

Causes that led to Formation of League of Nations after the 1st World War 1941: A Brief Study

Tirthankar Hudati¹, Archana Das², Arati Hudati³

¹Master of Engineering(M.E) in Electronics and Instrumentation Engineering(E.I.E), Department of Electronics and Communication Engineering, University Institute of Technology, The University of Burdwan, Golapbag (North), Purba Barddhaman-713104 West Bengal, India

²Master of Philosophy(M.Phil) in Political Science Department of Political Science, The University of Burdwan, Golapbag ,Purba Barddhaman -713104 ,West Bengal, India

³B.A, Memari College, ,Department of History, Memari, Burdwan, West Bengal ,India.

Abstract

The League of Nations was formed after the First World War to maintain peace and prevent future wars. The idea was proposed by U.S. President Woodrow Wilson, who included it in his Fourteen Points plan for peace. The Treaty of Versailles (1919) officially included the plan to create this international organization.

The League was established in 1920, with its headquarters initially in Paris, later moved to Geneva, Switzerland. Though it aimed to promote peace and cooperation among countries, the League failed to prevent the Second World War.

Keywords: Treaty of Versailles, League of Nations, First World War

1. Introduction

The outbreak of the First World War made the leaders of the world to establish an international organisation for preventing future wars. The Treaty of Versailles also provided a Covenant for the establishment of an international organisation to maintain peace and security in the world. The founder of this organization was President Woodrow Wilson of USA. It was his idea to create a world organization to maintain peace and prevent future wars.

President Woodrow Wilson's **Fourteen Points** underline the creation of a general association of nations. It was Woodrow Wilson who worked hard during Paris negotiations to bring about the birth of the **League of Nations**. The League was actually established in **1920** and its headquarters was shifted from Paris to Geneva in Switzerland. Thus, the League of Nations came into being.

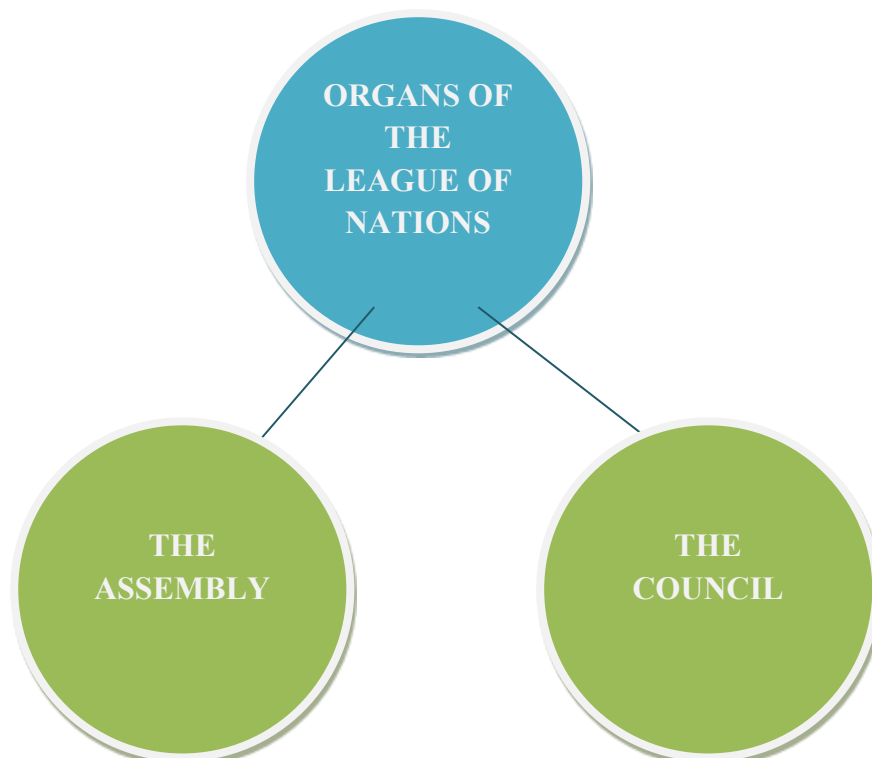
2. Aim of the League of Nations

The League of Nations aimed. At:



3. Organs of the League of Nations

The League set upon itself the task of achieving the above aims through its organs—mainly the Assembly and the Council.



Organs of the League of Nations—mainly the Assembly and the Council.

a) The Assembly

This supreme body consisted of the representatives of the various states which were the members of the League. Every member state was given the right of one vote in the Assembly. All decisions of the Assembly were required to be unanimous. It acted as International Legislature.

b) The Council

It originally consisted of four permanent members and four other members elected by the Assembly. In 1926, Germany was also given a permanent seat in the council. The number of non-permanent members continued to increase and ultimately it reached the figures of eleven. Of the two, the assembly was certainly stronger.

4. Organisation of the League of Nations

Main Organs of the League of Nations:

1. The Secretariat
2. The Assembly
3. The League Council
4. The International Labour Organisation
5. Permanent Court of International Justice.

ORGANISATION OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS**The Secretariat****The League Council****The Assembly****The International Labour Organisation****Permanent Court of International Justice.****a) The Assembly**

This supreme body consisted of the representatives of the various states which were the members of the League. Every member state was given the right of one vote in the Assembly. All decisions of the Assembly were required to be unanimous. It acted as International Legislature.

b) The Council

It originally consisted of four permanent members and four other members elected by the Assembly. In 1926, Germany was also given a permanent seat in the council. The number of non-permanent members continued to increase and ultimately it reached the figures of eleven. Of the two, the assembly was certainly stronger.

c) The Secretariat

It was located at Geneva. The Secretary General was the prominent figure. He was appointed by the Council but the approval of Assembly was essential. The staff of the Secretariat was appointed by the Secretary General in consultation with the Council. The Member states had to pay towards the expenses of the Secretariat.

d) The Permanent Court of International Justice

It consisted of 15 judges with its headquarters at The Hague. It gave judgments on questions involving the interpretation of international law, treaties, and other mutual obligations. The judges of the court were elected for nine years.

e) The International Labour Organisation

It was also attached to the League of Nations with its headquarters at Geneva. Its object was to improve labour conditions in various parts of the world. Its governing body consisted of the representatives of the government, employers, and workers.

Mandate System

It was set up by the League. The territories captured from the Central Powers and Turkey were not restored to them. The administration of those countries was given to various powers under the supervision of the League of Nations.

5. Achievements Of The League Of Nations

a) Aaland Islands: These islands lie between Sweden and Finland. Both Finland and Aaland once belonged to Sweden. On the ownership of Aaland Islands, there came a dispute between Sweden and Finland in 1920. A special Commission of the League investigated the case and settled the dispute in favour of Finland.

b) Mosul Boundary Dispute: This was a question related to the frontier dispute between Turkey and the Great Britain's mandated territory of Iraq. Both the parties claimed Mosul Vilayet which was rich in oil. Both failed to come to an agreement on this boundary line. Ultimately the League Council gave its final judgment on the subject. In June 1926, a treaty was made between Turkey and Great Britain by which a small part of the Vilayet was given to Turkey. The revised boundary was recognised as definite. Some royalty from Mosul oil fields were given to Turkey.

c) Eupen and Malmady: In 1920 and 1921 Germany protested to the League of Nations against the decision of giving Eupen and Malmady to Belgium. The League Council discussed the matter in September 1920 and wrote to the government that its decision regarding the transfer of Eupen and Malmady to Belgium was final.

d) Curfew Incident

In August 1923, an Italian general and two officers were murdered on Greek soil. The Italians demanded apologies and reparations too for the crime. Greece refused to accept the demands of Italy. Hence Italy

occupied the island of Curfu. In this dispute Britain and France mediated and brought about a compromise between Italy and Greece.

e) Dispute between Greece and Bulgaria

There was a border dispute between Greece and Bulgaria. In 1925 a Greek army commander was murdered. The Greek army marched in to Bulgaria. The League Council requested Britain and France to investigate this affair. The Greek forces were withdrawn and Greece was asked to pay compensation to Bulgaria for violation of her territory on a scale to be fixed by a League Commission.

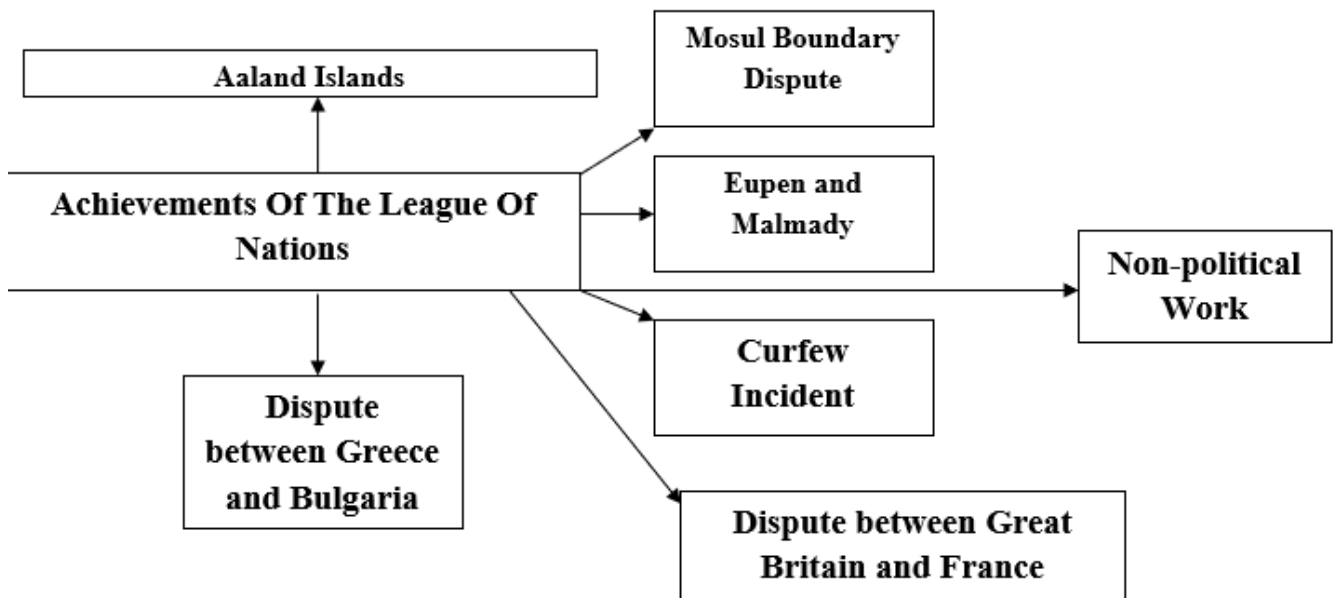
f) Dispute between Great Britain and France

In 1921, there was dispute between France and Great Britain over the nationality question in Tunis and Morocco. The matter went to the Court of International Justice. However the dispute was decided by mutual negotiations between the foreign ministers of the two countries.

g) Non-political Work

The League did also a lot of non-political work. A slavery convention met at Geneva in 1925. In 1932 it was decided to set up a permanent **Slavery Commission**. The **Financial Commission** was responsible for the issue and supervision of various League Loans for Austria, Hungary, Greece etc.

The league also set up in 1923 the **Health Organisation** with a Health Committee and a secretariat. It did good in fighting diseases such as Malaria, Smallpox, Rabies, Cancer, Tuberculosis and heart diseases etc. It helped nations to improve national health. It organised technical conferences. The League did commmentate Common Wealth work in the field of control of traffic in dangerous drugs, peasant reforms, suppression of trade in obscene literature.



6. Causes for the Failure of League of Nations

The League failed in its main object of maintaining peace in the world. In spite of its efforts for two decades, the whole world was involved in war again in 1939. There are many causes for its failure.

a) The major powers like USA and USSR were not members of the League of Nations. This was a serious defect.

- b) It was unfortunate that the Covenant of the League of Nations was made a part and parcel of the peace settlement. It would have been better if it had been kept separate. There were many states which considered the Treaty of Versailles as a treaty of revenge and were not prepared to ratify the same. By not ratifying the treaty, they were refused to be members the League. The absence of great powers [USA and USSR] in the international organisation weakened the League. Japan, Germany and Italy had left the League.
- c) There was also a feeling among the nations that the League of Nations was fully dominated by the victorious countries of World War I especially of France and England. The result was that the other states began to doubt about the working of the League of Nations.
- d) The countries like Germany were humiliated by the victorious countries. Germany was compelled to pay war reparations when it was suffering from economic difficulties. Hence there were no chances of peace.

After World War I, in Europe there came situations for the rise of dictatorships in Italy, Japan and Germany. Japan in the Far East conquered Manchuria. The League was not also in a position to condemn the action of Japan. Japan was also prepared to give up the membership of the League.

Likewise in Italy there was Fascist Dictatorship. This had preached the people of Italy narrow nationalism. Italy captured Abyssinia. When the League questioned the conquest of Italy on Abyssinia, it left the League.

Germany too was not prepared to accept the commitments under the Treaty of Versailles. In Germany too there was Nazi dictatorship. Hitler preached pseudo patriotism. He also spoke about the superiority of German race over other races. He wanted to expand Germany's sway over Austria and Poland. He made conquests over these countries. Defying the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles he increased the armaments. When this was questioned in the League, Germany left the League.

Small nations lost their faith on the working of the League. They felt that the League of Nations had no power to control the aggressive activities of the big powers.

France's insistence of forcing Germany to pay the war reparation at the time of its economic crisis had disastrous effects on the politics of the country. This contributed to the downfall of the Weimar Republic. This led to the rise of Hitler in Germany and the latter was responsible for the failure of the League.

The birth of the League of Nations on the ruins of the First World War was welcomed. However, the member states of the League did not cooperate. As a result the League failed in its mission. Thus, the Second World War broke out. Finally, UNO was established on the disintegration of the League.

7. References

1. **Henig, Ruth.** *The League of Nations*. London: Haus Publishing, 2010.
 - A concise and accessible overview of the League's aims, achievements, and failures.
2. **Pedersen, Susan.** *The Guardians: The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire*. Oxford University Press, 2015.
 - A scholarly analysis of how the League managed mandates and the legacy of imperialism.
3. **Walters, F. P.** *A History of the League of Nations*. Oxford University Press, 1952.
 - A comprehensive account by a former League official.
4. **MacMillan, Margaret.** *Peacemakers: The Paris Peace Conference of 1919 and Its Attempt to End War*. John Murray, 2001.
 - Provides context on how the League was formed and its early limitations.

5. **Pedersen, Susan.** "Back to the League of Nations: Review Essay." *The American Historical Review*, vol. 112, no. 4, 2007, pp. 1091–1117.
 - <https://doi.org/10.1086/ahr.112.4.1091>
6. **Mark Mazower.** "An international civilization? Empire, internationalism and the crisis of the mid-twentieth century." *International Affairs*, vol. 82, no. 3, 2006, pp. 553–566.
 - Discusses the League's internationalism and legacy.
7. **Kennedy, Paul.** "The Parliament of Man: The Past, Present, and Future of the United Nations." *Foreign Affairs*, 2006.