

Chapter 10: The League of Nations

10.1 COMPOSITION OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS

The Assembly and the Council

- The Assembly met annually
- All members of the Assembly had the right of veto – hard to get any decisions made
- The Assembly determined the budget of the League of Nations
- There were 4 permanent members of the Council – the United Kingdom, Italy, France and Japan
- The 4 permanent members had veto power – Italy and Japan vetoed most decisions
- The Council set the Assembly's agenda
- The Council required unanimous votes for any action to be taken

10.3 PURPOSES OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS

Collective Security

- The opposite of the diplomacy system
- Relied on moral force to keep all states in line
- All states were obliged to punish the offender – no sides taken, no free riders

The process of dispute settlement

1. Moral suasion
 - The Council was empowered to investigate any disputes involving League members
 - Any decisions reached by the Council had to be unanimous
2. Economic sanctions
 - The cutting off of economic and financial ties with the offending state
3. Military force
 - The Council could recommend that members contribute to a League military force

Promoting disarmament

- Belief that an arms race promoted war

Supervising the mandate system

- The countries were supposed to prepare these regions for independence
- In reality these regions were still colonies

Promoting international cooperation for socio-economic issues

- Formed the World Health Organisation (WHO), the Advisory Committee on Traffic in Women and Children

10.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE **LEAGUE'S** PROVISIONS

Disunity in the Council and Assembly

- The need for a unanimous vote hindered effective action
- The great powers in the Council possessed disproportionate influence
- Countries did not think the League had enough authority to solve disputes – disputes were referred to the Conference of Ambassadors

Lack of global policemen and enforcers

- The League excluded a number of major powers – the USA, Germany and Russia were not in the League
- The United Kingdom and France were expected to be enforcers
- However, they were not ready for this role due to their military being needed to guard their own extensive empires and their economies were still recovering from World War I

Faulty dispute settlement process

- The Americans had assumed that moral suasion would keep countries from going to war
- The investigation procedures took too long
- The League was unwilling to impose economic sanctions – non-League members might have taken over the trade

Inability to address civil war

- Spanish Civil War
- The League could not intervene if it was an internal issue

Inability to deal with guerrilla warfare

- War had to be declared before the League could intervene

Inability to supervise mandates effectively

- No effort to develop the mandate regions or aid them in the process of self-government
- The League did not supervise these mandates effectively

10.5 FAILURE OF THE DISARMAMENT PROCESS

- France consistently refused to disarm due to its fear of Germany
- The United Kingdom and the United States rapidly reduced their military forces
- Some countries' ideologies glorified war and thus had large militaries – Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany

Washington Naval Agreement of 1922

- Created fear of another naval race

The Five Power Treaty

- Stopped building of battleships for 10 years
- Set a ratio of battleships – 5 (USA): 5 (UK): 3 (Japan): 1.75 (Italy): 1.75 (France)

The Four Power Treaty

- USA, UK, Japan and France agreed to defend each other if their possessions were threatened by a third party
- Guaranteed the rights of the four countries to their Asian possessions

The Nine Power Treaty

- Led to the Japanese withdrawal from the Shandong Peninsula in China
- Agreed to respect China's independence

Impact of the Washington Conference

- The Royal Navy was affected severely – they had to scrap a large number of warships
- Japan deeply resented the treaty – they felt they were not recognised as a great power
- France was unhappy that it was considered a second class naval power
- Naval arms construction could not be done secretly – easier to negotiate reduction

London Naval Agreement of 1930

- A ratio for smaller warships was established – 10 (USA): 10 (UK): 7 (Japan)
- France and Italy withdrew due to limits on naval construction – led to naval race between them
- Deep resentment in Japan – it was seen as keeping Japan weaker than USA and UK

World Disarmament Conference of 1932

- Faced problems such as the Manchurian Crisis and Great Depression

- States could not agree over technical terms – what constituted an ‘offensive weapon’?
- Inability to work out verification procedures to enforce disarmament
- The UK suggested limiting offensive weapons and armies to be of equal strength – rejected
- France suggested creating a League of Nations Army – rejected
- Japan left the Conference and League of Nations – rejected the Lytton Commission
- Germany withdrew from the Conference when Adolf Hitler rose to power – strong public support

London Naval Conference of 1935

- Japan refused to attend – it demanded naval equality with USA and UK
- Italy refused to attend – it resented UK and France interfering in Abyssinia
- Germany, Italy and the Soviet Union signed the agreement – in reality none of them actually intended on honouring the agreed terms

10.6 FAILURE TO PROMOTE ECONOMIC COOPERATION

- The Economic Committee encouraged the abolishment of tariffs and the introduction of free trade
- This failed due to the deep impact of protectionism

10.7 THE SUCCESSES OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS

- Success was usually achieved if a major power was not involved in the conflict

Finland and Sweden dispute over the Aland Islands

- The islands were originally under Sweden but were transferred to Finland
- Finland declared independence in 1917 – the islanders claimed they were Swedes instead
- Sweden wanted a plebiscite
- The League decided that Finland would get the islands but Swedish culture was protected
- The islands were demilitarised and considered neutral

Yugoslavian invasion of Albania

- Albania was a new state – it gained independence only in 1912
- It did not confirm its borders – hence Yugoslavia took advantage and invaded them
- The League threatened economic sanctions against Yugoslavia – Yugoslavia withdrew in 1921
- The League made Italy the protector of Albania – however Italy would invade Albania in 1939

Germany and Poland over Upper Silesia

- Western Upper Silesia was German-speaking while Eastern Upper Silesia was Polish-speaking
- Both Germany and Poland claimed the entire Silesia – it was important for its coal and industries
- The League decided in 1922 that the area would be divided – Germany received more area but Poland received the major industrial areas and sources of raw materials

10.8 FAILURES OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS

- Failure usually occurred when the aggressor was a Council member

The Ruhr Crisis of 1923

- France and Belgium invaded the Ruhr – the Ruhr was a demilitarised zone and could not resist