Sample Response for “To what extent was the League of Nations doomed to fail?”

IB Euro

Yellow= Topic Sentence, Blue= Developing Sentence, Red = Evidence, Purple = Historiography and Green= Analysis and Evaluation

The League of Nations aspired to prevent all future conflict but it in hindsight it had a number of structural failures that left it unable to achieve this goal. One major structural flaw was the balance of power between the large and small states. The Council, the organ of the League that considered and recommended actions against offending states, was made up of 4 permanent members with veto power (UK, France, Italy and Japan) and 10 non-permanent members. All actions by the Council had to unanimous and, because of the veto powers of the permanent members, proved ultimately unable to equitably resolve conflicts between large and small nations. This bureaucratic quagmire encouraged some states to act aggressively then ask for forgiveness later once their goals had been achieved. One example of this came in the Corfu Incident of 1923 between Greece and Italy. Italy’s fascist regime under Mussolini bombed the Greek island of Corfu and captured a number of Greek officials. Rather than taking punitive action against Italy for its act of war, the League pacified Mussolini by blaming Greece for provoking them. This clear reluctance to sanction a large nation emboldened future acts of aggression from Mussolini and others but also revealed to smaller nations the true intent of the permanent members.

In addition to a self-serving structure, the League of Nations was also inherently flawed because of its exclusion of key nations that were needed to maintain collective security and enforce the Treaty of Versailles. When it was first established, Germany and Russia were excluded because the founding members did not believe they were worthy: Germany because it had yet to fulfill its obligations from the Treaty and Russia because of its premature withdrawal from the war and political ideology. This exclusion forced these nations to operate outside of the League and when they were able to successfully do so, it reinforced that the organization was not essential for diplomacy to occur. This was apparent with the signing of the Treaty of Rapallo in 1922. Following this revisiting of the highly inequitable Brest-Litovsk, both nations were able to rebuild outside of the view of the League and, in the case of Germany, violate the terms of the Treaty of Versailles by rearming in secret. As Erik Goldstein says “ Shunned by the western powers, the only option for Soviet Russia was the turn to Europe’s other pariah state, Germany.” While the League would eventually rectify this mistake and bring Germany, then Russia, into the fold, this crucial short-term vindictiveness demonstrated its ineffectiveness as a force for peace. The League of Nations was founded in 1919 to keep the peace around the world, and while it did prevent some minor disputes from breaking out in conflict, its inherent flaws of structure and membership doomed it from achieving its mission.