

**'The League of Nations achieved its peacekeeping aims in the 1920s.' How far do you agree with this statement? Explain your answer.**

The League of Nations, created out of the Treaty of Versailles with the purpose of maintaining world peace to prevent another global conflict like World War I, dealt with thirty disputes between states, in the 1920's. Historians still argue whether in the first ten years of its creations, the 1920's, the League was successful in fulfilling its aim of maintaining peace, with some arguing that incidents such as the Aaland Islands and Upper Silesia far outshine the arguments for why the League was unsuccessful such as Corfu and Vilna. It will be seen that, in terms of solely peacekeeping, the League of Nations was successful because after all, no serious wars broke out. However, serious flaws were exposed in the process that would inevitably lead to war in the future which means that overall, the League failed its peacekeeping aims.

On one hand, the League of Nations achieved its peacekeeping aims in the 1920's because it was able to prevent disputes from turning into the war; in the case of the Aaland islands, a dispute between Sweden and Finland for islands located between the two countries, the League was able to conclude its first European international agreement with both sides left satisfied. The islands had a population that was 95% Swedish, but Finland owned the islands. However, the League realised that giving the land to Sweden would set dangerous precedents all over the world with other minority groups seeing this as an opportunity to

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Commented [M(1)]: Haha, true I suppose! Although this argument requires one to have a very poor view of human nature... is the natural state of humanity one of war? Maybe...

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Commented [M(2)]: Can we assume that this is your ultimate argument to the question? I think so.

Commented [M(3)]: I'm glad that you have ended with this. So far as a sentence can be 'perfect,' this is it

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Commented [M(4)]: While I am always impressed by your use of extended grammar techniques, the semi-colon here makes for a monstrosity long sentence. Personally I would suggest only use the semi-colon if the sentences are both short and/or an ambiguous relationship (between two sentences) needs to be made more/undeniably obvious

Commented [M(5)]: The Aaland islands dispute is a clever place to start – it is often seen as the LON's greatest peace keeping success (although its dealing with Typus and a National Postal system may trump this as an 'overall' winner – not relevant here though of course)

gain independence. Therefore, the League said the islands should remain in the hands of the

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Finns, but the Swedes should have more autonomy, the ability for a group to make decisions

**Commented [M(6):** Proper diplomatic compromise. Finland has always been more diplomatic and the Aaland islands clearly weren't worth fighting over (although wars have been started with less)

for itself without asking for permission, such as preserving traditions and the Swedish

Language being taught in schools. The dispute was a success not only because it maintained

peace, but also meant that the Paris Peace settlement was not undermined as the islands

**Commented [M(7):** Just worth noting as a passing comment (relevant to a huge portion of the historical period) is that our Western historiography (i.e., perspective on history) often synonymises 'peace' with 'maintaining the status quo'. You are correct here only if we say that 'peacekeeping' is the same as 'unchanging' – if the Swedes of the Aaland Islands were unhappy then is this peace? Ultimately, I think that you are **completely correct** in terms of this essay. Just some food for thought especially as you intend to take history a bit further in your education ☺

were not handed over to Sweden. However, one could make the argument that whilst

peace was preserved, the League's decision was a contradiction to Wilson's principle of self-

**Commented [M(8):** I think this is the key point really. Fixing the LON to Versailles was clearly a terrible decision (for a whole range of reasons – not least the US issue) – hindsight is 20:20

determination. Besides from the Aaland islands, the League also succeeded in coming to a

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fair, and peace-preserving decision in Upper Silesia. Following riots and protests from

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Germany, as the overall results of a plebiscite held from the Treaty of Versailles suggested

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that it should be awarded to them, and Poland, since there were some territories where

**Commented [M(9):** You were about to get to something potentially interesting here, but you stepped back from it because you don't want to muddy the water of your 'pro-statement' paragraph. You should try and go for it! You might just smash that grade 9 with no ambiguity if you start to do that...

Poland was in the clear majority, the League suggested a partition. This peaceful idea was

**Commented [M(10):** Just slightly imperfect language here.

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accepted by both sides, with Eastern Upper Silesia going to Poland and Western Upper

Silesia going to Germany. This serves as purpose to show how the League was once again

successful in preserving peace and came to a conclusion which would not break down

immediately.

**Commented [M(11):** Nice – this is a clear answer to the big aspect of the title question. You have not yet engaged with 'how far' but I hope that the next paragraph begins to do that

On the other hand, the League of Nations could be said to have failed their peacekeeping aims because in many cases, the League was forced to backdown to powerful nations. In Vilna, a dispute between Poland and Lithuania, the Peace Settlement at the end of the First World War created new countries, including Poland and Lithuania themselves. The city of Vilna was given to Lithuania under the Versailles Settlement, but the population wanted to be Polish rather than Lithuanian. Following an invasion by Poland on the city, the League told Poland to withdraw. Instead of introducing sanctions that would otherwise be protocol, the Council of Ambassadors awarded the city to Poland. This was because France didn't want to upset Poland as it was a potential ally against Germany. On top of this, Britain wouldn't send its army without the support of other members. This exposed one of the most notorious problems with the League of Nations: the USA did not join. The Vilna incident exposed the weakness of the League because not only did it fail its task of peacekeeping since it took no action against the invading country, but it also showed to the rest of the world that the League did not have the power to stop powerful, aggressor nations. This can also be seen in Corfu, a dispute over the Greek island between Italy and Greece. Following the Italian invasion of Greece, due to contention caused by the Versailles settlement, the League ordered Italy to leave Greece; however, like Vilna, Italy refused. The matter was handed over to The Conference of Ambassadors where Italy was again ordered to leave Corfu, but agreed that Greece should pay compensation, despite Greece's innocence in the matter. Like Vilna, it revealed the League would give preferential treatment to powerful and aggressive members, like Italy and that the League was powerless against a bigger country which threatened a smaller country. Therefore, the League has failed its peacekeeping aims because it sent a message to the rest of the world that the League could be ignored and overruled by other international groups.

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Commented [M12]: This is the strong argument on this issue – LON powerless in face of powerful aggressors? Probably

Commented [M13]: Whilst this is probably a suitable comment for a GCSE essay it is not wholly true. Both of these countries had originated in some form (Poland more strongly) pre-WW1 too – German expansion (in particular, though not exclusively) was a major factor in the pre-WW1 nullity

Commented [M14]: Did this mean that Versailles created a state of 'non-peace' and the LON settled the dispute though? Are you sure that this was truly anti-peace?

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Commented [M15]: This is true and it backs up your position (and somewhat diminishes mine)

Commented [M16]: Very good to bring in this IR point – making it more about France (& Britain) strengthens the point that you are making in this paragraph

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Commented [M17]: BOOM - good

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Commented [M18]: Brilliant – really engaging with the question now. I think you need to do this **much** earlier, but the fact that it arrives in full force now saves the essay, lovely stuff

Commented [M19]: I'm far from well-read on this incident, but my understanding is that this was a renegotiation of the original settlement in effect, so the compensation was not in response to the incident (*per se*) but rather an agreement that Greece did 'too well' in 1919

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In sum, it can be seen that whilst no major wars broke out, the League failed on numerous occasions to stop powerful, aggressor nations from attacking smaller, defending nations.

**Commented [M(20)]:** Good – suitable short conclusion that responds to Q directly

We have a few things to discuss on this – most I will save for the session tomorrow rather than bombarding you with them, the ‘headlines’ are as follows:

- Improvement seen on argument (highlighting will be explained in session)
- “Do you agree” vs. “How far do you agree” (I think you probably know where this one is going)
- Excellent content as always, top tier stuff!
- Careful with a few examples here, there are multiple angles to view many of these issues from (the LON is a far more complex issue than most think – even though the Q has narrowed the focus so significantly). You need to have stronger conviction in a few points (see attached comments)
- Really good job as always: 8

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