

## **Henry Cabot Lodge's Objections to Article 10 of the Treaty of Versailles (1919)**

*The Treaty of Versailles consists of 440 Articles. Articles 1–26 form the Covenant of the League of Nations. Article 10 became the most contentious issue during the ratification debates within the U.S. Senate. Henry Cabot Lodge (R-Massachusetts) objected to many details of the Treaty of Versailles, particularly the League of Nations. He believed that membership in the League of Nations would entangle the United States in foreign affairs and prevent the country from acting independently in such matters. The following are selected portions of a speech that he delivered in the Senate on August 12, 1919.*

### **Peace Treaty of Versailles**

**Article 10** The Members of the League undertake to respect and preserve as against external aggression the territorial integrity and existing political independence of all Members of the League. In case of any such aggression or in case of any threat or danger of such aggression the Council shall advise upon the means by which this obligation shall be fulfilled.

### **Lodge's Objections**

I object in the strongest possible way to having the United States agree, directly or indirectly, to be controlled by a league which may at any time, and perfectly lawfully and in accordance with the terms of the covenant, be drawn in to deal with internal conflicts in other countries, no matter what those conflicts may be... There can be no genuine dispute whatever about the meaning of the first clause of article 10... In article 10 the United States is bound on the appeal of any member of the league not only to respect but to preserve its independence and its boundaries, and that pledge if we give it, must be fulfilled.

... The broad fact remains that if any member of the league suffering from external aggression should appeal directly to the United States for support the United States would be bound to give that support in its own capacity and without reference to the action of other powers, because the United States itself is bound, and I hope the day will never come when the United States will not carry out its promises.

... There are, of course, many others, but these points, in the interest not only of the safety of the United States, but of the maintenance of the treaty and the peace of the world, should be dealt with here before it is too late. Once in the league the chance of amendment is so slight that it is not worth considering. Any analysis of the provisions of this league covenant, however, brings out in startling relief one great fact. Whatever may be said, it is not a league of peace; it is an alliance, dominated at the present moment by five great powers, really by three, and it has all the marks of an alliance. The development of international law is neglected. The court which is to decide disputes brought before it fills but a small place. The conditions for which this league really provides with the utmost care are political conditions, not judicial questions... This league to enforce peace does a great deal for enforcement and very little for peace. It makes more essential provisions looking to war than to peace for the settlement of disputes.

...I am as anxious as any human being can be to have the United States render every possible service to the civilization and peace of mankind, but I am certain we can do it best by not putting ourselves in leading strings or subjecting our policies and our sovereignty to other nations. The independence of the United States is not only more precious to ourselves but to the world than any single possession....The United States is the world's best hope, but if you fetter her in the interests and quarrels of other nations, if you tangle her in the intrigues of Europe, you will destroy her power for good and endanger her very existence...

### **Document Analysis**

What were Lodge's primary objections to U.S. membership in the League of Nations?

Do Lodge's arguments sound familiar? Are they relevant today, especially in discussions pertaining to the United Nations?

Why do you think the Senate was more receptive to these arguments in 1919 than in 1945, when the United States joined the United Nations?