

## Option 2 Reservationists: Make Changes to the Treaty

The Great War demonstrated that the world is a very dangerous place when nations base their actions solely on their own interests. The idea that the slaughter of the Western Front has somehow changed that basic rule is folly. The terms of the Versailles Treaty do not guarantee that international relations have changed. One of our greatest concerns is the redrawing of the map of the world by Allied leaders at Versailles. The concept of self-rule, although noble in scope, is based upon idealistic rhetoric that does not represent the world as it exists. We have great concerns that an outbreak of war between the hastily formed new states of Europe and elsewhere could result in Americans having to fight and die in areas completely alien to our national interests in order to fulfill President Wilson's "obligation" as found in Article X of the League's Covenant.

Accusations that we are isolationist are completely false. We support America playing an active role in the new world order, and we have no problems accepting membership into a league of nations. However, long-held traditions governing American foreign policy such as "avoiding foreign entanglements," are just as true today as they were before 1914. Article X, with its declaration that all members would be obligated to enforce postwar borders, violates this principle. President Wilson's insistence that Article X does not require that American forces be sent every time a conflict occurs sets a bad precedent. What would the world think about the United States if it is asked to fulfill this obligation in a particular crisis, and it decides not to? The dishonor the United States would bring upon itself would cause it to lose international standing. If Europe wants security, we have no problem entering into a security alliance with Britain or France to keep Germany from threatening them again. The "collective security" proposed by Article X is too vague.

Another major concern lies with the protection of American sovereignty. The Versailles Treaty provides for too many instances in which a body other than Congress makes laws

concerning the citizens of the United States. For instance, the Treaty requires member nations to submit to arbitration, permanently reduce armaments, contribute to expenses of the League, and it regulates future U.S. relations with Germany. All domestic and political questions relating to internal affairs of the United States should be left to the elected officials of American government to decide, not members of any multinational Council. The United States should also be free to enter into any relations with other nations in manners it sees fit. Discussions with the British and French authorities have shown that they will accept our reservations without reopening the entire treaty to discussion as the Wilsonians have charged. It is time to permit America to assume its proper role on the world stage.



## Beliefs and Assumptions Underlying Option 2

---

1. International relations have not changed so drastically as a result of the Great War that nations will act differently from before. The Versailles Treaty is based on idealism rather than reality.

2. Article X of the Covenant of the League

of Nations will compel the United States to fulfill obligations it does not wish to.

3. The United States should not enter into international agreements which infringe upon American sovereignty.

## Supporting Arguments for Option 2

---

1. The treaty is unlikely to pass with a two-thirds vote without the reservations.

2. The reservations will be supported by the American people.

3. The reservations will allow us to choose which of Europe's battles to join: we will retain our own decision-making power.

## From the Historical Record

---

*Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, August 1919*

"Taken altogether, these provisions for war present what to my mind is the gravest objection to this League in its present form. We are told that of course nothing will be done in the way of warlike acts without the assent of the Congress. If that is true, let us say so in the covenant. But as it stands there is no doubt whatever in my mind that American troops and American ships may be ordered to any part of the world by nations other than the United States, and that is a proposition to which I for one can never assent.... I believe that we do not require to be told by foreign nations when we shall do work which freedom and civilization require.... Let us unite with the world to promote the peaceable settlement of all international disputes. Let us try to develop international law. Let us associate ourselves with the other nations for these purposes. But, let us retain in our own hands and in our own control the lives of the youth of the land. Let no American be sent into battle except by the constituted authorities of his own country and by the will of the people of the United States."

*Senator Warren G. Harding, November 19, 1919*

"If this ratification is made with reserva-

tions which have been adopted, there remains the skeleton of a league on which the United States can, if it deems it prudent, proceed in deliberation and calm reflection toward the building of an international relationship which shall be effective in the future."

*Senator Irvine L. Lenroot, November 19, 1919*

"These reservations do nothing more nor less than to preserve the liberty and the independence of the United States of America.... This treaty has not been read generally by the people of this country; but I say to you that every one of these reservations...when they are read and when they are understood...will be approved of."

*Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, November 19, 1919*

"They say that if we demand the exclusion of the Monroe Doctrine from the operation of the League, they will demand compensation. Very well. Let them exclude us from meddling in Europe. That is not a burden that we are seeking to bear. We are ready to go there at any time to save the world from barbarism and tyranny, but we are not thirsting to interfere in every obscure quarrel that may spring up in the Balkans."

*Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, November 19, 1919*

"I cannot personally accede to the proposition that other nations, that a body of men in executive council where we as a nation have but one vote, shall have any power, unanimous or otherwise, to say who shall come into the United States. It must not be within the jurisdiction of the League at all. It lies at the foundation of national character and national well-being. There should be no possible jurisdiction over the power which defends this country from a flood of Japanese, Chinese, and Hindu labor."

*Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, November 19, 1919*

"Then comes Article X. That is the most important article in the whole treaty.... This article pledges us to guarantee the political independence and the territorial integrity against external aggression of every nation of the earth. We ask no guarantees; we have no endangered frontiers; but we are asked to guarantee the territorial integrity of every nation practically in the world—it will be when the League is complete. As it is today, we guarantee the territorial integrity and political independence of every part of the far-flung British Empire.... Under that clause of the treaty we have got to take our army and our navy and go to war with any country which attempts aggression upon the territorial integrity of another member of the League.... Now, guarantees must be fulfilled. They are sacred promises—it has been said only morally binding. Why, that is all there is to a treaty between great nations. If they are not morally binding they are nothing but 'scraps of paper.' If the United States agrees to Article 10 we must carry it out in letter and in spirit; and if it is agreed to I should insist that we do so, because the honor and good faith of our country would be at stake. Now, that is a tremendous promise to make."

*Senator Irvine L. Lenroot, November 19, 1919*

"Can it be possible that there is a Democrat so partisan that he does not see the necessity of a reservation as to Article 10 relieving us of the obligation of declaring war in an unjust

cause? I am profoundly convinced that if partisanship be forgotten and only Americanism remembered we can agree upon a reservation to this article, now so dangerous to the cause of true liberty, so destructive of American ideals and principles. I care not in what form the reservation is made so long as it does not obligate us to engage in war irrespective of the justice of the cause.... If Senators across the aisle would only forget that President Wilson is the leader of the Democratic party, and remember that this is an American question so crucial, so important to our country, so fateful to its future that consideration of political advantage should not have the weight of a feather in our deliberations—if this could be done, Mr. President, I am confident that we would come to an almost unanimous agreement as to reservations for the protection of the United States."

*Senator Key Pittman, November 19, 1919*

"When you unmask all of the hypocrisy surrounding this whole transaction, when you see the leaders of the great Republican Party, representing the people of this country, pretending that they are doing everything in God's world to ratify a treaty....their interest and sincerity and consistency at least are open to suspicion on the part of the people of the country... [I]f those of you there who are honest and sincere, if those of you there who hold your country above your party, are willing to join us on this side, I feel assured we can get you enough votes to ratify this treaty with reservations that you yourselves would have accepted two months ago.... [I]f you do not cut out of the resolution of ratification those reservations that you know will destroy the treaty, if you persist in that fraud upon the American people and that fraud upon the world, then I tell you there are enough fearless Democrats on this side of the Chamber to prevent its ratification until the American people understand. We may adopt the policy of isolation, and profit; we may decide to remain in an existence of selfishness, greed, and war, but we will not stand for national cowardice, pretense, and dishonesty."