

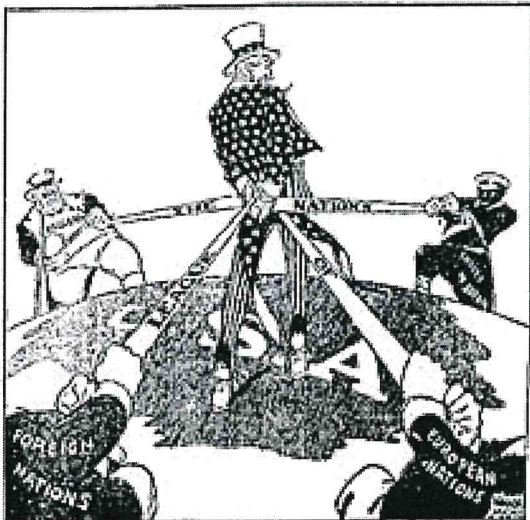
Option 3 Irreconcilables: Reject the Treaty

Because of Europe's incessant wars of ancient hatreds and power politics, it has always been in our interest to separate ourselves as far as possible from that volatile continent. President Wilson's attempt to make "the world safe for democracy" was doomed from the start as it presupposed that the Europeans and others were actually interested in democracy. Even the British and French with their supposed democratic heritage were not interested in allowing their vast colonial subjects to obtain self-rule. It is obvious from their insistence in maintaining their colonies and adding new ones from the spoils of the defunct German and Ottoman Empires that self-rule was a sham from the start. In addition, we now have the contagion of international Bolshevism that threatens the very existence of democracy throughout the world. The Russian Czars were tyrannical enough, but now Lenin and his gang imperil Europe. Why would the United States want to risk infection from the Bolshevik virus by maintaining a presence in Europe? We've already witnessed labor unrest in this country, and the risk of the "Red Menace" will only increase unless we cut ourselves off from its home base: Europe.

Those who put any faith in "collective security" through the proposed League of Nations are deluding themselves. Membership in any such organization would risk our security and embroil us in constant wars. The same holds true for those who advocate our entering into a security alliance with Britain and France to check Germany's recovery. President Washington's warning about "entangling alliances" holds true more today than ever before. Any loss of American sovereignty and self-reliance is unacceptable. Both the original and the revised versions of this treaty would threaten our sovereignty and send us into war.

The argument that our economic ties to Europe force us to maintain relations with that region also lacks substance. The ever growing Asian trade with the United States seems to be the most logical pursuit if we think that international trade is vital to our continued

growth. There are those that point out that our own domestic markets and those in Latin America are more than sufficient to meet those demands. Why should we risk more infringements on our freedom of the seas by European powers that are always warring against one another? They have never respected our rights as a neutral. Our insistence on such brought us the War of 1812 and the most recent Great War. We saw the end result: 100,000 Americans died to fulfill Wilson's fuzzy, idealistic view of international relations. Have we not learned from our mistakes? The time has come to cut off our relationship with the troubled continent of Europe. We should not ratify the Versailles Treaty.



Beliefs and Assumptions Underlying Option 3

1. Europe is a volatile region which does not share our interests or values. We should not become entangled in its troubles.

2. Asia is a more economically promising trading partner than Europe.

3. American institutions and perhaps even our Constitution would be threatened by membership in the League.

Supporting Arguments for Option 3

1. The treaty does not rectify the wrongs present in the world before the Great War. It perpetuates those wrongs and sets the groundwork for another war.

2. Rejecting membership in the League will allow the U.S. government to continue

to function and govern in the way it sees fit, unhampered by outside nations.

3. Removing ourselves from European affairs will allow us to focus on issues in the Americas.

From the Historical Record

Walter Lippmann, editorial in The New Republic, May 1919

"The future of liberal Americanism depends upon a moral union between democracy and nationalism. Such a union is compromised so long as nationalism remains competitive in policy, exclusive in spirit and complacently capitalist in organization. Liberals all over the world have hoped that a war, which was so clearly the fruit of competition and imperialist and class-bound nationalism, would end in a peace which would moralize nationalism by releasing it from class bondage and exclusive ambitions. The Treaty of Versailles does not even try to satisfy these aspirations. Instead of expressing a great recuperative effort of the conscience of civilization, which for its own sins has sweated so much blood, it does much to intensify and nothing to heal the old and ugly dissensions between political nationalism and social democracy. In so far as its terms are actually carried out, it is bound to provoke the ultimate explosion of irreconcilable warfare. It weaves international animosities and class conflict into the very fabric of the proposed new system of public law.

Senator William E. Borah, November 1919

"If it is conceivable that a treaty can be

formed and a league of nations written which will respect the Constitution in its letter and its spirit, and which will safeguard and preserve the Nation-old traditions of our country, then the matter would pass without any further debate. But, if we join the League, how can we protect and safeguard our own institutions and our own policies, as established by our systems? We can not be entangled in European affairs and not be entangled at the same time. This is not only a plunge into the unknown but also a course absolutely contrary to our previous foreign policy....There may be some egotism in Congress which makes it believe it knows more than the American people. But this is not true. The American people do not want to protect the other nations."

Senator James A. Reed, November 1919

"There is a quarrel between Italy and Yugoslavia over Fiume, a small Italian town with fifty thousand population. Italy and Yugoslavia cannot settle it. Thereupon the League of Nations undertakes to intervene, and then render a decision, and thereupon it is ordered that the United States shall apply economic pressure, that she shall cease to ship goods to either country. Then war drums begin to roll, and our troops leave their jobs, their farms, their fami-

lies. And suddenly Americans are dying for a fight that they have no interest in.”

Senator William E. Borah, November 19, 1919

“My friends of reservations, tell me where is the reservation in these articles which protects us against entangling alliances with Europe? Those who are differing over reservations, tell me what one of them protects the doctrine laid down by the Father of his Country. That fundamental proposition is surrendered, and we are a part of the European turmoils and conflicts from the time we enter this league.... Lloyd George is reported to have said just a few days before the conference met at Versailles that Great Britain could give up much, and would be willing to sacrifice much, to have American withdraw from that policy. That was one of the great objects of the entire conference at Versailles, so far as the foreign representatives were concerned. Clemenceau and Lloyd George and others like them were willing to make any reasonable sacrifice which would draw America away from her isolation and into the internal affairs and concerns of Europe. This league of nations, with or without reservations, whatever else it does or does not do, does surrender and sacrifice that policy; and once having surrendered and become a part of European concerns, where, my friends, are you going to stop?”

Senator Lawrence Y. Sherman, November 19, 1919

“This league and treaty, whether reserved or otherwise, are a charter of an international homicide club.”

Senator Frank B. Brandegee, November 19, 1919

“We would have had peace long ago if the president had not practically told the other powers that he would not participate in the making of a peace treaty unless they let him put his covenant in as a part.”

Senator Frank B. Brandegee, November 19, 1919

“I would not vote for a league of nations based on the principles that this league is

based upon, with all the reservations the wit of man could devise, because it would not be safe for my country.... I would consider myself a candidate for the madhouse if I were to vote for any such thing.”

Senator Frank B. Brandegee, November 19, 1919

“As soon as people recover from this pipe dream they will see good, old human nature and cause and effect continue to operate.... I am absolutely convinced if we can survive the present condition of hysteria for a year and keep out of this thing that nobody will admit that he ever favored it.”

Senator Frank B. Brandegee, November 19, 1919

“Now I know where I stand; I am on American soil.... I am looking at the stars and stripes [on the] back of your chair, sir, with pride, and I am offered a bridge to cross an unknown sea and invited to take my stand under the sickly flag of international socialism; and I decline to do it!”

Senator Frank B. Kellogg, November 19, 1919

“There is another and even more commanding reason why I shall record my vote against the treaty. It imperils what I conceive to be the underlying, the very first principles of this Republic. It is in conflict with the right of our people to govern themselves.... If we have erred we have erred out of too much love for those things which from childhood you and we together have been taught to reverence—yes, to defend even at the cost of limb and life. If we have erred it is because we have placed too high an estimate upon the wisdom of Washington and Jefferson, too exalted an opinion upon the patriotism of the sainted Lincoln. And blame us not therefore if we have, in our limited vision, seemed sometimes bitter and at all times uncompromising, for the things for which we have spoken, feebly spoken, the things which we have endeavored to defend, have been the things for which your fathers and our fathers were willing to die.”