

League of Nations [Revision Cascade]

Aims of the League of Nations	Achieve international peace	Article 15 promised not to resort to war, and Article 16 promised to unite to act against aggressors ('the community of power')
	International Law	Articles 12–14 set up a Permanent Court of International Justice, and promised to accept arbitration in the event of a dispute
	Mandates	A Mandates Commission looked after Germany's and Turkey's colonies (article 22)
	Improve people's lives and jobs	Articles 23–25 promised to secure fair conditions for workers (International Labour Organisation), and to fight against disease (Health Committee), slavery, drugs and the arms trade
	Disarmament	Articles 8–9 proposed to set up a Disarmament Commission
Membership of the League: facts	Started with 42 members	The League had 42 members at its first Assembly at Geneva, November 1920
	USA was never a member	The Senate rejected the Treaty in Mar 1920, and made separate peace treaties with Germany, Austria and Hungary in Oct 1921
	Enemy powers joined in the 1920s	Austria and Bulgaria joined in 1920, Hungary in 1922, Germany in 1926 (= genuine 'collective security')
	Greatest number 58 in 1934	... including the USSR, which joined in 1934
	Fascist powers left in the 1930s	Japan and Germany left in 1933, Italy in 1937, Austria in 1938, Spain and Czechoslovakia in 1939 (= weakening of the League)
America failed to join: causes	Isolationism	Since the Monroe Doctrine of 1823, the USA had tried to keep out of European affairs
	Deaths	After the slaughter of the First World War, Americans did not want any more US soldiers dragged into European wars
	Cost	American businessmen argued that sanctions would harm the American economy
	Dislike of the old Empires	As a former colony, the US did not want to support the old empires of Britain and France
	German immigrants	America's German immigrants hated the Treaty of Versailles; American politicians did not want to lose their votes

America failed to join: events	Public debate, Sep 1919	Both Wilson and the opponents of the Treaty of Versailles made national tours to advertise their cause; Wilson collapsed and suffered a stroke
	Lodge reservations, 6 Nov 1919	The Senate Foreign Relations Committee proposed to accept the Treaty of Versailles, but with 14 reservations proposed by Senator Lodge
	The Senate rejected the Treaty (first time), 19 Nov 1919	Wilson's supporters defeated the Lodge reservations, but then the Senate rejected original Treaty
	Bipartisan Committee, Jan 1920	Further attempts were made for a compromise by Senators Hitchcock and Taft, supported by Britain and France, but Wilson refused to accept any reservations
	Senate rejected the Treaty (second time), 19 Mar 1920	America made a separate treaty of peace with Germany, Austria and Hungary in October 1921
Organisation of the League	Assembly	The League's main meeting, held once a year; all League nations could attend
	Council	Met 4–5 times a year and in crises. Five permanent members (Britain, France, Italy, Japan, plus Germany after 1926) – each had a veto
	Secretariat	Badly understaffed
	Agencies and Commissions	e.g. International Labour Organisation, Health Committee, Mandates Commission, Slavery Commission, Refugees Committee – also the Permanent Court of International Justice
	Conference of Ambassadors	Informal meetings of the more important countries; not part of the League's official structures, but often made the decisions which the League then agreed – e.g. Corfu, 1923
Stopping war: how might the League stop wars?	Covenant: Article 10	The Members of the League undertake to respect and preserve against external aggression the territorial integrity and existing political independence of all Members of the League
	Collective Security	Countries did not need to build up their armies or go to war because the League would ensure their safety
	Community of Power	Wilson's idea of the nations of the world, organised into a force to keep the peace
	Moral Persuasion	The idea that nations would step back from war when they felt the opposition of the nations in the League to doing so
	Powers of the League – Covenant: Article 11	The League shall take any action that may be deemed wise and effectual to safeguard the peace of nations

Powers of the League	Condemnation	e.g. of Japan in 1932; the idea was that the 'community of power' could exercise 'moral persuasion' which would cause an aggressor to back down
	Arbitration	e.g. between Sweden and Finland over the Aaland Islands in 1921
	Permanent Court of International Justice	Nations could appeal to the court – e.g. the SS Wimbledon case in 1923 – but the court had no powers to enforce its decision
	Sanctions	e.g. the sanctions against Italy over Abyssinia, 1935
	Armed force	The League had the right to use armed force, but never did so, because the member states would have had to pay for their own armies
Peacekeeping: successes in the 1920s	Teschen, 1920	Poland and Czechoslovakia fought over this area, which was rich in coal; in 1920 the League arbitrated on the dispute, splitting the area between the two countries
	Aaland Islands, 1921	The League settled a dispute between Sweden and Finland – after an investigation it said the islands belonged to Finland; Sweden and Finland accepted this
	Silesia, 1921	The League settled a territorial dispute over Upper Silesia (rich in coal) between Germany and Poland – it held a plebiscite and suggested a partition; Germany and Poland agreed
	Bulgaria, 1925	Greece invaded Bulgaria, which appealed to the League; the League ordered Greece to withdraw, which it did
	Iraq, 1926	The Turks demanded Mosul, a part of Iraq (a British mandate) which was rich in oil. The League supported Iraq/ Britain; Turkey agreed (Treaty of Ankara)
Peacekeeping: failures in the 1920s	Vilna, 1920	The Poles captured Vilna (the capital of Lithuania); the League ordered Poland to withdraw but could do nothing when Poland refused
	Invasion of the Ruhr, 1923	French & Belgian troops invaded the Ruhr when the Germans did not pay reparations; the League was not even consulted
	Memel, 1923	Lithuania seized Memel, a German port under League control. The League told Lithuania to leave, but the Conference of Ambassadors gave Memel to Lithuania
	Corfu, 1923	Italy occupied Corfu; Greece appealed to the League, which ordered Mussolini to leave – but the Conference of Ambassadors overruled the League and forced Greece to pay compensation to Italy
	Bolivia, 1928	Chaco War: a border dispute between Paraguay and Bolivia - Paraguay appealed to the League, but Bolivia refused to agree. A ceasefire was brokered by the USA, but full-scale war broke out in 1932

Other successes: in the 1920s	Prisoners of War	400,000 Prisoners of War repatriated
	Permanent Court of International Justice (PCIJ)	Enforced the peace treaties, protected minorities, and judged on matters of international law – still important today
	International Labour organisation (ILO)	Research & advice; Conventions on Minimum Wage and Social Insurance; campaigns on migration, hours of work, women & children -- still important today
	League of Nations Health Organization (LNHO)	Work against leprosy (extermination of mosquitoes); Drugs companies blacklisted
	Kellogg–Briand Pact, 1928	Sixty-five countries signed a treaty renouncing war as a means of national policy
Failure in the 1920s: Disarmament	Article 8	Article 8 of the Covenant: to reduce armaments 'to the lowest point consistent with national safety'.
	Washington Naval Conference, 1921	USA, Britain, and Japan tried to agree limits to their navies; fell apart when Japan demanded parity.
	Temporary Mixed Commission on Armaments, 1921	Started discussing proposals such as prohibiting chemical warfare & the bombing of civilian populations, and limiting artillery & tanks. No decisions.
	Draft Treaty of Mutual Assistance, 1926	Proposed to make a war of aggression illegal; if a country was attacked, all countries of the League would send troops to defend it. Fell apart when Britain refused to commit troops.
	Conference for the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments, 1932-33	In the planning since 1926! Made no progress and fell apart when Hitler demanded parity; he left the Conference and the League. All countries then started to re-arm.
Failure in the 1920s: Reparations	1921: Reparation Commission	Disagreement about the total sum and who should get what. In the end the 'London Schedule' compromise agreed £6.6bn, at at least £50 million a year – the rest as Germany could afford.
	1921 and 1923: Invasions of the Ruhr	Germany defaulted almost immediately. In 1921 French, Belgians and British forces, and in 1923 French and Belgian forces, invaded the Ruhr (the coal-producing area of Germany) ... this ruined the German economy, causing rebellions.
	1924: The Dawes Plan	Germany only had to pay what it could afford (the 'prosperity index'), the terms was extended indefinitely, and the USA gave Germany a huge loan.
	1929: The Young Plan	Agreed a total final sum of £5.6bn, with a schedule of payments until 1988. A loan (the 'Young Bond') was floated. The Reparations Commission was disbanded.
	1932: Lausanne Conference	After the Great Depression, it was proposed to abolish reparations on receipt of a final sum £150 million. It was never ratified, and Hitler stopped paying all reparations
Failures in the 1930s	Manchurian Crisis, 1931–32	The League failed to prevent Japan conquering Manchuria and attacking China
	Abyssinia Crisis, 1935–36	The League failed to prevent Italy conquering Abyssinia
	Rhineland, 7 Mar 1936	The League failed to prevent Hitler re-militarising the Rhineland

	Austria, 11 Mar 1938	The League failed to prevent Hitler annexing Austria
	Second World War, Sep 1939	The League failed to prevent the Second World War
Manchurian Crisis 1931–33: causes	Depression of the 1930s	Thousands of Japanese were impoverished; the Japanese solution was to get land in China
	Co-prosperity sphere	The Japanese wanted to build up an empire in the Pacific which would provide raw materials for Japan's industries
	Army influence in Japan	The army in Japan was growing increasingly powerful; the army in Manchuria ignored the Japanese government and attacked the Chinese
	China was weak	The Chinese leader Chiang Kai-shek was occupied by a war against the Chinese Communists
	Mukden Incident, 18 Sep 1931	A small act of sabotage on the South Manchurian Railway near the town of Mukden gave the Japanese the excuse to blame the Chinese army and invade
Manchurian Crisis: events	Mukden Incident, 18 Sep 1931	A small act of sabotage on the South Manchurian Railway near the town of Mukden; the Japanese, who controlled the railway, blamed the Chinese army, which was stationed nearby
	China appealed to the League, 19 Sep 1931	China appealed to the League, complaining about Japanese aggression
	Manchukuo set up, Feb 1932	After invading Manchuria, the Japanese set up Manchukuo as a puppet state under the deposed Chinese Emperor, Henry Pu Yi
	Lytton Report, Oct 1932	In December 1931, the League appointed a commission led by Lord Lytton to investigate; his report stated that Japan was the aggressor and should leave
	Japan left the League, Mar 1933	Japan refused to accept the Lytton report (Feb 1932) and walked out of the League, led by Matsuoka Yosuke; Japan formally resigned from the League in 1933
Manchurian Crisis: consequences	Japan left the League, Mar 1933	Japan refused to accept the Lytton report (Feb 1932) and walked out of the League, led by Matsuoka Yosuke; Japan formally resigned from the League in 1933
	Japan invaded China, Jul 1937	Japan continued to increase its influence in northern China, ending in war and invasion in 1937
	No sanctions against Japan	... and in fact the great powers continued to cooperate with the Japanese, who were asked to the Disarmament Conference and the World Economic Conference
	The League was weakened	Japan had been one of the major powers in the League, with a seat on the Council
	The League was humiliated	The League was shown to be powerless in the face of a big country
	Depression of the 1930s	Thousands of Italians were impoverished; Mussolini's solution was to get an empire in Africa

Abyssinian Crisis 1935–36: causes	European arrogance	Mussolini argued that the Abyssinians were backward, and that conquest by Italy would 'civilise' them
	Empire-building by Mussolini	Mussolini wanted recreate the old Roman empire
	Manchuria	The Manchurian Crisis had shown that the League was powerless to stop a big nation; Mussolini copied the Japanese
	Wal-Wal Incident, Dec 1934	An army of 1000 Ethiopians clashed with an Italian army which had occupied a fort in Abyssinia in 'disputed' territory
Abyssinian Crisis 1935–36: events	Wal-Wal Incident, Dec 1934	An army of 1000 Ethiopians clashed with an Italian army which had occupied a fort in Abyssinia in 'disputed' territory; Abyssinia appealed to the League, but the League could not make a decision
	Italy conquered Abyssinia, Oct 1935–May 1936	The Italian army used tanks and chemical weapons, and committed atrocities such as attacking hospitals
	Sanctions, Nov 1935	Not on oil or steel, neither was the Suez Canal closed – and sanctions were dropped in July 1936 after the Italians conquered Abyssinia
	Hoare–Laval Pact, Dec 1935	A secret pact between Britain and France to give most of Abyssinia to Italy; it was denounced as a sell-out when it was leaked to the Press
	Haile Selassie appealed to the League, Jun 1936	He was heckled and ignored

Abyssinian Crisis 1935–36: results	Italy left the League, Nov 1937	Mussolini claimed that France and Britain were using the League as a 'screen' to work against Italy
	Italy conquered Abyssinia	Abyssinia became part of Italy's empire in Africa
	Axis alliance	Italy left the 'Stresa Front' alliance (of France, Britain and Italy) against Hitler, and allied instead with Germany (the 'Axis': 1 November 1936)
	The League died	British historian AJP Taylor believed 'the League died in 1935'
	Appeasement	British Prime Minister Chamberlain (June 1936) acknowledged that collective security had failed, and turned instead to appeasement as a way to keep the peace
End of the League: results	'Reform' Committee	Tried to adapt the League to the changed politics of the 1930s. It failed. Britain and a number of other countries contracted out of Article 16. A few countries left
	New foreign policies	Few countries left the League, but they made alliances, re-armed as fast as possible and prepared for war
	Closure	When War broke out in Sept. 1939, the League closed its offices in Geneva
	Terhran Conference, 1943	America, the USSR and Britain agreed to setup a new international organisation - the 'United Nations', when the war finished
	Last meeting	The United Nations came into existence on 24 Oct 1945. On 12 April 1946 the League met and abolished itself
Why the League failed	Overambitious aims	The League's aims (stopping war, disarmament and improving lives) were unachievable, created hopes which could never be fulfilled, and dashed them when it failed
	Weaknesses and failures	The USA never joined. The League's organisation was muddle, and it had no real powers and no army to enforce its decisions. The more the League failed, nations went back to building up their armies and making alliances
	Depression of the 1930s	Economic problems made the fascist powers more expansionist, but France and Britain became desperate to avoid the expense of war
	Betrayed by its members	Japan and Italy defied the League, France and Britain (in the Hoare–Laval Pact of 1935) undermined it
	Impotent against big powers	The League's powers of moral persuasion, arbitration and sanctions were useless against big powers such as Japan, Italy and Nazi Germany

Interpretations: Historiography	Initial Support	Edward A Harriman (1927) called it “one of the most important events in all history”. Frank Walters (1952) argued that the powers were to blame.
	Realism	EH Carr (1940) blamed Wilson’s utopianism, saying it failed to see the reality that powers put their own interests first. Elmer Bendliner called the League “tragicomic” (1975), John Mearsheimer, “a spectacular failure”. Focus on why the League failed.
	AJP Taylor	Taylor (1966) labelled the League “a useless fraud” and an “irrelevance” not worthy of study. Margaret Macmillan (2003): “only a handful of eccentric historians still bother to study the League”.
	Revisionists	Accepted that the League failed to prevent WWII, but Zara Steiner (2005), Peter Yearwood (2009) and Andrew Webster (2012) see it not as a substitute for realism, but as a valuable EXTRA way of multinational diplomacy.
	The ‘Third League of Nations’	Susan Pedersen (2013) found the agencies and committees of the League which dealt with transnational issues (e.g. the PCIJ, ILO, LNHO, Economic Committee, protection of ethnic minorities etc.) “expansive, flexible, creative and successful. Antony Anghie (2004) suggested it laid the foundations of modern global institutions such as the World Bank. Ruth Henig concluded: “a bold step towards international cooperation”.