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# League of Nations and its Failures

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## Abstract:

With the end of the First World War a new epoch began in the history of the International Relations. A permanent general international organization of a nearly universal character came into existence for the first time in 1920. This was known as League of Nations. The purpose of the organization was to maintain universal peace and “to develop cooperation among nations and to guarantee them peace and security”. President Woodrow Wilson of United States of America was one of the powerful advocates of the League. In accordance with President Wilson’s ideals, the Covenant outlined the League of Nations’ three basic objectives: to ensure collective security, to assure functional cooperation, and to execute the mandates of peace treaties.

Keywords: World War, International, Organization, Universal Peace.

## Introduction:

World War I was the most destructive conflict in human history, fought in brutal trench warfare conditions and claiming millions of casualties on all sides. The industrial and technological sophistication of weapons created a deadly efficiency of mass slaughter. The nature of the war was thus one of attrition, with each side attempting to wear the other down through a prolonged series of small-scale attacks that frequently resulted in stalemate.

In the immediate aftermath of the war, American and European leaders gathered in Paris to debate and implement far-reaching changes to the pattern of international relations. The League of Nations was seen as the epitome of a new world order based on mutual cooperation and the peaceful resolution of international conflicts.

## The establishment of the League of Nations:

League of Nations, an organization for international cooperation established on January 10, 1920, at the initiative of the victorious Allied Powers at the end of World War I. The Treaty of Versailles was negotiated at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919, and included a covenant establishing the League of Nations, which convened its first council meeting on January 16, 1920.

The League of Nations came into being after the end of First World War to ensure a war free world. Generally, its name is traced to the 1908 book *La Societe des Nations* by the influential French peace negotiator Leon Bourgeois. The US President Woodrow Wilson had proposed such an organization on 8th January 1918 in his address to the US Congress when he had outlined his proposal to end the war and provided a framework for a new post-war international order. This led to the formation of the League of Nations. The League of Nations was founded in 1920 by 42 countries. In 1935, the League had 58 member countries. The member countries of the League of Nations spanned the globe and included most of Southeast Asia, Europe, and South America. At the time of the League of Nations, nearly all of Africa consisted of colonies of Western powers. The United States did not become the member of the League of Nations.

Causes for the failure of the League of Nations:

The League of Nations was the first major attempt as an international organization of state to maintain peace and promote international co-operation. But it failed. Some of the causes of its failure are briefly mentioned as follows:—

1. The political background of Europe at the time of the birth of the League was not very conducive to a peace organization. World War I had been fought ostensibly to make the world safe for democracy, to end all future wars, etc. But essentially it was an imperialist war for the division and re-division of colonies.
2. At no stage of its history did the League represent the world balance of forces. The U.S.A. never became its member and Russia stepped in only in 1934. Thus its effectiveness as an instrument of the world peace suffered.
3. In absence of Russia and America, it was actually dominated by the Anglo-French powers and became an instrument of their policy in Europe and since these powers were not interested in peace so much as in maintenance of their imperialist domination and destruction of Soviet Union, the League of Nations never had a chance to succeed.
4. The League of Nations was founded on the principle of unani of all the members except those who were party to a dispute. Thus every single member including the smallest had the right to veto. This system had two very important consequences.
5. The world was divided into two social systems-the capitalistic and socialistic. The absence of Russia created a very real danger that the League might be used against the new socialist state. Unfortunately this danger proved to be real. The League which condoned fascist aggressions one after the other, wasted no time in violating its very principles by expelling Soviet Union on the question of Finland.
6. The spheres of activity of the Council and the Assembly were not clearly defined. It led to confusion of responsibility.
7. The responsibility for maintenance of peace was not securely placed anywhere. The Council of the League which alone could shoulder it was burdened with other responsibilities regarding minority treaties, mandatory territories, etc.

In nutshell, the League succeeded to resolve some of the inter-state disputes peacefully. But as it lacked a military force, it could not enforce the Treaty of Versailles. It also failed to get disarmament. Its failures resulted into the Second World War. The League of Nations was replaced by the United Nations in 1945.

**Conclusion:**

Though the League ultimately failed to prevent the outbreak of the Second World War, and has therefore been viewed by historians as a largely weak, ineffective, and essentially powerless organization. But It is wrong to believe League of Nations done nothing; it paved the way of United Nations Organizations.

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