

Module 6: Foreign Policy

Topic 3 Content: United Nations

Introduction



Glover Mint: When discussing international foreign policy, one organization that cannot be overlooked is the United Nations. In this episode of WUSG News, Emily Airheart and Terry S. Tate will be discussing the organization and responsibilities of the UN.

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Global Guide



Emily Airheart: Thank you, Glover. The League of Nations was formed shortly after World War I to help maintain a peaceful international community. Without the participation of countries like Germany, Russia, and the United States, the organization proved to be ineffective. The League of Nations failed to prevent World War II, but it did serve as a model for another intergovernmental organization, the United Nations. Terry, what information do you have for us today about the UN?

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United Nations



Terry S. Tate: I have plenty of information to share, Emily. As you mentioned, the United Nations replaced the League of Nations after the Second World War. When the UN was formed in 1945, it initially had 51 countries as members. As of 2015, there are officially 193 members. The UN has main offices in several cities, but its headquarters are located in New York City. It is broken down into six principal organs, or divisions. In order to better understand how the United Nations operates, we will examine each of these organs individually.

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General Assembly



General Assembly

- U.N. members meet in the General Assembly to discuss important international issues.
- Every member country has equal representation in the General Assembly, and each member possesses one vote.
- Important issues are decided by a two-thirds majority vote and less serious questions are decided by a simple majority vote.
- The General Assembly serves mainly as an advisory body and a forum where important international matters may be debated.

Terry S. Tate: Members of the United Nations meet in the General Assembly to discuss important international issues. These issues may include human rights, the world economy, or conflicts between nations. Every member country has equal representation in the General Assembly, and each member possesses one vote. Important issues like international security or the membership of a particular nation are decided by a two-thirds majority vote. Less serious questions are decided by a simple majority vote. The General Assembly technically has no power to enforce any of its decisions. It serves mainly as an advisory body and a forum where important international matters may be debated.

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Security Council



Security Council

- The U.N. Security Council is responsible for maintaining international peace and security.
- The Security Council has the ability to impose sanctions and perform military actions.
- 10 members of the Security Council are elected by the General Assembly for 2-year terms.
- China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States are all permanent members of the Council.
- Security Council decisions require a supermajority of 9 out of 15 votes to pass, but these resolutions may also be vetoed by any of the 5 permanent members.

Terry S. Tate: The United Nations Security Council is responsible for maintaining international peace and security. Rather than serving as an advisory body, the Security Council actually has the ability to impose sanctions, order embargoes, and perform military actions. There are only fifteen members of the Security Council. Ten of these members are elected by the General Assembly for two-year terms. China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States are all permanent members of the Council. You may recognize these nations as the victorious powers at the end of World War II. Security Council decisions require a supermajority of nine out of fifteen votes to pass. The five permanent members also have veto power over any resolution passed by the Council. Critics of the UN Security Council argue that the power of the permanent members prevents it from being a truly democratic body.

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Economic and Social Council

Economic and Social Council

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



- ECOSOC coordinates the economic and social work of several specialized UN agencies.
- This includes agencies like the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).
- ECOSOC's main goals are to raise the standards of living in developing nations and to promote human rights.
- ECOSOC also works to coordinate the efforts of thousands of nongovernmental organizations, like the International Red Cross and Amnesty International.

Next

Terry S. Tate: The United Nations Economic and Social Council, also known as ECOSOC, coordinates the economic and social work of several specialized UN agencies. This includes agencies like the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). ECOSOC's main goals are to raise the standards of living in developing nations and to promote human rights. ECOSOC also works to coordinate the efforts of thousands of nongovernmental organizations, or NGOs. You may be familiar with some of these NGOs, like the International Red Cross and Amnesty International.

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International Court of Justice



International Court of Justice

- The International Court of Justice (ICJ) serves as the judicial branch of the UN and is headquartered in the Peace Palace in The Hague, Netherlands.
- Every member of the UN is considered a party to the World Court.
- The 15 judges of the ICJ are jointly elected by the General Assembly and the Security Council, and serve 9-year terms.
- Only states may be parties in ICJ court cases, there are no appeals, and no nation is forced to participate.

Terry S. Tate: The International Court of Justice (ICJ), also known as the World Court, serves as the judicial branch of the United Nations. It is headquartered in the Peace Palace in The Hague, Netherlands. Every member of the United Nations is considered a party to the World Court. The fifteen judges of the International Court of Justice are jointly elected by the General Assembly and the Security Council, and serve nine-year terms. Two judges from the same country are not allowed to serve on the court at the same time. Only states, not individuals, may be parties in ICJ court cases. Countries that are not members of the UN may also voluntarily decide to be parties in a case. There are no appeals in the ICJ, and any verdict reached is final. No nation is forced to participate, but if a nation chooses to settle a dispute in the World Court, it agrees to accept and be bound by the decision.

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Trusteeship Council

Trusteeship Council



- The Trusteeship Council was created to oversee the decolonization of different territories around the world.
- A colony or territory would be placed under the administration of another country or group of countries until it could attain self-government.
- There were 11 trust territories when the United Nations was founded.
- Palau was the last trust territory.
- Because there are no longer any trust territories, this body suspended operation in 1994.

Terry S. Tate: The Trusteeship Council is a principal organ of the UN that was created to oversee the decolonization of different territories around the world. A colony or territory would be placed under the administration of another country or group of countries until it could attain self-government. There were eleven trust territories when the United Nations was founded. Palau was the last trust territory, receiving independence in 1994. Because there are no longer any trust territories, this body suspended operation when Palau received independence. Since then, the five permanent Security Council members who make up the Trusteeship Council meet only when necessary.

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Secretariat

Secretariat



U.N. Headquarters

- The administration of the entire UN occurs within the Secretariat.
- It is led by the Secretary General, who is elected by the General Assembly.
- The Secretary General serves his or her term for a period of five years and may be reelected.
- The Secretary General serves as the chief administrator at meetings of the General Assembly and other UN council meetings.
- Serving under the Secretary General is an international civil service that coordinates administrative operations.
- This staff takes an oath that they will receive their instructions solely from the UN.



Next

Terry S. Tate: The United Nations Secretariat could be considered the executive arm of the UN. The administration of the entire organization occurs within the Secretariat. This organ of the UN is led by the Secretary General, who is elected by the General Assembly. The Secretary General serves his or her term for a period of five years and may be reelected; however, the entire Security Council must approve of the General Assembly's selection. The Secretary General serves as the chief administrator at meetings of the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, and the Trusteeship Council. This individual also serves as the main spokesperson and face of the United Nations. Serving under the Secretary General is an international civil service that coordinates administrative operations. Members of this staff take an oath that they will receive their instructions solely from the United Nations, and not from an outside government.

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International Criminal Court



Terry S. Tate: Before we finish, it is worth mentioning the International Criminal Court (ICC). This Court is affiliated with the UN, but is not technically a part of the organization. It was independently established in 2002 by an international treaty, and is headquartered at The Hague, Netherlands with the International Court of Justice. Unlike the World Court, the International Criminal Court was created to prosecute individuals and not nations. The main goals of the ICC are to promote international law and punish people for genocide and other war crimes. The ICC will only prosecute crimes if the member state is unwilling or unable to do so itself. Although the UN Security Council may refer certain cases to the International Criminal Court, it is important to note that the United States is not a member. That's it for this edition of *Global Guide*. Back to you, Demi and Glover.

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Ending of Episode



Glover Mint: Thank you, Terry. The United Nations has grown to serve many different roles in the international community, but its primary focus has always been to maintain international peace and security. There have been many wars and other conflicts since its creation, proving that the UN is not always able to achieve this goal. Regardless of the UN's strengths and weaknesses, the organization serves an important purpose in international relations.