

Q1: What was the League of Nations?

A: The League was an INTERNATIONAL organisation. It was set up as part of the Treaty of Versailles. It was the idea of US President Woodrow Wilson – he thought the League would help to stop future wars. There were 42 countries in the League when it began in 1919.

LEAGUE OF NATIONS



SOCIÉTÉ DES NATIONS

Unit 3: International Relations 1918-36

Lesson 4: League of Nations (pp. 52-59 from the *IB Course Companion*)

What is the origin and purpose of the League of Nations?

A. Factors leading to the creation of the League

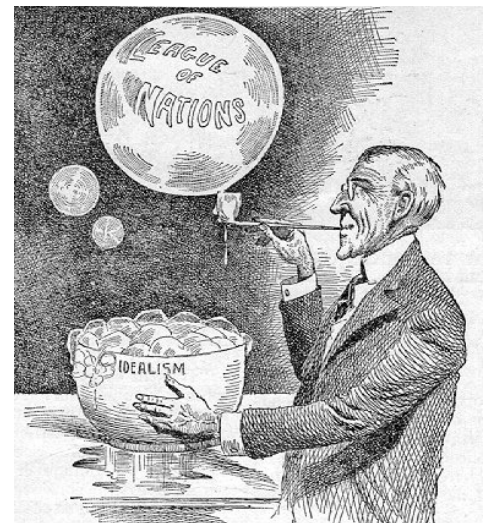
i. devastation of WWI led many to feel a new approach to keeping the peace was needed

ii. Woodrow Wilson

1. part of the Fourteen Points

2. priority for Wilson during negotiations in Paris

3. believed the League could correct any problems/compromises made in the Treaty of Versailles.



iii. New approach
1. collective security

a) League Covenant included in the Treaty of Versailles

i) Article X:
all members undertake to respect and preserve as against external aggression the territorial integrity and political independence of all members of the League.



b) implication meant that members were obligated to help regardless of their national interest. Principle of peace > national interest.

Q2: What were the aims of the League of Nations?

A: The aims were set out in the COVENANT of the League of Nations. This document was like a 'rule book' for the League (see Source 1). The aims were:

- to be united and strong enough to discourage any nation from using force as a way to solve disputes
- to provide a place to discuss international disputes and work them out peacefully
- to encourage countries to CO-OPERATE, especially in business and trade
- to encourage DISARMAMENT by nations
- to improve living and working conditions for people around the world.

By sticking together, the nations of the world would have protection and help from each other – this was called COLLECTIVE SECURITY.

Hand in hand

The five giants represent the five continents of the Earth. The giants are standing firm together.



At the giants' feet, leaders of all the nations are working, reading and talking together. The League's members come from all five continents. The League believed that strength came from unity.

Wall paintings by the famous Spanish artist, José Maria Sert that decorate the Assembly Chamber in the League's Headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland. They were designed to show the aims and values of the League.

- c) problems with collective security
 - i) does not indicate where potential threats will come from nor the level of response needed.
 - ii) assumes that all nations will have the same interpretation of the threat and will be willing to spend to meet the challenge.
 - iii) assumes all nations are equally powerful enough to enforce peace.



c) problems with collective security

iv) collective security is an abstract concept – whereas traditional diplomacy would see the relationship and responsibilities between countries clearly laid out.

1) Draft Treaty of Mutual Assistance – 1923

a. would have required all members to come to the aid of another member to an extent that was determined by the League Council.

b. France supported it; Britain did not.

d) why collective security failed:

i) asked nations to surrender their freedom, to enforce treaties not related to their national interest, or even against their national interest.

ii) not very collective if three of the major powers are absent.



THE GAP IN THE BRIDGE.

This cartoon was originally published in *Punch*, London, 10 December 1919.

2. collective responsibility

a) support economic and humanitarian issues.

b) support departments created:

i) mandates commission

ii) drugs department to end drug trafficking

iii) slavery commission

iv) refugee department

v) est. of International Court of Justice in The Hague

vi) est. of International Labour Organization to improve working conditions and the rights of workers.

Q4: How could the League make a country do what it wanted?

A: It had three main powers. It could use:



- MORAL CONDEMNATION – criticising the actions of the aggressor (the nation which was attacking another nation)



- economic SANCTIONS – cutting off important supplies like oil

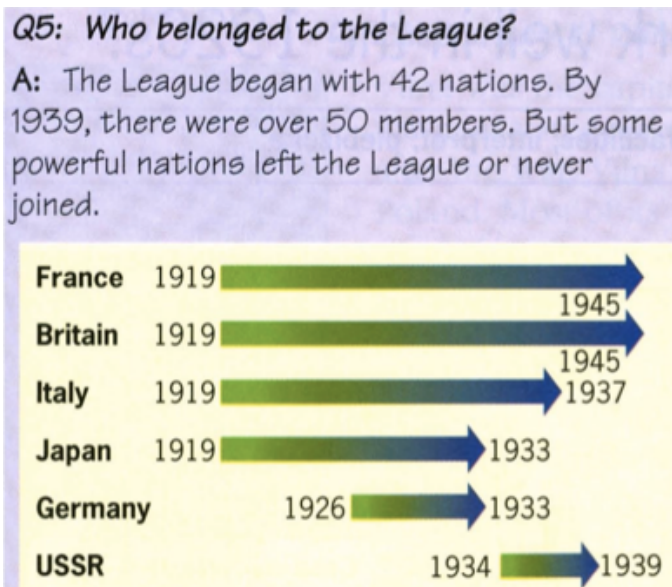


- armed force – using force against the aggressor.

What are the effects of the absence of the major powers?

A. Absence of the defeated states

- i. did not fit with the idea of reconciliation or magnanimity
- ii. League symbolized the Treaty of Versailles, the victors' treaty, the victors' league.
- iii. excluding USSR increased its hostility to the west and fueled suspicion that the West wanted it destroyed.



B. Absence of the USA

i. only power that left WWI in a far stronger position than when it entered

ii. only power with the ability to enforce Versailles or the League decisions.

iii. credibility of the League and collective security was severely damaged.

1. gave support to other countries who did not want to follow the Covenant.



Q6: What about the USA?

A: The USA never joined! The League may have been President Wilson's big idea, but he could not get the rest of the USA to agree with him. The US Congress (Parliament) did not want the USA to get involved in sorting out problems in the rest of the world. This view became known as ISOLATIONISM.

This was a real setback for the League. Everybody knew that the League needed the USA's money and troops so that it could work effectively.

C. Absence of three of the Great Powers: USA, Germany and the USSR

- i. limited the strength that could be used to solve a crisis
- ii. had no input into the decisions and therefore no reason to support the league's actions.
- iii. excluding Germany and Russia meant that their objections could not be addressed through negotiation.

1. Treaty of Rapallo

- a) agreement between Germany and USSR to cooperate militarily and economically.
- b) Germany was able to rearm and train soldiers in the USSR, thus avoiding the disarmament provisions in the Treaty of Versailles.

iv. reduced the effectiveness of sanctions: moral or economic, if these countries did not comply with them.

v. diminished the prestige of the League

1. Washington Conference was led by the USA

2. Locarno Treaty was made between France and Germany.

3. thus, the major peace conferences were negotiated without League organization or leadership.

vi. diminished cooperation among countries within the league

1. Britain sought security through returning to isolation

a) would not bind itself to intervention in Europe w/o American support.

2. British and French differed in their attitude towards the treaty.

a) French wanted the League to enforce the Versailles Treaty

b) British wanted to soothe relations with Germany

i) wanted it to be economically strong for trade and

ii) to balance the power on the continent

League Members throughout the World



The League of Nations, 1919-39

- Original member states
- Joined in 1920 (by invitation)
- Joined later (showing date of joining) 1923
- Colonies of member states
- Withdrew later (showing date of withdrawal) 1936
- Mandate territories
- Non-member states

Europe-key to numbers

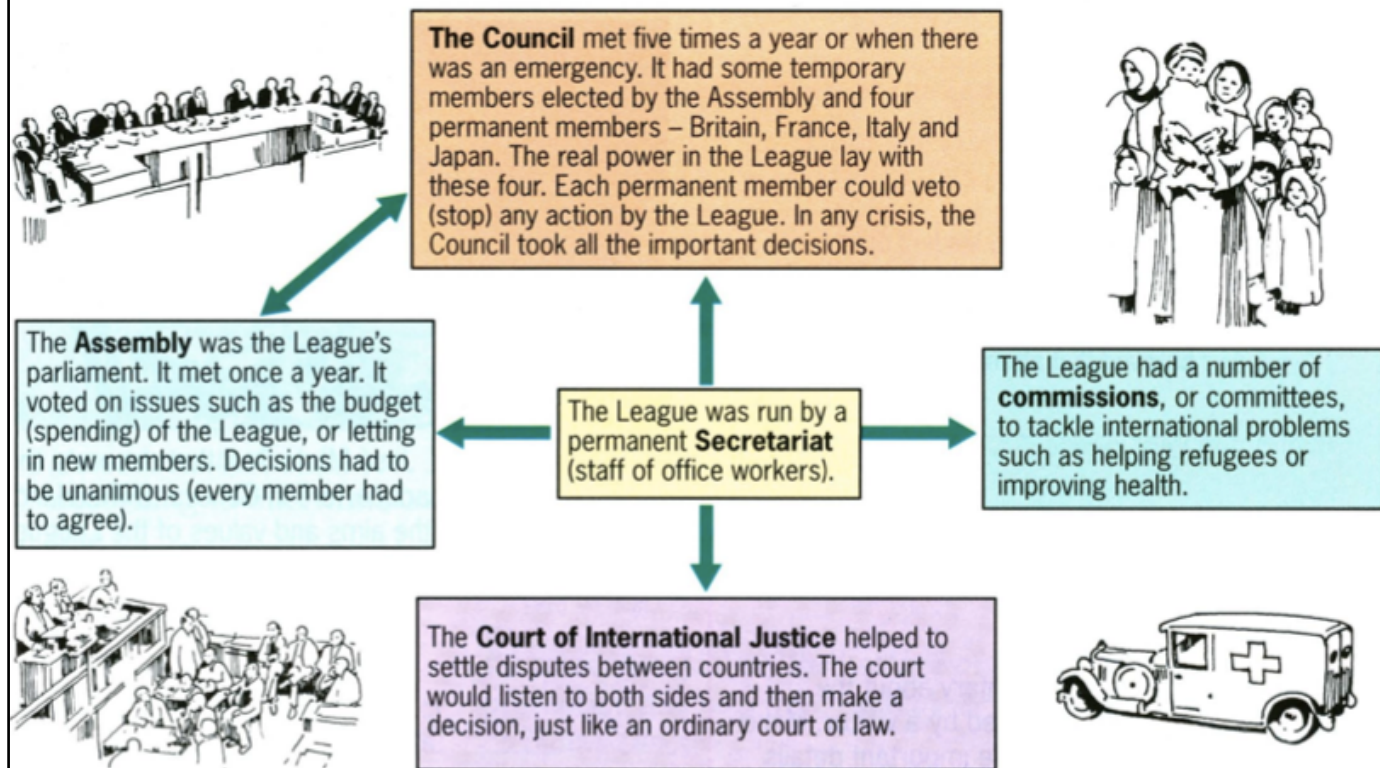
1 Belgium	} Original member states	9 Switzerland	1920
2 Czechoslovakia		10 Estonia	1921
3 Italy 1937		11 Latvia	1921
4 Yugoslavia		12 Lithuania	1921
5 Albania		13 Hungary	1922
6 Austria		14 Germany	1926 1933
7 Bulgaria		15 Luxembourg	1929
8 Netherlands			

Alaska (USA)
CANADA
UNITED STATES
MEXICO 1931
CUBA
DOMINICAN REP. 1924
HAITI
PANAMA
VENEZUELA 1936
COLOMBIA
PERU 1939
CHILE 1926
ARGENTINA
BOLIVIA 1926
PARAGUAY 1935
URUGUAY

ICELAND
NORWAY
SWEDEN
FINLAND 1920
USSR - entered 1934, expelled 1939 after invasion of Finland
UNITED KINGDOM
DEN. 12 11
EIRE 14
POLAND
FRANCE 15
ROM. 13
TURKEY 7
AFGHAN 1934
INDIA
SAUDI ARABIA
EGYPT 1937
IRAQ 1932
IRAN 1934
MONGOLIA
TIBET
CHINA
JAPAN 1933
PHILIPPINES (USA)
SIAM
ABYSSINIA 1923 (Italian 1936)
LIBERIA
SOUTH AFRICA
AUSTRALIA
NEW ZEALAND

SOURCE 3

How did the League Work?



How the League of Nations was organised.

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

Europe, 1923



D. Early Attempts at Peacekeeping 1920-25

i. Successes

1. Aaland Islands, 1920

a) Sweden and Finland claimed ownership of these islands.

b) issue was referred to the League, which gave ownership to Finland



2. Upper Silesia, 1921

a) land on the Polish and German border had a mixed population

b) League held a plebiscite that saw 700 000 vote in favour of Germany and 480 000 vote for Poland

c) League decided to share area with Germany getting over half the land population; Poles had most of the industry.

d) caused bitterness with Germany, but both accepted the decision.



3. Greek-Bulgarian War, 1925

a) Greek army invaded Bulgaria

b) League ordered a stoppage to fighting and for a withdrawal.

c) League threatened sanctions when Greeks seemed like they were not going to do it.

d) League inquiry found Greeks at fault and imposed a fine; both sides accepted the inquiry's findings.



ii. Failures:

1. Seizure of Fiume

a) occupied by an Italian adventurer and poet, Gabriele D'Annunzio, and held for 18 months

b) eventually was made into a free state in the Treaty of Rapallo (1920) between Italy and the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (later renamed Yugoslavia)

c) by 1924, a new treaty signed in Rome gave the area to Italy.



Gabriele D'Annunzio addressing his forces at Fiume in 1920

Where's Fiume?



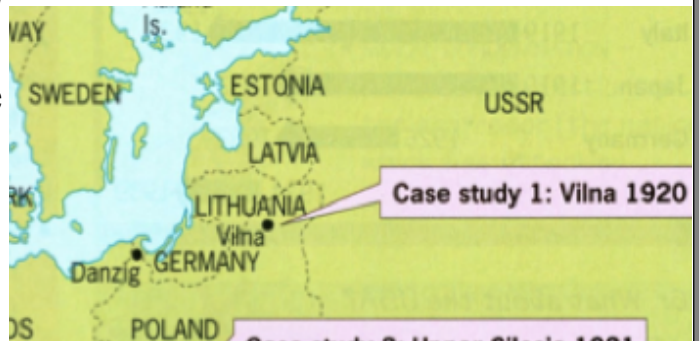
2. Vilna, 1920 (Poland vs. Lithuania)

a) dispute over the city of Vilna, which both claimed, but was in the hands of Lithuania since 1918.

b) mainly inhabited by Poles, but was the capital of Lithuania.

c) Polish army seized the town and ignored demands from the League to withdraw so a plebiscite could be arranged.

d) Conference of Ambassadors decided Poland was allowed to keep Vilna, bypassing the League.



3. Russo-Polish War, 1919-1920

a) Bolsheviks saw Poland as an obstacle to spread communism and a threat to its territory.

b) initially Poland did well and captured Kiev.

c) by summer of 1920, Bolsheviks were outside Warsaw alarming the west.

d) Poles were able to counterattack successfully and signed the Treaty of Riga, 1921.

i) borders of Poland were further to the east than the Peacemakers in Paris had recommended.



4. Corfu incident, 1923

a) five Italian surveyors were killed on the Greek side of the border while mapping the border between it and Albania.

b) Benito Mussolini demanded compensation from the Greeks even though no hard evidence existed that they were to blame.

c) Greeks refused and Mussolini bombed and occupied the Greek island of Corfu.

d) The League wanted to condemn the actions of Italy, but France and Britain, not wanting to upset Italy, refused to allow it.

e) instead, Britain and France put pressure on Greece to pay the compensation and apologize, which it did.



5. Ruhr Invasion, 1923

a) France and Belgium occupied the Ruhr in 1923 when Germany fell behind in its reparation payments.

b) France made it clear that they'd leave the League before withdrawing from the Ruhr Valley.



iii. Therefore:

1. League usually successful against small-medium powers, but not against major powers or when powers were determined to use violence.

LEAGUE OF NATIONS



SOCIETE DES NATIONS

The main reasons for the failure of the League of Nations can be summarised into the following points:

1. Not all countries joined the League.

Although the idea for the League of Nations had come from Woodrow Wilson, there was a change of government in the United States before the signing of the treaty and the new Republican government refused to join. As a punishment for having started World War One, Germany was not allowed to join and Russia was also excluded due to a growing fear of Communism. Other countries decided not to join and some joined but later left.

2. The League had no power.

The main weapon of the League was to ask member countries to stop trading with an aggressive country. However, this did not work because countries could still trade with non-member countries. When the world was hit by depression in the late 1920s countries were reluctant to lose trading partners to other non-member countries.

3. The League had no army.

Soldiers were to be supplied by member countries. However, countries were reluctant to get involved and risk provoking an aggressive country into taking direct action against them and failed to provide troops.

4. Unable to act quickly.

The Council of the League of Nations only met four times a year and decisions had to be agreed by all nations. When countries called for the League to intervene, the League had to set up an emergency meeting, hold discussions and gain the agreement of all members. This process meant that the League could not act quickly to stop an act of aggression.

Taken directly from:
<http://www.historyonthenet.com/WW2/causes.htm>