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Annotation: The debate over U.S. entry into the League of Nations included foreign policy issues, such as collective security versus national sovereignty, idealism versus pragmatism, the responsibilities of powerful nations, the use of force to accomplish idealistic goals, and the idea of America.

Document: The Senate and the League of Nations

I. Henry Cabot Lodge: Reservations with Regard to the Treaty

Resolved (two-thirds of the senators present concurring therein), that the Senate advise and consent to the ratification of the treaty of peace with Germany concluded at Versailles on the 28th day of June, 1919, subject to the following reservations and understandings, which are hereby made a part and condition of this resolution of ratification, which ratification is not to take effect or bind the United States until the said reservations and understandings adopted by the Senate have been accepted by an exchange of notes as a part and a condition of this resolution of ratification by at least three of the four principal allied and associated powers, to wit, Great Britain, France, Italy, and Japan:

1. The United States so understands and construes Article I that in case of notice of withdrawal from the League of Nations, as provided in said article, the United States shall be the sole judge as to whether all its international obligations and all its obligations under the said Covenant have been fulfilled, and notice of withdrawal by the United States may be given by a concurrent resolution of the Congress of the United States.
2. The United States assumes no obligation to preserve the territorial integrity or political independence of any other country or to interfere in controversies between nations -- whether members of the League or not -- under the provisions of Article 10, or to employ the military or naval forces of the United States under any article of the treaty for any purpose, unless in any particular case the Congress, which, under the Constitution, has the sole power to declare war or authorize the employment of the military or naval forces of the United States, shall by act or joint resolution so provide.
3. No mandate shall be accepted by the United States under Article 22, Part 1, or any other provision of the treaty of peace with Germany, except by action of the Congress of the United States.
4. The United States reserves to itself exclusively the right to decide what questions are within its domestic jurisdiction and declares that all domestic and political questions relating wholly or in part to its internal affairs, including immigration, labor, coastwise traffic, the tariff, commerce, the suppression of traffic in women and children, and in opium and other dangerous drugs, and all other domestic questions, are solely within the jurisdiction of the United States and are not under this treaty to be submitted in any way either to arbitration or to the consideration of the

Council or of the Assembly of the League of Nations, or any agency thereof, or to the decision or recommendation of any other power.

5. The United States will not submit to arbitration or to inquiry by the Assembly or by the Council of the League of Nations provided for in said treaty of peace any questions which in the judgment of the United States depend upon or relate to its long-established policy, commonly known as the Monroe Doctrine; said doctrine is to be interpreted by the United States alone and is hereby declared to be wholly outside the jurisdiction of said League of Nations and entirely unaffected by any provision contained in the said treaty of peace with Germany.

6. The United States withholds its assent to Articles 156, 157, and 158, and reserves full liberty of action with respect to any controversy which may arise under said articles between the Republic of China and the Empire of Japan.

7. The Congress of the United States will provide by law for the appointment of the representatives of the United States in the Assembly and the Council of the League of Nations, and may in its discretion provide for the participation of the United States in any commission, committee, tribunal, court, council, or conference, or in the selection of any members thereof, and for the appointment of members of said commissions, committees, tribunals, courts, councils, or conferences, or any other representatives under the treaty of peace, or in carrying out its provisions; and until such participation and appointment have been so provided for and the powers and duties of such representatives have been defined by law, no person shall represent the United States under either said League of Nations or the treaty of peace with Germany or be authorized to perform any act for or on behalf of the United States thereunder; and no citizen of the United States shall be selected or appointed as a member of said commissions, committees, tribunals, courts, councils, or conferences except with the approval of the Senate of the United States.

8. The United States understands that the Reparation Commission will regulate or interfere with exports from the United States to Germany, or from Germany to the United States, only when the United States by act or joint resolution of Congress approves such regulation or interference.

9. The United States shall not be obligated to contribute to any expenses of the League of Nations, or of the Secretariat, or of any commission, or committee, or conference, or other agency organized under the League of Nations or under the treaty or for the purpose of carrying out the treaty provisions, unless and until an appropriation of funds available for such expenses shall have been made by the Congress of the United States.

10. If the United States shall at any time adopt any plan for the limitation of armaments proposed by the Council of the League of Nations under the provisions of Article 8, it reserves the right to increase such armaments without the consent of the Council whenever the United States is threatened with invasion or engaged in war.

11. The United States reserves the right to permit, in its discretion, the nationals of a Covenant-breaking state, as defined in Article 16 of the Covenant of the League of Nations, residing within

the United States or in countries other than that violating said Article 16, to continue their commercial, financial, and personal relations with the nationals of the United States.

12. Nothing in Articles 296, 297, or in any of the annexes thereto or in any other article, section, or annex of the treaty of peace with Germany shall, as against citizens of the United States, be taken to mean any confirmation, ratification, or approval of any act otherwise illegal or in contravention of the rights of citizens of the United States.

13. The United States withholds its assent to Part XIII (Articles 387 to 427, inclusive) unless Congress by act or joint resolution shall hereafter make provision for representation in the organization established by said Part XII, and in such event the participation of the United States will be governed and conditioned by the provisions of such act or joint resolution.

14. The United States assumes no obligation to be bound by any election, decision, report, or finding of the Council or Assembly in which any member of the League and its self-governing dominions, colonies, or parts of empire, in the aggregate, have cast more than one vote, and assumes no obligation to be bound by any decision, report, or finding of the Council or Assembly arising out of any dispute between the United States and any member of the League if such member, or any self-governing dominion, colony, empire, or part of empire united with it politically has voted.

II. Senate Debate

Mr. Lodge. Mr. President, I have received from the press a copy of a letter which has been given out, I understand, and which I think, as the senator from Nebraska [Mr. Hitchcock] has not offered it, should be read at this time before we vote.

The White House,

Washington, 18 November, 1919.

My Dear Senator: You were good enough to bring me word that the Democratic senators supporting the treaty expected to hold a conference before the final vote on the Lodge resolution of ratification and that they would be glad to receive a word of counsel from me.

I should hesitate to offer it in any detail, but I assume that the senators only desire my judgment upon the all-important question of the final vote on the resolution containing the many reservations by Senator Lodge. On that I cannot hesitate, for, in my opinion, the resolution in that form does not provide for ratification but, rather, for the nullification of the treaty. I sincerely hope that the friends and supporters of the treaty will vote against the Lodge resolution of ratification.

I understand that the door will probably then be open for a genuine resolution of ratification.

I trust that all true friends of the treaty will refuse to support the Lodge resolution.

Cordially and sincerely yours,

(Signed) Woodrow Wilson.

Hon. G. M. Hitchcock,

United States Senate.

Mr. President, I think comment is superfluous, and I shall make none

Mr. Robinson. Mr. President, for reasons very different from those asserted by the senator from Pennsylvania [Mr. Knox], it is my purpose to vote against the pending resolution of ratification incorporating reservations adopted by a majority of Senators.

During several months, to the exclusion of nearly all other important business, the Senate has had under consideration the treaty of peace with Germany. It now seems probable, unless the advocates of unqualified ratification and so-called reservation senators reconcile differences, that the result of our labors may be failure. The Senate is about to vote on an alleged resolution of ratification, a resolution which, it seems to me, does not ratify but which, in fact and in legal effect, constitutes a rejection of this treaty.

All senators recognize the importance of the vote soon to be taken. This vote invites the judgment of the people of this country, and, indeed, the judgment of all mankind, upon the policy implied in the resolution of ratification incorporating reservations agreed to by the majority.

Many of us are convinced that the adoption of the pending resolution, as I have already stated, will accomplish no useful purpose. The senator from Massachusetts [Mr. Lodge] has had read into the Record a letter issued by the President, in which that officer, representing a part of the treaty-making power, declares that the pending resolution of ratification cannot accomplish ratification; that it is, in fact, rejection of the treaty; and therefore it is futile to adopt the resolution.

The statement that the resolution of ratification will in fact defeat the treaty will occasion no regret to the senators who from the beginning have advocated its rejection. They have apparently succeeded, temporarily at least, in accomplishing indirectly what could not be done openly and frankly. Through alleged reservations, which will not likely be accepted by other parties to the treaty, they seek to exclude the United States from fellowship with her late allies and from membership in the League of Nations. In almost every line of the reservations is implied antagonism of senators toward the President. Suspicion and mistrust of the nations associated with this government in the recent war are reflected by the reservations, sometimes poorly concealed, often clearly evinced.

The avowed purpose is to completely repudiate every obligation of this government to encourage and sustain the new and feeble states separated, by our assistance during the war, from their former sovereignties by withholding from them the moral and military power of the United States.

To me it seems regrettable beyond expression that senators who desire to improve the treaty and who desire also that it shall become effective should lend their assistance to a course in which the avowed enemies of the League of Nations must find unbounded gratification and pleasure. Is it not unpardonable for friends of the treaty to couple with the resolution of ratification conditions designed to deprive the Executive of his constitutional functions? It is worse than idle -- it seems to me hypocritical -- to impose terms and conditions which make the exchange of ratifications impracticable, if not impossible.

Membership in the League of Nations is treated, in the reservations, with so little dignity and as of such slight importance as to authorize its termination by the passage of a mere concurrent resolution of Congress. This attempt to deny to the President participation in withdrawal by this government from the League and to vest that authority solely in the two houses of Congress in disregard of the plain provision of the Constitution displays a spirit of narrow opposition to the executive unworthy of the subject and unworthy of the Senate of the United States.

The requirement that before ratification by the United States shall become effective the reservations adopted by the Senate must be approved by three of the four principal allied powers is designed to make difficult the exchange of ratifications. Mr. President, it can have no other purpose; it can accomplish no other end.

The reservation respecting Article 10 nullifies the most vital provision in the League of Nations contract. It absolves the United States from any obligation to assist in enforcing the terms of peace, an obligation that the leader of the majority in his speech to this body on the 23rd day of August, 1918, and again in December of the same year, asserted as one which the United States cannot without dishonor avoid or escape.

No senator can doubt that the repudiation by the United States of the undertaking in Article 10 to respect and preserve the territorial integrity and political independence of the other members of the League weakens, if it does not destroy, one of the principal agencies or means provided by the League for the prevention of international war.

The reservation withholding the agreement of the United States to the arrangement in the treaty respecting Japanese rights in Shantung, and reserving for this government freedom of action in case of controversy between China and Japan regarding the subject, admittedly will not be accepted by Japan, and probably it will not be accepted by either France or Great Britain. In making this declaration, I repeat the statement made in the Senate a day or two ago by the senator from North Dakota [Mr. McCumber], and I make the inquiry how any friend of the treaty who wants it ratified, and who realizes that under these reservations our ratifications cannot become effective unless it is approved by three of the four principal allied powers -- I make the inquiry now how a senator who takes that view of the subject and wants the treaty ratified can support the pending resolution?

It may be, Mr. President, that the friends of this treaty have made a mistake. Undoubtedly the friends of the treaty, and not its enemies, should dictate the policy of the Senate concerning ratification. The senators who have opposed ratification from the beginning have imposed upon

an overwhelming majority of the Senate, by their power and influence, their views respecting the resolution of ratification.

As the measure now comes before the Senate it comes with the open declaration of the Executive, who is the sole agency through whom this government may exchange ratifications, that that act will not be accomplished. It comes with the recognition of the fact by the Senators who favor the treaty that the reservations are of such a nature that they will not be accepted by other nations.

Make no mistake about it. The Senate should either ratify this treaty unqualifiedly or upon such terms and conditions as will justify the Executive and enable him speedily to conclude peace by an exchange of ratifications.

The resolution of the senator from Massachusetts incorporating the reservations as agreed upon will probably result in the refusal of the Executive to attempt to procure the consent and approval of three of the four principal allied powers. If he should make the attempt, it is plain that our self-respecting allies will not accept the terms and conditions which we seek to impose by these reservations. Why, then, Mr. President, should the resolution proposed by the senator from Massachusetts be agreed to? Every senator knows that it cannot effectuate peace. The senator from Massachusetts himself on last Sunday issued a statement to the press in which he declared that "The treaty is dead."

I call now upon the friends of the treaty to take charge of the corpse. By their action they can revitalize it. The enemies of the treaty, senators who do not favor its ratification, have controlled the proceedings of the Senate heretofore. It is time now that those of us who favor the treaty, and we have the necessary number, should get together and ratify it.

Mr. Borah. Mr. President, I am not misled by the debate across the aisle into the view that this treaty will not be ratified. I entertain little doubt that sooner or later -- and entirely too soon -- the treaty will be ratified with the League of Nations in it; and I am of the opinion with the reservations in it as they are now written. There may possibly be some change in verbiage in order that there may be a common sharing of parentage, but our friends across the aisle will likely accept the League of Nations with the reservations in substance as now written. I think, therefore, this moment is just as appropriate as any other for me to express my final views with reference to the treaty and the League of Nations. It is perhaps the last opportunity I shall have to state, as briefly as I may, my reasons for opposing the treaty and the League.

Mr. President, after Mr. Lincoln had been elected President, before he assumed the duties of the office and at a time when all indications were to the effect that we would soon be in the midst of civil strife, a friend from the city of Washington wrote him for instructions. Mr. Lincoln wrote back in a single line, "Entertain no compromise; have none of it." That states the position I occupy at this time and which I have, in a humble way, occupied from the first contention in regard to this proposal.

My objections to the League have not been met by the reservations. I desire to state wherein my objections have not been met. Let us see what our attitude will be toward Europe and what our

position will be with reference to the other nations of the world after we shall have entered the League with the present reservations written therein. With all due respect to those who think that they have accomplished a different thing and challenging no man's intellectual integrity or patriotism, I do not believe the reservations have met the fundamental propositions which are involved in this contest.

When the League shall have been formed, we shall be a member of what is known as the Council of the League. Our accredited representative will sit in judgment with the accredited representatives of the other members of the League to pass upon the concerns, not only of our country but of all Europe and all Asia and the entire world. Our accredited representatives will be members of the Assembly. They will sit there to represent the judgment of these 110 million people -- more than -- just as we are accredited here to represent our constituencies.

We cannot send our representatives to sit in council with the representatives of the other great nations of the world with mental reservations as to what we shall do in case their judgment shall not be satisfactory to us. If we go to the Council or to the Assembly with any other purpose than that of complying in good faith and in absolute integrity with all upon which the Council or the Assembly may pass, we shall soon return to our country with our self-respect forfeited and the public opinion of the world condemnatory.

Why need you gentlemen across the aisle worry about a reservation here or there when we are sitting in the Council and in the Assembly and bound by every obligation in morals, which the President said was supreme above that of law, to comply with the judgment which our representative and the other representatives finally form? Shall we go there, Mr. President, to sit in judgment, and in case that judgment works for peace join with our allies, but in case it works for war withdraw our cooperation? How long would we stand as we now stand, a great republic commanding the respect and holding the leadership of the world, if we should adopt any such course?

So, sir, we not only sit in the Council and in the Assembly with our accredited representatives, but bear in mind that Article 11 is untouched by any reservation which has been offered here: and with Article 11 untouched and its integrity complete, Article 10 is perfectly superfluous. If any war or threat of war shall be a matter of consideration for the League, and the League shall take such action as it deems wise to deal with it, what is the necessity of Article 10? Will not external aggression be regarded as a war or threat of war? If the political independence of some nation in Europe is assailed will it be regarded as a war or threat of war? Is there anything in Article 10 that is not completely covered by Article 11?

It remains complete, and with our representatives sitting in the Council and the Assembly, and with Article 11 complete, and with the Assembly, and the Council having jurisdiction of all matters touching the peace of the world, what more do you need to bind the United States if you assume that the United States is a nation of honor?

We have said, Mr. President, that we would not send our troops abroad without the consent of Congress. Pass by now for a moment the legal proposition. If we create executive functions, the executive will perform those functions without the authority of Congress. Pass that question by

and go to the other question. Our members of the Council are there. Our members of the Assembly are there. Article 11 is complete, and it authorizes the League, a member of which is our representative, to deal with matters of peace and war, and the League through its Council and its Assembly, deals with the matter, and our accredited representative joins with the others in deciding upon a certain course which involves a question of sending troops. What will the Congress of the United States do? What right will it have left, except the bare technical right to refuse, which as a moral proposition it will not dare to exercise?

Have we not been told day by day for the last nine months that the Senate of the United States, a coordinate part of the treaty-making power, should accept this league as it was written because the wise men sitting at Versailles had so written it, and has not every possible influence and every source of power in public opinion been organized and directed against the Senate to compel it to do that thing? How much stronger will be the moral compulsion upon the Congress of the United States when we ourselves have endorsed the proposition of sending our accredited representatives there to vote for us?

Ah, but you say that there must be unanimous consent, and that there is vast protection in unanimous consent.

I do not wish to speak disparagingly; but has not every division and dismemberment of every nation which has suffered dismemberment taken place by unanimous consent for the last 300 years? Did not Prussia and Austria and Russia by unanimous consent divide Poland? Did not the United States and Great Britain and Japan and Italy and France divide China and give Shantung to Japan? Was that not a unanimous decision? Close the doors upon the diplomats of Europe, let them sit in secret, give them the material to trade on, and there always will be unanimous consent.

How did Japan get unanimous consent? I want to say here, in my parting words upon this proposition, that I have no doubt the outrage upon China was quite as distasteful to the President of the United States as it is to me. But Japan said: "I will not sign your treaty unless you turn over to me Shantung, to be turned back at my discretion," and you know how Japan's discretion operates with reference to such things. And so, when we are in the League, and our accredited representatives are sitting at Geneva, and a question of great moment arises, Japan, or Russia, or Germany, or Great Britain will say, "Unless this matter is adjusted in this way I will depart from your League." It is the same thing, operating in the same way, only under a different date and under a little different circumstances.

Mr. President, if you have enough territory, if you have enough material, if you have enough subject peoples to trade upon and divide, there will be no difficulty about unanimous consent.

Do our Democratic friends ever expect any man to sit as a member of the Council or as a member of the Assembly equal in intellectual power and in standing before the world with that of our representative at Versailles? Do you expect a man to sit in the Council who will have made more pledges, and I shall assume made them in sincerity, for self-determination and for the rights of small peoples than had been made by our accredited representatives. And yet, what became of it? The unanimous consent was obtained nevertheless.

But take another view of it. We are sending to the Council one man. That one man represents 110 million people.

Here, sitting in the Senate, we have two from every state in the Union, and over in the other house we have representatives in accordance with population, and the responsibility is spread out in accordance with our obligations to our constituency. But now we are transferring to one man the stupendous power of representing the sentiment and convictions of 110 million people in tremendous questions which may involve the peace or may involve the war of the world.

However you view the question of unanimous consent, it does not protect us.

What is the result of all this? We are in the midst of all of the affairs of Europe. We have entangled ourselves with all European concerns. We have joined in alliance with all the European nations which have thus far joined the League and all nations which may be admitted to the League. We are sitting there dabbling in their affairs and intermeddling in their concerns. In other words, Mr. President -- and this comes to the question which is fundamental with me -- we have forfeited and surrendered, once and for all, the great policy of "no entangling alliances" upon which the strength of this republic has been founded for 150 years.

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.

Let us not underestimate that. There has never been an hour since the Venezuelan difficulty that there has not been operating in this country, fed by domestic and foreign sources, a powerful propaganda for the destruction of the doctrine of no entangling alliances.

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 America 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 the European concerns, where, my friends, are you going to stop?

You have put in here a reservation upon the Monroe Doctrine. I think that, insofar as language could protect the Monroe Doctrine, it has been protected. But as a practical proposition, as a working proposition, tell me candidly, as men familiar with the history of your country and of other countries, do you think that you can intermeddle in European affairs; and, second, never to permit Europe to [interfere in our affairs].

When Mr. Monroe wrote to Jefferson, he asked him his view upon the Monroe Doctrine, and Mr. Jefferson said, in substance, our first and primary obligation should be never to interfere in European affairs; and, second, never to permit Europe to interfere in our affairs. He understood, as every wise and practical man understands, that if we intermeddle in her affairs, if we help to adjust her conditions, inevitably and remorselessly Europe then will be carried into our affairs, in spite of anything you can write upon paper.

We cannot protect the Monroe Doctrine unless we protect the basic principle upon which it rests, and that is the Washington policy. I do not care how earnestly you may endeavor to do so, as a practical working proposition your League will come to the United States. Will you permit me to digress long enough to read a paragraph from a great French editor upon this particular phase of the matter, Mr. Stephen Lausanne, editor of *Le Matin*, of Paris?

When the Executive Council of the League of Nations fixes "the reasonable limits of the armament of Peru"; when it shall demand information concerning the naval program of Brazil; when it shall tell Argentina what shall be the measure of the "contribution to the armed forces to protect the signatures of the social covenant"; when it shall demand the immediate registration of the treaty between the United States and Canada at the seat of the League, it will control, whether it wills or no, the destinies of America. And when the American states shall be obliged to take a hand in every war or menace of war in Europe (Art. 11), they will necessarily fall afoul of the fundamental principle laid down by Monroe, which was that Americans should never take part in a European war.

If the League takes in the world, then Europe must mix in the affairs of America; if only Europe is included, then America will violate of necessity her own doctrine by intermixing in the affairs of Europe.

If the League includes the affairs of the world, does it not include the affairs of all the World? Is there any limitation of the jurisdiction of the Council or of the Assembly upon the question of peace or war? Does it not have now, under the reservations, the same as it had before, the power to deal with all matters of peace or war throughout the entire world? How shall you keep from meddling in the affairs of Europe or keep Europe from meddling in the affairs of America?

Mr. President, there is another and even a more commanding reason why I shall record my vote against this 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, free from all restraint, legal or moral, of foreign powers. It challenges every tenet of my political faith. If this faith were one of my own contriving, if I stood here to assert principles of government of my own evolving, I might well be charged with intolerable presumption, for we all recognize the ability of those who urge a different course. But I offer in justification of my course nothing of my own save the deep and abiding reverence I have for those whose policies I humbly but most ardently support. I claim no merit save fidelity to American principles and devotion to American ideals a

Source: Record, 66 Cong., I Sess., pp. 8777-8778; 8768-8769, 8781-8784.

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