

The aims/origins of the League of Nations

When was it founded? Where was it founded? How many members did it have at its peak?

Founded on January 10th 1920 after the Paris Peace Conference that ended World War I (at its peak it had 58 members)

Who developed the LoN?

US President Woodrow Wilson

What was its principal mission?

To Maintain world peace

What was the primary goal?

Prevent wars through collective security and disarmament and settling

What was the plan for the interaction between the members of the LoN?

They were going to respect treaties and maintain good relationships with other nations

What other matters would the LoN be concerned with?

Labour conditions, Treatment of indigenous populations, Human and drug trafficking, Arms dealing, Global health and poverty, Protection of minorities, Prisoners of war

What did the member states supposedly provide?

A system of collective security as a means to prevent wars

How did they see an aggressor?

An aggressor against one member nation would be considered and aggressor against all member nations, thus (supposedly) acting as a deterrent

The aims/origins of the League of Nations (cont)

How did people see the LoN and were they effective?

Many looked to the League as a sense of stability to the world, however, the effectiveness of the LoN in providing a stabilising influence over geopolitics is very debatable

What were the sanctions the LoN could put into place when there were international disputes?

Moral sanctions: condemnation of an action undertaken by a member state. --
Economic sanctions: suspending trade with an offending member state. --
Military sanctions: raise an army to fight an offending member state (the League did not have a military force, and there was no obligation for member nations to provide one, so this threat was often rather empty - and most nations knew this)

How would the sanctions be put into place?

These sanctions would be put into place in that order depending on upon the severity of the offence

Organisation of LoN

Role of the Assembly

All nations that were member nations could have three delegates, but with one vote in the Assembly, which met in September each year. The Assembly dealt with matters such as discussing issues relating to peace and security, the admission of new members, electing non-permanent members to the Council, determining the budget and making amendments to the Covenant.

Organisation of LoN (cont)

Role of the Council

The Council's most important task was to settle international disputes. It met three times a year and reported back to the Assembly annually. The Council consisted of four permanent members – Britain, France, Italy and Japan. The United States was meant to be the fifth member, but the US Senate blocked the United States from becoming a member of the League. Germany was admitted as a member when it was finally allowed to join the League in 1926 (though it left in 1935). The Soviet Union joined in 1934 (but left in 1937). There were 10 non-permanent members who were elected for three-year terms. Australia served as a non-permanent member between 1933 and 1936.

Role of the Secretariat

The Secretary-General of the League of Nations was given the task of setting up the mechanisms to encourage international cooperation. The Secretariat consisted of a large staff, which evolved into an internationally minded civil service that conducted the day-to-day business of the League. The Secretariat was responsible for the administrative work of the League in the publication of its activities. Much of its work was divided into 11 specialised commissions that dealt with - politics, data collection, law, economics and finance, transport, the rights of minorities, the oversight of the mandates, disarmament, health, social problems, international associations.

Successes of the LoN

Czech Foreign Minister, Eduard Beneš (who was a strong supporter of the League) summed up what he thought were League successes up to 1932:

* **The Permanent Court of International Justice** – in Beneš' words, the World Court had 'achieved wonders' and it had become a 'living factor for peace'.

* **Disputes solved** – disputes over the Aland Islands, Vilna, Upper Silesia, Albania and Memel were settled, as well as more serious conflicts between Greece and Italy (1923) and Greece and Bulgaria (1925). These were settled either by the Court or by arbitration.

* **Humanitarian work** – Beneš believed that the League had made great progress in the care of refugees, dealing with epidemics, fighting drugs (especially opium), and the protection of children.

* **Economic and financial cooperation** – Beneš believed that the League had achieved 'remarkable success' in fostering international cooperation in this area.

* **Disarmament** – Beneš believed that the International Disarmament Conference, which had just commenced at the time of writing in 1932, had 'achieved a partial yet important success'.

Weaknesses of the LoN

No guarantee of cooperation from other nation

Unable to follow through with all sanctions

Absence of the US (the most powerful nation, blow to LoN's prestige and international power)

Power was weakened when nations left (e.g. when Japan and Italy left)

Weaknesses of the LoN (cont)

Absence of Russia and withdrawal of Germany as they were two hugely powerful countries that were not part of the negotiations, limiting the power of the LoN

Linked with the Treaty of Versailles (that they created), and they were unable to maintain aspects of the treaty making the LoN seem ineffective, invasive and uncaring

The rise of dictators in several member countries weakened the effectiveness of the LoN as there were ideologically nationalist and opposed international intervention in their affairs (League was powerless to act against their aggression - e.g. Japan left LoN when they opposed the invasion of Manchuria)

Way it was organised - decisions had to be unanimous (which is hard when there are so many nations) or offending parties could resume hostilities for the next three months until a decision could be reached

All permanent members had a veto and the Conference of Ambassadors kept overruling the decisions of the council

Diplomacy and Treaties

Washington Conference

The world's largest gathering of naval powers convened in Washington between 1921 and 1922 to conclude three major treaties. In the Five-Power Treaty, it was agreed that the United States, British and Japanese navies should be in the ratio of 5:5:3. The Washington Conference was regarded as a success and had the effect of upholding the status quo in Europe.

Diplomacy and Treaties (cont)

Locarno Pact

German Foreign Minister Gustav Stresemann pursued a liberal policy and was willing to cooperate with the League. In October 1925, the Locarno Pact was signed by Britain, France, Belgium, Italy and Germany. This pact confirmed the existing frontiers and Germany reaffirmed the demilitarisation of the Rhineland. Germany was admitted to the League of Nations in 1926.

Kellogg-Briand Pact

The Kellogg-Briand Pact is also known as the Pact of Paris. It was strongly supported by French Foreign Minister Aristide Briand, who initially proposed a bilateral agreement between the United States and France to outlaw war between them. However, US President Calvin Coolidge and US Secretary of State Frank Kellogg suggested inviting other nations to join. They were later joined by another 62 nations, so that it was signed by most of the countries in the world at that time. The two clauses agreed to were - outlaw war as an instrument of national policy and settle disputes by peaceful means. The Kellogg-Briand Pact was of great symbolic importance. However, there were no actual mechanisms to ensure that nations kept their word. In a time of relative global prosperity in 1928, many people believed that the world had now finally shaken off the effects of World War I and looked forward to international peace and security in the future.

