

Reviewing the failure of the league of nations history essay



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The League of Nations was formed after the World War I. From the point of the US's president Woodrow Wilson, the only way to prevent the world from the huge conflict, was to create an organisation to promote international peace and security - the League of Nations. It was the first organisation, whose main aim was to prevent sovereign countries from the war. The League's failure to prevent the outbreak of the World War II in 1939 did not destroy the belief in the need of the universal organization, instead, it was good experience and a chance to learn from the mistakes of the past and to build new body, better equipped to maintain international peace in the future. This body was the United Nations. In this essay, i would like to explain why the League of Nations failed and how The United Nations work today to avoid this experience in future.

The League of Nations seemed to be a very good and new idea in the post-war world. Countries wanted to stay in peace and start over international relations in Europe, and in the world as well. When The USA came into the war in 1917, they were surprised and terrified by the mass that had taken place in what was meant to be a civilised society. Woodrow Wilson was liberalist, who believed in democracy, freedom and peace. His Fourteen points was the mixture of international and domestic interests. It took many principles of progressivism than had produced domestic reforms in The USA, like free trade, open agreements, democracy and self-determination of the states. However, the last point was about creating an institution, whose goal was to prevent war through collective security, settling disputes between countries through negotiations, diplomacy and improving global welfare.

„ The League of Nations was not a move toward world goverment in which a

higher authority could commit the member states . It was not the end of the anarchic system of states, but an effort to make the states collectively discipline unruly members of the system.”(Understanding International Conflict, fifth edition, Joseph S. Nye, Jr.) However, the League lacked an armed force on its own and was dependent on Great Powers to enforce its resolution, keep the sanctions, ordered by the League of Nations, or provide an army for League to use, when it will need it. But they were very reluctant to do so. Benuto Mussolini said that „ The League of Nations is very well when the sparrows shout, but not good at all when eagles fall out.” Anyway, the League did have successes but some early failures as well. In 1930’s it showed its incapability to prevent agression by the Axis Powers. And the onset of the World War II showed that League failed its main goal- prevention the world from the war. However it was not surprising, because, first of all, two most powerful countries were not its members-the United States and Russia. Britain and France were not strong enough to impose pace on their own. Secondly, their sunctions did not work, there was no clear division of responsibility between the League Council, its main executive committee, and the League Assembly, which included all member states. They were only able to make recommendations. In addition, it was not that strong to make countries like Germany, Italy and Japan obey their constitution. However, in 1920s it was succesful with small, weak countries, but powerful countries like Germany, Italy and Japan ignored the League in some way. They were too strong for the League to stop them. Actually, the League’s main countries let it down. Japan and Italy defied and left the League, and France and Britain betrayed it. In addition, the world-wide depression in1930s made countries get more land and power. They were worried about themselves, not about <https://assignbuster.com/reviewing-the-failure-of-the-league-of-nations-history-essay/>

world peace. And the more League failed, the less people trusted it. In the end, everybody just ignored it.

On the 24 October 1945 the United Nations was established. During the World War II world witnessed death and destruction, made possible by the harnessing of advanced technologies in the instruments of war. The United states used atomic bombs against Japan, and all nations, gripped with horror of the war got together and established The United Nations Organisation. The name and the structure of it came from the thoughts of President Roosevelt, and was quite similar to the structural organisation of the United States. This new institution continued of the League of Nations goal and was set up to correct its previous problems. However, the differences between the League of Nations and The United Nations start with the circumstances of their creation. First, when the Covenant of the League formulated, war was already over, but the main features of the UN were elaborated when the WWII was still in progress. Secondly, the Covenant was created under the circumstances of the Paris Peace Conference and Peace Treaty with Germany. When the UN charter was drafted as an independent legal instrument at the conference especially convened for the purpose. Third, the Covenant was hammered out behind closed doors, by the five major powers that time- the UK, France, Italy, Japan and the USA. The final text of the United Nations Charter was the product of combined efforts of 50 nations represented at the 1945 San Francisco Conference and therefore the views of the smaller nations were taken into account, especially their concern to give the new organization far-reaching responsibilities in promoting economic and social cooperation and the independence of colonial peoples.

The structure of the United Nations included six main organs: the Security Council, the General Assembly, The Secretariat, the Economic and Social Council, the Trusteeship Council, and the International Court of Justice. When the main bodies on the League of Nations were only three: Assembly, Council and Secretariat. So, the structure of the UN was improved and intended to avoid problems faced by the League of Nations. Today, It's been almost 60 years of the United Nations existence. It had to cope with different international conflicts, security conflicts ranging from the Cold War and post-Cold War period, global terrorism of the Islamic Jihad variety as exemplified by the Al Qaeda, Taliban and Pakistan state-sponsored terrorism against India in Jammu and Kashmir. However, taking in account that in the early 1990s the UN agenda for peace and security expanded quickly, it has failed in many ways as well. First of all, it was not able to prevent world from conflicts and wars broke out all over the world, e. g. Korean War, Vietnam War, Soviet military occupation of Afghanistan, the United States sponsored Islamic Jihad via Pakistan on Afghanistan against the Soviets, the three Gulf Wars and the wars leading to the break up of Yugoslavia. Secondly, Nuclear Proliferation and Disarmament issue. The Nuclear Proliferation should have been top-most priority, but, nowadays, China assists to Pakistan in development of nuclear weapons and helps North Korea in building up long-range and nuclear capable missiles. Furthermore, the United Nations today, mostly pay attention to humanitarian, health, education and cultural fields, spending money not on solving global and important problems, but on various committee meetings and honorariums to their select members which have no connection at all with global security. However, it definitely succeeded in its economic and social work, but the predominance of United

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States military power and the possibility that the USA will act in its own way, without UN participation might lead to different consequences. Therefore, all of the above could lead to the failure of the United Nations, as an effective instrument for conflict prevention and global security. Nevertheless, the United Nations are going to face a lot of future challenges. Probably it will not be global wars but more of asymmetric type of wars, limited wars, insurgencies and terrorism. They might be driven by religion or ethnic genocide. Today religious conflicts are possible in Middle East and Africa, maybe in East Asia and South-West Asia as well. Therefore, the United Nations work on the improvements of its peacekeeping capacity. Many meetings and debates were held, in order to understand and solve issues, world faces today. First of all, UN must encourage countries to work together and stimulate all member states to be involved in the process. Secondly, they have to develop more comprehensive approach, involving government in their actions, and invest money in prevention of the problem. Also, the United Nations must pay attention to the roots of the conflict and try to keep state sovereignty. Finally, in case of the conflict, they should find a solution, beneficial for both sides, approach to the specific requirements of individual situations keeping the national priorities and perspectives in the forefront. If the UN keep going in the same direction, it may avoid the same failure, as its predecessor faced.

In a conclusion, The United Nations has done important work in key economic and social areas, but it should concentrate more on its main goal-security. However, taking into account the experience of the League of nations, nobody can be sure, whether any organisation is able to prevent the

war. All states and all leadures are egoistic and everything, in some meaning, comes from human nature. Simply, if the nations want peace, the League gives them the way by which peace can be kept. League or no League, a country which is determined to have a war can always have it.(The 1930s historian H. A. L. Fisher sums up the failure of the League in his book, A History of Europe (1938)