped to leverage Mexico's exclusion at Paris to pressure Mexico to compensate Britain for outstanding losses incurred during the revolution, and to reverse provisions of its 1917 constitution that Britain found objectionable. What's more, these British sources provided important clues as to further U.S. archival sources that might illuminate the period, including detailed U.S. Military Intelligence reports filed from Mexico at the time, a few of which found their way into Foreign Office hands and can be found among the documents circulated in Britain at the time. I have since extensively consulted these Military Intelligence files in the U.S. archives, and have found additional archival collections in the U.S. to supplement and fill out leads uncovered in the British documents.

This research trip proved to be absolutely crucial for the successful completion of this chapter, which is now being revised into article form for journal submission. I am exceedingly grateful to the History Project and INET for this opportunity, and look forward to presenting this work at a future conference.