

The successes and failures of the league of nations assignment

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During the 1920's the League of Nations primary desire was to end war across all fronts and to promote international co-operation. Therefore the best criteria that can be used to classify a success, was whether war was avoided and a peaceful settlement formulated after a crisis between two or more nations. Although this aim was the most important the league also tried to help economic problems in other countries. This applied to the economic collapse of Austria and Hungary between 1922-3. When Austria-Hungary faced bankruptcy the league organised loans for them and slowly they were able to begin economic recovery due to the League's aid.

As stopping conflict was a priority for the league their first success was sorting out The Aaland Islands. These islands are near enough equal distant between Finland and Sweden. They had traditionally belonged to Finland but most of the islanders wanted to be governed by Sweden. Neither Sweden nor Finland could come to a decision as to who owned the islands and in 1921 they asked the League to adjudicate. The League's decision was that they should remain with Finland but that no weapons should ever be kept there. Both countries accepted the decision and it remains in force to this day.

Their Second judgement fell when Upper Silesia was wanted by both Poland and Germany during 1921. The Treaty of Versailles had given the people of Upper Silesia the right to have a referendum on whether they wanted to be part of Germany or part of Poland. In this referendum, 700, 000 voted for Germany and 500, 000 for Poland. This close result resulted in rioting between those who expected Silesia to be made part of Germany and those who wanted to be part of Poland. The League was asked to settle this

dispute. After a six-week inquiry, the League decided to split Upper Silesia between Germany and Poland.

The League's decision was accepted by both countries and by the people in Upper Silesia. The League of Nations final settlement involved the Greek/Bulgarian dispute in 1925. In 1925, sentries patrolling this border fired on one another and a Greek soldier was killed. The Greek army invaded Bulgaria as a result. The Bulgarians asked the League for help and the League ordered both armies to stop fighting and that the Greeks should pull out of Bulgaria. The League then sent experts to the area and decided that Greece was to blame and fined her ? 45, 000. Both nations accepted the decision.

During The League of Nations reign they put together some agencies to handle the different areas to make the world a better place, UNICEF as a modern day example. These agencies set up their own plans and pacts to change things for the better and make things fairer for all. At the end of the First World War the Allies demanded from the Central Powers compensation for all the damage that was done during the conflict. An Allied Reparations Committee was set up and in 1921 it reported that Germany should pay ? 6, 600. 000 million in annual instalments. Later on, in 1924 what was known as the Dawes Plan began to investigate the problem.

An American Banker named Charles Dawes was sent by the ARC to write a report on it. His results followed: Germany did not have to pay for two years. The amount they had to pay was reduced and France was forced to remove any troops from the Ruhr. The Dawes Plan was initially a great success. The

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currency was stabilized and inflation was brought under control. Large loans were raised in the United States and this investment resulted in a fall in unemployment. Germany was also able to meet their obligations under the Treaty of Versailles for the next five years.

The Wall Street Crash created problems for the German economy and so a new commission under another banker, Owen Young, was set up to consider reparations in 1929. Cleverly Called the Young Plan, A review of reparations again reduced the level of reparations by a whopping 75%. America hoped these reductions would stop the Germans hating the Treaty of Versailles so much. Although the plan was accepted by all the governments concerned it was severely criticized in Germany by right-wing politicians such as politicians like Adolf Hitler and Alfred Hugenberg.

The Locarno Pact in 1924 saw foreign ministers of France, Britain and Germany meet in Switzerland to discuss matters including the request of Gustav Stresemann for a mutual guarantee of the Rhineland which was met with the approval of Aristide Briand; under the leadership of Briand, Stresemann, and Austen Chamberlain. This lead to the signing of a series of treaties of mutual guarantee and arbitration. The “ Spirit of Locarno” symbolized hopes for an era of international peace and goodwill. In 1936, denouncing the Locarno Pact, Hitler remilitarized the Rhineland.

Other attempts to keep the peace included the Kellogg Briand Pact in 1928 and the Disarmament Conference in 1932. Unfortunately they failed to live up to their purpose. The Kellogg Briand Pact promised to end war and in this sense it made no immediate contribution to international peace either. I

proved to be ineffective in the years to come. First of all the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931, the Italian invasion of Ethiopia from 1935-6, and the German invasion of Poland, were prime examples of this. 61 Countries met in Geneva for the Disarmament Conference.

The main conflict was that the USSR wanted all countries to disarm but Germany wanted all countries to have equal arms instead. As a consequence to this the conference failed as no agreement could be made. There were three main reasons for the League of Nations lack of success throughout the 1920s and 30s as a peace-keeping organisation. These were obvious weaknesses of organisation, a lack of army and the economic depression throughout the 1930's. First of all there was numerous weakness of the League of Nations. They all were a part of the organisations eventual downfall.

First of all the biggest weakness was probably the fact that the United States refused to join as they were an extremely powerful nation and would have had a lot to say. They were seen as the 'keystone' of the league and seemed strange that they didn't join even though it was Woodrow Wilson's idea anyway. Secondly the League of Nations also seemed to have a weakness in not accepting Germany in the League. This gave the impression that the League were the victors of WWI, with Britain and France together as an alliance, this kept the German people bitter and still wanting revenge.

Other lesser weaknesses of the League included their dependence on members for funds and not other sources. The LoN was seen to have another significant weakness; this was that it did not possess an army of its own, and

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that if it wanted an army to stand up to a troublesome country, it must raise an army from member countries. This became ineffective, as many member countries were very unwilling to raise an army and physically challenge a country, as they were afraid that it would affect their own self-interests. This was just the case when Italy decided to invade Abyssinia in 1935.

No one tried to stop them as the League was still deciding what to do. Italy took it on themselves to invade as planned so the Abyssinian forces didn't stand a chance. Also in Manchuria as most of their people lived in so called 'barbarianism' Japan saw it as an easy target without the sufficient protection from the League and not having its own force left it defenceless. Lastly, The League of Nations was weakened again by the Great Depression that hit the world in the years following the Wall Street Crash. At a time of economic crises it meant that the League had trouble imposing sanctions especially at this time.

This meant that countries like Japan and Italy were able to annex other countries without effective punishment. In Conclusion I agree with the statement that reads weaknesses of The League, A lack of army and economic depression were all equally important reasons for the lack of success of the League of Nations as a peace keeping organisation. This is because all the statements tie in with each other. First of all if the great depression didn't occur then Japan wouldn't have invaded Manchuria because after the economic slump the Japanese lost faith in the government and turned to the army to find a solution.

The army invaded Manchuria in China, an area rich in minerals and resources. The League then called for countries to stop trading with Japan but because of the depression many countries did not want to risk losing trade and did not agree to the request. The League then made a further call for Japan to withdraw from Manchuria but Japan's response was to leave the League of Nations. So instead of taking it into their own hands and helping China by sending troops they just asked them to leave and this ties in with the lack of army available to the League. This is why I believe all were equal as reasons of failure as a peace-keeping organisation.