

Issues with the league of nations assignment

[History](#)



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Issues with the League of Nations After World War I an organization was formed to try and make sure that another horrific war would not occur again. This organization was called The League of Nations, and it had some great ideas to help and prevent another war, but as history shows just a mere 20 years later World War II was beginning. The League of Nations had failed and Europe was in another total war that would take up the next 6 years of Europe's History.

I believe that The League of Nations failed because it had a lack of involvement from contributing countries, unable to act quickly, and no terms of enforcement which ultimately led to the Second World War. After World War I there was a peace conference held in 1919, located in Paris. At this conference political delegates met from the Allied Powers. There was a rush to get things done because they all knew that a new era must begin quick because not only did the war take millions of lives it also effected the ones that were still alive.

The League of Nations was the project of the United States President, Woodrow Wilson. He believed that it was his job to figure out a way to keep peace in Europe. Wilson's belief was the same for a man as it was a nation, and this was his thought on how international affairs should be handled (Scott). Wilson believed that all problems could be handled by sitting down and talking without the force of violence, but usually this was only for white men other races were not capable in participating in this civilized manner. Believing this, Wilson proposed his plan for the League of Nations.

The league would be composed of multiple predominately white countries from Europe. The design would allow these countries to sit down and discuss the issues at hand and dissolve any problems that were occurring. This was great in theory, but many people thought that it might be too good to be true. In an article by Klaus Schwabe he describes how many people felt about the plan being proposed by Wilson and stated, “ In spite of his deep disillusionment Wilson did not feel compelled to revise his universalist conception of the future League,” (Schwabe 6).

The League of Nations was based in Geneva, Switzerland because this was one of the countries that were neutral during World War I. This was chosen to give a sense of security to the world’s people that what happened during World War I would never occur again. “ Woodrow Wilson said of the Covenant, with his instinct for forgoing the historically memorable phrase, ‘ A living thing is born,’ ” (Scott p. 38). Even though Wilson was not there to see the creation of the League of Nations, because he was no longer President of the United States, he had tried to facilitate world peace.

This world peace talk gave every nation’s citizens a sense of relief that this would be the answer to never having another world war occur. The idea of the League of Nations was when there was a dispute the League committee would meet and decide what could be done to stop the arguing and try and dissolve the problem without the thought of war. If the nations were not cooperation actions would be taken to make sure that conflict could be avoided.

The first big issue that faced the League of Nations was before it was fully an organization in 1919, which was the League, did not have full participation to follow the guidelines that were formed by the founding members of the Paris Conference. The United States was considered the most powerful nation in the world at this time, and its involvement in the League of Nations was crucial. To be a part of the League of Nations, Woodrow Wilson would have to persuade Congress to agree that this was best for the country; and this was not going to be an easy task.

Members of Congress held many different opinions on this situation. Some members of Congress, especially the Senate felt extreme isolationism, and felt it necessary to keep the United States concerns within the United States. Others believed that the Covenant that was agreed upon in Paris was too weak and would not ever be able to create peace, (Scott 77-97). Having this many different opinions in the Senate made it impossible for the United States to join the League of Nations: therefore, America did not join.

This was just the beginning of the League of Nations, and instantly they do not have the support of the United States, but in Europe there were also many instances of low participation in the ideals that the League of Nations had been founded upon. During World War I many large empires suffered a major collapse which left newly created minority groups throughout Europe searching for an identity, and the League thought that was an issue that they must address.

In the heyday of Wilsonian liberalism, the minorities policy with which the League of Nations came to be associated, and which seems to me to remain

an experiment of abiding interest, involved keeping minorities where they were and offering the protection of international law, rather than uprooting and resettling them elsewhere, (Mazower 49). This was good in theory, but for this to be successful the countries had to follow the protocol of helping and offering protection to the minorities to enable them to be successful citizens in society.

This was crucial for it to work because with the collapse of the empires there were many countries that had a large minority group and could be facing civil war. By mid-1919 Poland was only two-thirds Polish from an ethnic point of view. Despite bitter protests, the new Polish government was obliged to guarantee certain rights to its minorities as a condition of recognition: they included equality of treatment under the law and religious freedoms as well as rights to certain forms of collective organization in the educational and cultural spheres.

The Polish Minorities Treaty was guaranteed by the League of Nations, which apparently meant that complaints could be brought to Geneva (Mazower 50). This was common throughout all of Europe because something had to be done to protect the rights of the minorities, and this treaty like many others was the best way to get the support that was needed. The minorities could send petitions to Geneva to be looked over and have the League decide on the individual cases. This was something that would be difficult for the League to be able to uphold and enforce due to the lack of support that was within the League.

The reason the lack of support created such a problem in enforcing the minority rules was that within the League, “ The Great Powers were happy to interfere in the internal affairs of ‘ new’ states but allowed no meddling in their own affairs,” (Mazower 53). This made them hesitant to get involved in any minority affairs because they knew that they were not addressing them in their own countries. To be able to look at individual cases of minorities throughout all of Europe it takes a lot of man power and time in which the League had neither.

In the article The League of Nations and the Minorities Question, Carole Fink writes, “ The minorities and their advocates expected that the League would exceed the Great Powers’ hesitant gestures; the minority states retained their opposition to any system whatsoever. And the newly-formed Council, without the United States, Germany, or Soviet Russia, scarcely constituted a powerful agency for minority protection, especially when its two leading members- Britain and France- sparred over almost every detail in the peace settlement,” (Fink 99-200). The minority issue is an obvious example of how the lack of participation by the countries involved, and how the countries that were not involved allowed the League of Nations to be a failure from the very beginning. Another occurrence of lack of participation from the involving countries had to deal with the Locarno agreement that was part of the Treaty of Versailles. The Locarno agreement promised to keep German troops out of Rhineland, and if they did not abide by this agreement European Forces agreed to push them out.

This agreement from the European forces was made through the League of Nations and was also supposed to be monitored by them as well. In 1935,
<https://assignbuster.com/issues-with-the-league-of-nations-assignment/>

Adolf Hitler decided to test the League of Nations and take back Rhineland for Germany: On March 5th, Anthony Eden reported to the Cabinet that, in the event of a German move in the Rhineland, France would not act alone. Flandin had been pressing Britain for Assurance that even if Italy were to renege, the British would still honor their Locarno obligations.

The French, for their part, while taking necessary steps as a preliminary to military action, intended to make their first move through the League Council. That is what happened. Preparatory measures taken by the French Army led to speculation that France intended to drive the German troops out of Rhineland again, as she was entitled to do under the Locarno agreement. But their government went to the League instead.

That decision, and inaction followed upon it proved to Hitler that he had been right in taking a gamble and his advisers had been wrong and, until September 1939, he was to repeat the lesson over and over again, (Scott 297-298). The reason France was not going to do anything alone was because they feared to get involved in another war. This made them ask for additional help, but with the great depression and World War 1 still in the thoughts of the countries there was going to be very few countries willing to do anything against Germany.

This showed the lack of participation by the contributing countries, and also began to make the citizens of these countries doubt the League. The League was an organization that was formed to ensure it stayed peaceful throughout Europe, but when the contributing countries continue to not participate on what was agreed then it makes it hard for anything to be

accomplished. The next issue I found to be a large problem for the League of Nations was its severe lack of power and ability to act quickly.

The League of Nations as stated before had great ideals and thoughts on how the way the world should work, but the only problem was that how were they going to enforce these agreements. Because the League of Nations did not have an armed force they had to rely on either each individual country's military or use economic sanctions. The plan for the League of Nations to enforce sanctions was going to rely on boycotts against the resisting nation. The boycotts sounded like it would be the best thing to make sure peace would stay intact, and be able to force the resisting nation into forfeiting the conflict that was arising.

The reason the conflicting nation would put a stop to the arising conflict is because contributing nations in the League of Nations would boycott all goods produced in that country and stop all trade. As stated before it was a good plan, but during the time that this was being exposed the most the world was in the Great Depression and no nation could afford to stop trading with any country because of the economic crisis that the nations were in. (Scott)

Also, without the threat of a military then no resisting nation had to fear the League because all they could do was basically tell them to stop instead of actually bringing arms against the conflicting nation. This was something that was stated above about France and Britain when Germany was about going into Rhineland. France wanted to bring arms against Germany, but would not do it without another country's help for a couple of reasons. First,

the thought of another major war for the citizens and the government at this time was something that had to be avoided.

Second, they also felt that it was not their place to be the only military in the League of Nations to do something against Germany even though they had all decided on the Locarno agreement. This showed great weakness in the League because now not only did they not have a military to enforce sanctions on a resisting nation, the group of nations that were involved with the League of Nations was not working together to ensure peace. An assumption is that if the United States would have backed the League of Nations they would have been much more powerful due to their military power, but that was not the case.

When Wilson was proposing the League of Nations he felt that there was no need for a military because in his eyes there was no need for violence. Wilson as stated before felt that white men could sit down and have a civilized conversation and resolve all problems which was obviously not the case. That is the reason everyone was relying on the boycott technique to ensure peace, but also in their fear to make sure their country was not forcing another war.

The last way the enforcement of sanctions from the League of Nations was weak is the amount of time it takes for the League to decide and react to situations. With the head of the League being in Geneva, it was difficult for a group of leaders to get together in a timely matter to meet after a conflict had arose to decide on sanctions for the resisting country. By the time they had met and made a decision on sanctions, the conflict has already been

going on for many weeks to months making it difficult for them to enforce any sanctions.

This was prevalent in the cases with the minority agreements that were stated above, and also many other cases. When Germany was beginning to rearm their military even though they were not supposed to under the Treaty of Versailles, but the League was unable to act in timely matter for multiple reasons. The League could not determine what they should do to ensure that Germany is taken care of, but also there was always the fear of another great war.

This was especially prevalent in October 1933 when Germany and Hitler decided to leave the League in complete defiance of the League's policy, but there was nothing done about their actions which showed the world that the League was extremely weak. (Mazower 54). Their reasoning goes to the same ones stated above which the fear of another war, but also the League was incapable of determining a certain sanction to act upon and were unable to physically do anything towards Germany.

It is easy for one to see why the League of Nations was such a great idea, and how the citizens of the nation's felt a sense of security when the League was put in place. After World War I the nations in Europe were mentally distraught because no war had ever been fought like that and many did not know how to cope with what had been done. This was especially prevalent in the citizens of these countries after World War I and as stated in *The Rise and Fall of the League of Nations*, George Scott explains that the leaders of the countries of Europe, " were driven by the demands of their ar-sick

peoples. It was their job to usher in the new era, when, all over the world there would be peace," (Scott 11). The fact that the nations were in such a rush to develop an organization with such magnitude as the League of Nations explains why there were so many faults that ultimately led to the failure. This indecisiveness of the League of Nations in the categories explained above led to, "moral erosion, or exhaustion, brought about unrest and the vicious circle of revolt and oppression that paved an easy way for authoritarian regimes," (Garces 12).

This explains the way that many governments made the switch to authoritarian style governments because there was no sense of security within some of the nation's society which made an authoritarian style government look appealing to the citizens. This type of leadership that was brought about especially in Germany seemed to be the best way for many of their citizens and it ultimately led to World War II. ? Works Cited Page Fink, Carole. "" The League of Nations and the Minorities Question. "" World Affairs 157. 4 (1995): 197-205. JSTOR.

Web. . Laura, Garce. "" The League of Nations' Predicament in Southeastern Europe. "" World Affairs 158. 1 (1995): 3-17. JSTOR. Web. . Mazower, Mark. "" Minorities and the League of Nations in Interwar Europe. "" Daedalus 126. 2 (1997): 47-63. JSTOR. Web. . Schwabe, Klaus. " Woodrow Wilson and Germany's Membership in the League of Nations, 1918??? 19. " Central European History 8. 01 (1975): 3. JSTOR. Web. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4545727> Scott, George. The Rise and Fall of the League of Nations. New York: Macmillian, 1973. Print.