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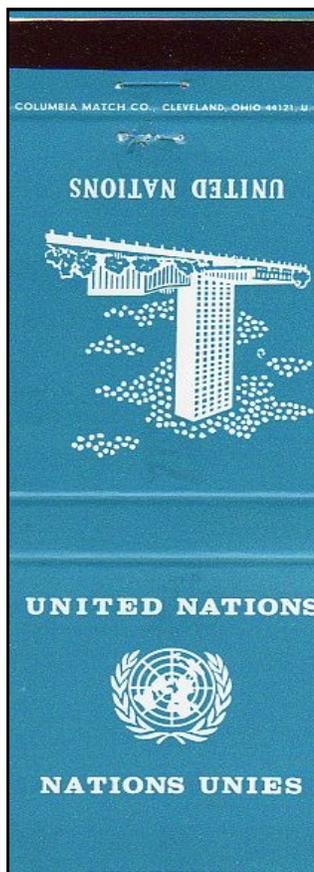
The United Nations

by
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[Well, it's October, and everyone else is going to do Halloween to death, so—we're doing the UN! October 24th is United Nations Day]

“The UN was founded as a successor to the League of Nations, which was widely considered to have been ineffective in its role as an international governing body, as it had been unable to prevent World War II. The term "United Nations" was first used by Winston Churchill and Franklin D. Roosevelt, in the 1942 Declaration by United Nations, which united the Allied countries of WWII under the Atlantic Charter, and soon became a term widely used to refer to them. Declarations signed at wartime Allied conferences in 1943 espoused the idea of the UN, and in 1944, representatives of the major Allied powers met to elaborate on the plans at the Dumbarton Oaks Conference. Those and later talks outlined the organization's proposed purposes, membership, organs, and ideals in regards to peace, security, and cooperation.

On 25 April 1945, the UN Conference on International Organization began in San Francisco. The UN officially came into existence on 24 October 1945 upon ratification of the Charter by the five permanent members of the Security Council — France, the Republic of China, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom and the United States — and by a majority of the other 46 signatories. The first meetings of the General Assembly, with 51 nations represented, and the Security Council, took place in Westminster Central Hall in London in January 1946.”



The United Nations system is based on five principal organs; the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the Secretariat, and the International Court of Justice. Four of the five principal organs are located at the main United Nations headquarters located on international territory in New York City. The International Court of Justice is located in The Hague, while other major agencies are based in the UN offices at Geneva, Vienna, and Nairobi. Other UN institutions are located throughout the world. The six official languages of the United Nations, used in intergovernmental meetings and documents, are Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish, while the Secretariat uses two working languages, English and French. There are currently 192 United Nations member states, including all fully recognized independent states apart from Vatican City, which has observer status.

The founders of the UN had envisaged that the organization would act to prevent conflicts between nations and make future wars impossible, however the outbreak of the Cold War made peacekeeping agreements extremely difficult due to the division of the world into hostile camps. Following the end of the Cold War, there were renewed calls for the UN to become the agency for achieving world peace, as there are several dozen ongoing conflicts that continue to rage around the globe.

A 2005 RAND Corp study found the UN to be successful in two out of three peacekeeping efforts. It compared UN nation-building efforts to those of the United States, and found that seven out of eight UN cases are at peace, as opposed to four out of eight US cases at peace. Also in 2005, the Human Security Report documented a decline in the number of wars, genocides and human rights abuses since the end of the Cold War, and presented evidence, albeit circumstantial, that international activism — mostly spearheaded by the UN — has been the main cause of the decline in armed conflict since the end of the Cold War.

The UN has also drawn criticism for perceived failures. In many cases, member states have shown reluctance to achieve or enforce Security Council resolutions, an issue that stems from the UN's intergovernmental nature — seen by some as simply an association of 192 member states who must reach consensus, not an independent organization. Disagreements in the Security Council about military action and intervention are seen as having failed to prevent the 1994 Rwandan Genocide, failed to provide humanitarian aid and intervene in the Second Congo War, failed to intervene in the 1995 Srebrenica massacre and protect a refugee haven by the authorizing the peacekeepers to use force, failure to deliver food to starving people in Somalia, failure to implement provisions of Security Council resolutions related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and continuing failure to prevent genocide or provide assistance in Darfur.

In addition to peacekeeping, the UN is also active in encouraging disarmament. However, the advent of nuclear weapons came only weeks after the signing of the charter and immediately halted concepts of arms limitation and disarmament, resulting in the first resolution of the first ever General Assembly meeting calling for specific proposals for "the elimination from national armaments of atomic weapons and of all other major weapons adaptable to mass destruction". [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Nations#History]

[Ed. note—a short Editorial: As far as I'm concerned, they should tear down the UN building and put in parking lot; we'd get a lot more bang or our buck...and believe me, it costs us A LOT of bucks to afford all those other countries the opportunity to publically kick us in the teeth at every opportunity. The UN is just as ineffective as the League of Nations. It's made up of diplomats—and diplomats talk; they don't act. Meanwhile tens of thousands of people routinely die around the world in various hellhole locations while awaiting action—What they get are meaningless resolutions and watered down sanctions!]