

United Nations


Structure: Security Council has 15 members

↳ 5 Permanent members (have veto power)

↳ 10 elected members

↳ Serve 2 year terms, elected by the General Assembly

General Assembly: everyone else



United States
United Kingdom
Russia
China
France

The Security Council can

1. authorize the deployment of troops from UN member countries
2. mandate cease-fire during conflicts
3. can impose economic penalties on countries.
4. can establish Peacekeeping operations



Currently (February 2023) there are 193 member nation-states. Exceptions:

- Palestine has the status of a non-member observer state. 138 of the 193 UN members recognize it
- Vatican City has the status of a non-member observer state. Unlike all other nations, it does not support any citizens but rather is the administrative center of the global church.
- Taiwan is NOT a member of the UN (it is recognized as part of China, and not sovereign)
- Kosovo is NOT a member of the UN (it is recognized as part of Serbia, and not sovereign)





General Assembly



Celebrations of the UN System

It is the only globally-reaching 'legitimate' organization.

It brings together nations of all governments...democracy, totalitarian, monarchy, etc. it provides an international forum.

- ↳ Adeli Stevenson, Cuban Missile Crisis
- ↳ Convened the World Summit 2005; wrote text condemning terrorism, fund to help countries emerging from conflict, and authorized UN intervention when countries can not arrest citizens for atrocious crimes. 191 countries agree.

Consider successes in Haiti 2004, East Timor 2006, Israel-Egypt 1979, and Nicaraguan Civil War 1989-1992

Criticisms of the UN system

NO COUNTER POINT

Effectiveness in preventing conflicts is questionable
Inability to deter atrocities of the magnitude seen in World War II.

- ↳ Ethnic cleansing, genocide, Sudan, Srebrenica massacre (which occurred in a UN 'safe area' with 400m monitors

Celebrations of the UN System

Maintains refugee camps

↳ Security council authorized UN intervention in Somalia 1992, which for the first time classified a humanitarian crisis as a threat to international peace



It is naïve to believe that any organization is capable of correcting all the world's ills.



Global security alliance (Collective security) works

↳ Suez conflict 1956, Korean conflict 1950-1952



Consensus decision making = resolutions



Criticisms of the UN system

Yet does not police them.

↳ Suicide terrorism seems to often originate from the campos (with regard to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict)

The very existence of continued regional violence is indicative of the failure of the organization

Debate: just how effective are collective security tactics?

These resolutions are largely symbolic, and not legally binding

Celebrations of the UN System

But the involvement of the five major post-war powers allow for continued membership, funding and support.

- ↳ And they did protect resource-poor South Korea 1950

Criticisms of the UN system

The veto gives five powers unparalleled power

The five members are all nuclear powers, not representative of regional or geographic diversity, and as such their votes are largely strategic and/or politically motivated.

- ↳ Especially in humanitarian intervention; protected oil-rich Kuwait 1991, but not resource-poor Rwanda 1994
- ↳ 1982-2005, America has vetoed 32 Security Council resolutions critical of Israel (since the S.C. is aligned by regional block, Arab nations are usually voted onto the council but Israel has never been; never has the S.C. adopted any resolution critical of Arab aggressors like Hamas or PLO).
- ↳ Russian and China vetoed imposing sanctions on Zimbabwe following violent presidential election



Celebrations of the UN System

Criticisms of the UN system

Peacekeepers and regional monitors serve to deter violence

- ↳ 2005-2006, 70,000 troops were deployed in 17 missions
- ↳ Cyprus 1964-now, Kosovo 1999-now

18 peacekeeping missions currently active in the world with more requests than the UN can handle.

If UN peacekeeping operations were a failure, why would there be demand?

How effective are they?

- ↳ Upon introduction, could not stop Rwandan genocide 1993
- ↳ Presence in Lebanon since 1974 did not dissuade 2006 war with Israel or Hezbollah missile strikes on Israel

It is a bureaucratically-overloaded organization in need of reform. Excessive waste, in terms of resources and money

- ↳ Reform needs: transparency, efficiency, accountability, make the UN more democratic, change the permanent membership of the security council

NO COUNTER POINT

Celebrations of the UN System

The UN is based on the idea that it not be overly dependent upon one nation for funding

- ↳ The max ceiling rate is 22%, the minimum for all is .001% of the UN overall budget. (the maximum ceiling rate for developing countries is .01%)
- ↳ The US annual budget for its core institutions is the same as the Pentagon spends in 24 hours in non-war times!

Special United Nations programs are a success

- ↳ World Health Organization, UNICEF, World Food Program

Criticisms of the UN system

Very costly, and the US pays a disproportionate share

- ↳ US 22%, Japan 16.6%, Germany 8.5%, UK 6.6%, France 6.3%, Italy 5.1%, Canada 3.0%, Spain 2.9%, China 2.7%, Mexico 2.2%, all others total 24%
- ↳ The General Assembly determines how much each nation should be obliged to pay.

Paid for by voluntary contributions...is this sustainable?

- ↳ 2009, WFP received only 1/4 of the funds necessary to operate (it is not criticized on the merits of its accomplishments)

Any nation may be elected to serve temporarily (a two-year term) on the Security Council

Membership in the UN Security Council and the permanent membership encourage elitism as it reflects 1945 power structure and they are nuclear powers

- ↳ Canada has suggested abolishing the concept of permanency
- ↳ Fait accompli...the practice of permanent members meeting privately and then presenting their resolutions to the full council
- ↳ Official languages at the UN date to 1945 founding: English, Chinese, Russian, French, and Spanish. Arabic was added as a sixth language in 1973.
- ↳ Boutros Boutros-Ghali was the only UN leader not elected to a second term because the US vetoed a resolution backing him

Celebrations of the UN System

Criticisms of the UN system

International Court of Justice

↳ Purpose is to adjudicate disputes among states, and cases about war crimes or illegal state interference.

NO COUNTER POINT

There is a method for amending the Charter and changing the organizational structure.

↳ The process: it must first be approved by two-thirds of the General Assembly, including all permanent members of the Security Council, and then be ratified by every country's legislative bodies.

PROPOSED The US parliamentary assembly would require a country's UN representative to be directly elected by its citizens

Representatives are not reflective of a democratic system. ie, countries (democracies, other) may not be responsive to their people.

↳ Additionally, there is not a legislature, judicial or executive branch, all the powers are given to the security council

↳ 5 of the permanent members of the security council are 5 of the top-10 arms dealing countries in the world

Given the history of the proposal, odds are it will not be passed or implemented

Celebrations of the UN System

The UN and its agencies are immune to the law of countries where they operate, safeguarding its impartiality with regard to host/member countries



Criticisms of the UN system

NO COUNTER POINT

The purpose of the UN was to introduce yet another forum through which conflict may be addressed and treaties resolved. It was never intended to rid the world of all conflict under its banner



Many major treaties have been brought about outside of the auspices of the UN system

↳ Israeli-Vatican reconciliation
1994, Israel-Jordan peace
1993, Northern Ireland-British peace 2008

Clearly not the case, given the UN support for unifying entities like the European Union

↳ The Un encourages national sovereignty. Indonesia is the only state to have left the UN (1965, rejoined 1966)



Globalism UN tries to create a one-world government

Moral relativism “While the early UN was formed of nations who fought against the Axis powers of 1945 and thus could take a stand against evil, the modern UN has become morally/ethically-diluted”

↳ Only 75 of the 184 members in 2004 were free democracies, which meant the UN became more amenable to the requirements of dictatorships.

↳ Alleged tolerance of violent regimes

↳ Kurt Waldheim (former head of Austria, elected head of UN 1972-1982) was an intelligence officer of the Nazi Wehrmacht.

↳ Nations which have been on the UN Human Rights Council have dubious backgrounds themselves... Syria, Saudi Arabia, Libya, Zimbabwe, China, Russia, Algeria. Even the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon has called upon them to drop the anti-Israel rhetoric; US has refused a seat on the Council.

NO COUNTER POINT



Celebrations of the UN System

The IAEA has functioned as designed

- ↪ The monitoring in Iraq proved effective; the UN knew fully of Iraq's capabilities
- ↪ The monitoring of Iran was blocked by Iran, so the matter was referred to the Security Council for restrictive actions
- ↪ South Africa voluntarily gave up the weapons it developed
- ↪ In a 2009 assessment by the James Martin Center for Non-Proliferation Studies, it reported that without the IAEA there would be at least seven more nuclear powers today

Criticisms of the UN system


The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has been unable to prevent nations from pursuing and acquiring nuclear weapons

- ↪ Iraq 1922-2007 defied the IAEA monitoring and sanctions'
- ↪ Iran 2004-2009, North Korea 2006-2008 were not dissuaded from pursuing nuclear resources.



US has many successes, treaty and otherwise

- ↳ Regulation of international air travel and safety standards
- ↳ Peacekeeping successes include
 - Liberia 2004: more than 100,000 combatants were disarmed and demobilized
 - Cyprus peace preserved since 1964
 - 18 peacekeeping missions currently active in the world with more requests than the UN can handle. (*If the US were a failure, why would there be demand?*)
- ↳ Ensuring that products for export meet international standards (milk, bananas, coffee, tea)
- ↳ Ensuring that international agreements are implemented by member states (such as those governing shared resources: animals, rivers/lakes, logging).
- ↳ Promoting cooperation among countries
- ↳ Tackling problems together: landmines, immunization, hunger
 - UNICEF in 2008 gathered more than \$700 million in supplies for children, operated safe water and sanitation programs in 90 countries and served as the principal aid agency to the 13 million children in Africa who have been orphaned by AIDS.
 - WHO/UNICEF immunization programs have reached over 80% of children under 5, eradicating small pox and controlling polio and malaria.
- ↳ Raising public awareness campaigns through organizing conferences



When the UN fails, it is blamed on the states; when it succeeds, it is credited to the whole UN

Respond to ONE of the following prompts:

- **To what extent do you feel that the United Nations is relevant to US interests?**
- **To what extent is the United Nations a successful organization?**
- **To what extent has the United Nations succeeded in fostering global peace and stability?**

In your response, please include at least four arguments in support and four areas of criticism, and be sure to stress which one carries the most weight for you. Ultimately, this is an opinion writing, but I expect you to root your viewpoint in a defensible position