



# The Debate Over the League of Nations

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Viewpoint	Represented by:	Positions
Strong Internationalists	President Woodrow Wilson Newton Baker James M. Cox William McAdoo	
Limited Internationalists	William H. Taft	Former President William H. Taft objected to putting the U.S. in a position in which it could be forced into a war against its will. Nevertheless, he was in favor of the League of Nations because he believed the chance of such a war occurring quite unlikely. The League's power to enforce a universal boycott against a country should prevent such a necessity. A world movement immune to a boycott would oblige the League's members to unite in military action. As the only sensible course of action, that would be a war in which the U.S. would willingly participate. It could not be compelled to fight.
Mild Reservationists	Senator Gilbert M. Hitchcock	
Strong Reservationists	Senator Henry Cabot Lodge Senator (and presidential candidate) Warren G. Harding	
Irreconcilables	Senator William Borah	



## Hypothetical Position Statements on the League of Nations

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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The following statements may be used in the assessment activity for the lesson *The Debate in the United States over the League of Nations*. Most are paraphrases of statements by participants.

There is inevitably a great deal of overlap in positions. For example, Irreconcilables would agree with many of the positions of Strong Reservationists. Mild Internationalists would agree with many of the positions of the Strong Internationalists. Use student responses as a springboard for discussion. Ask for support for answers.

### Strong Internationalist Positions

The League of Nations has come about by no plan of our conceiving, but by the hand of God who led us into this way. We cannot turn back. We can only go forward, with lifted eyes and freshened spirit, to follow the vision. It was of this that we dreamed at our birth. America shall in truth show the way. The light streams upon the path ahead, and nowhere else.

Any changes to the League Covenant are a rejection of the League.

It is my purpose to vote against the pending resolution of ratification incorporating reservations adopted by a majority of Senators. I believe the Senate is about to vote on an alleged resolution of ratification, a resolution that does not ratify but which, in fact and in legal effect, constitutes a rejection of this treaty.

### Limited Internationalist Positions

The combined pressure of the world's nations will prevent the unlikely possibility that the U.S. could be forced into a war against its will.

### Mild Reservationist Positions

Nations horrified at their losses in the Great War will be careful in negotiations, and good outcomes will result despite flaws in the League Covenant.

It is necessary to remember that the lack of such a league in 1914 threw the world into the chaos of this war... The question of this hour therefore is not whether a beautifully phrased and perfect document has been written, but whether it is the best hope we have.

## **Strong Reservationist Positions**

If the League ever adopts a plan to reduce armaments, the U.S. must reserve the right to increase its armaments without the consent of the council whenever it is threatened with invasion or engaged in war.

Specific and limiting changes to the Covenant must be made to protect U.S. interests.

The League would threaten U.S. sovereignty by requiring the U.S. to follow directions from an international body, so all decisions of the League must be considered suggestions only.

## **Irreconcilables**

We cannot send our representatives to deliberate 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.

They tell us the League of Nations will be a great brotherhood of nations assembled; and that when those nations are assembled together they will be a body devoted to the service of God and man without a single selfish thought or a single iniquitous motive. Yet, at the close of the war, many of those same countries that we are now told will liberate nations and bring democracy to the people of the world seized every foot of territory that was held by helpless people anywhere.

Shall we go to the League to help make decisions, and then if we think that decision works for peace, join with our allies, but in case it works for war, withdraw our cooperation?