Advanced Study Guide—Epilogue

1. In what ways was the League successful after World War I? Unsuccessful?

2. Many historians suggest that the terms of the Versailles Treaty were a major cause of World War II. Support that argument.

3. Some historians characterize U.S. policy during the interwar period as isolationist. What actions, described in the reading, could be called isolationist?

4. How was U.S. foreign policy different in the Cold War from the interwar period?

5. What is "Wilsonian" thought? Why do some support it and some oppose it?
7. Give two examples of America's unilateralist foreign policy in the 1920s.
   a. 
   b. 

8. Wilson's idea of ______________ in the League of Nations was the first presidential attempt to adopt a ______________ approach for America's foreign policy.

9. In what way is Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty similar to Article X of the League of Nations Covenant?

10. Give two examples of current U.S. foreign policy that are multilateral.
    a. 
    b. 

11. Why do some people think Wilson was naive and unrealistic?
1. Why did Germany elect Adolf Hitler?

2. Ultimately, more than nations joined the League. The League's successes fell into three categories: political, social, and economic. Provide one example in each category.

3. Political:

4. The League was often unable to enforce its decisions. Why?

5. Why did Germans elect Adolf Hitler?

6. What event finally triggered World War II?
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Some of the most notable accomplishments of the conference included an agreement to curb naval build-up, to settle disputes over possessions in the Pacific peacefully, and to regulate the use of submarines and outlaw the use of poison gas during warfare. All nine nations also signed an agreement affirming China's sovereignty and establishing a policy of open trade with China.

Between the wars the United States acted in ways that supported its interests. While it often was involved in international issues, it participated in ways that preserved its right to manage its own affairs.

The Cold War

Woodrow Wilson's idea of collective security embodied in the League of Nations Covenant represented the first presidential attempt to adopt a multilateral approach for America's foreign policy. During the twenties and thirties, Wilson's attempts were often mocked as "idealistic" and soon saw the rise of totalitarian states in Italy, Japan, the Soviet Union, and Nazi Germany as clear examples of his naivety. However, with the outbreak of World War II and the horrific loss of life and destruction that followed, Wilson's ideas once again found a receptive audience.

What is the United Nations?

Like the League of Nations, the seeds for the creation of the United Nations were planted in the midst of a world war. The League, having no military force of its own, had not been able to enforce its decisions. The devastation of World War II caused world leaders to look for new answers. Many, including President Franklin Roosevelt, recognized the League's flaws and felt that the establishment of a new global organization was necessary. Roosevelt worked with British Prime Minister Winston Churchill to create the Atlantic Charter, a document which called for the establishment of a United Nations (UN) which would help to maintain peace and security through international collaboration.

While the UN was hailed as a success when it convened its first meeting, the bitter divisions of the Cold War soon overwhelmed the carefully laid plans of the UN's creators. Cold War politics coupled with the structure of the UN veto system often prevented the UN Security Council from making decisions.

How did the Cold War affect multilateral international relations?

During the Cold War, the strategy of containing Soviet communism guided U.S. involvement abroad. American leaders feared that the Soviets would fan the flames of conflict to gain influence in regions that were identified as vital to U.S. interests. U.S. foreign aid was viewed as a tool for containing the spread of communism. It was for this reason that the United States allocated some $400 million ($3.8 billion in 2003 dollars) of aid to

The UN Security Council

The United States, the Soviet Union, Britain, France, and China are the permanent members of the UN's Security Council, the UN's executive body. The Security Council has the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. Each of the five permanent members of the Security Council has the right to veto UN decisions. The veto system was conceived as a safety valve that would allow the great powers to disagree without threatening the UN's existence.

The framers of the UN recognized the division between Soviet communism and the free-market democracies of the West (led by the United States, Britain, and France). Nonetheless, they hoped that the permanent members of the Security Council would share a common interest in maintaining global peace. The founders of the UN also understood that the support of every important country was essential to the organization's success.
War II. The League, designed to prevent war, had failed in its most basic mission.

The remapping of Europe and the Middle East did not solve the problems that had plagued the continents. Instead, the divisions persisted. Conflicts about borders and nationalities exist to this day. Additionally, the colonized nations of Africa and Asia did not gain independence as a result of the Versailles Treaty. The decolonization movement, begun in the 1950s, brought decades more bloodshed and violence before these areas gained self-rule.

The United States After WWI

After the war Americans hoped for a long period of peace and prosperity, but they disagreed about the best means to achieve those ends. Like their representatives in Congress, some Americans wanted to return to a policy of isolationism while others felt that detachment was no longer possible. While some Americans were fearful of embroiling themselves in European conflicts and wanted to focus on domestic issues, others felt that the United States was a global power that could not escape involvement in an increasingly interconnected world.

Although the United States did not join the League after World War I, the U.S. Senate as a whole was not isolationist. While some senators were staunchly opposed to involving the United States in "entangling alliances," many others advocated involvement in international affairs. Their objection to the League was not that it drew the United States into world affairs, but that it impeded the right of the United States to act unilaterally.

What characterized U.S. policies between the world wars?

Between World War I and World War II, U.S. leaders sought an independent foreign policy which was unconstrained by permanent alliances. The United States was involved in international affairs only in ways that were beneficial or necessary to the United States.

The United States' handling of British and French war debts is an example of this approach. At the conclusion of World War I Britain and France believed that the United States would forgive some of their over $10 billion dollars of war debts. The United States, however, demanded that the debts be paid back in full and did not attempt to come to a compromise with the Europeans. The United States also raised the import tax on some European goods. This action hampered the ability of the Allied powers to repay their debts, and as a result tension and bitterness grew.

The United States also enacted legislation to limit immigration into the country. The Emergency Quota Act of 1921 and the Immigration Act of 1924 set limits on the number of Europeans who were eligible to immigrate and declared that Japanese immigrants were "aliens ineligible for citizenship."

In some cases the United States worked with other nations in a multilateral approach to resolve problems. In 1921 and 1922, the U.S. government held an international conference on Asia in Washington D.C. At the Washington Conference, as it was called, the United States, Great Britain, Japan, and France signed several treaties on international issues. Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Belgium, and China also participated in several agreements.
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Epilogue: The Legacy of the League

Whether it was a result of his stroke, feelings of moral and intellectual superiority, or an unwavering belief in his own convictions, President Wilson was uncompromising (some have said obstinate) after his return from Paris.

"As a friend of the President, as one who has loyally followed him, I solemnly declared to him this morning, 'If you want to kill your own child because the Senate straightens out its crooked backs, you must take the responsibility and accept the verdict of history.'"

—Senator Henry Ashurst

Wilson's foremost opponent, Senator Lodge, also refused to budge. The Senate voted on joining the League of Nations on three occasions. In the first vote the Senators rejected the treaty with the reservations Lodge had written. In the second, the Senate rejected the treaty altogether. When the final vote came up in March 1920, the Senate rejected it again. The Senate fight over the League of Nations and the Treaty of Versailles was over. The United States signed separate treaties later with Germany and Austria-Hungary.

Wilson's personality may have contributed to the rejection of the treaty. His refusal to include any significant Republicans in his delegation to Paris annoyed Senators. Many

found President Wilson arrogant, and some criticized his tone of voice, which they said was preaching and moralizing. Additionally, the longstanding bitterness and political differences with Lodge ensured that his ideas would be severely scrutinized even before they reached the table.

The Life of the League

From its conception, the League was to be a multilateral organization which worked toward a goal common to its members: the promotion of international peace and security. League members agreed to deal openly with one another, to abide by international law, to attempt to settle disputes through arbitration, and to reduce armaments in order to prevent war. According to the League Covenant, the League could use verbal, economic, or physical sanctions to prevent a dispute from escalating into war.

Many have speculated about how the rest of the twentieth century would have turned out if the United States had joined the League of Nations. Because Germany and Russia were not initially permitted to join, the early League years lacked the participation of three of the most powerful nations of the world. Despite the fact that ultimately more than sixty nations joined, the League lacked some credibility without U.S. participation. There were, however, some successes.

What were some of the League's successes?

The League was able to resolve several disputes peacefully, just as Wilson had hoped. For instance, the League settled a dispute between Sweden and Finland over a group of contested islands, responded to a humanitarian crisis in Turkey, and prevented a war from erupting over a border conflict between Greece and Bulgaria.

The League was also responsible for some social and economic successes. It brought several social issues to the world's attention,