The UN
The United Nations

According to the UN charter, the UN has four purposes

- Maintain international peace and security
- Friendly relations
- Cooperate to solve problems
- Humanize the actions of nations

Same purpose as League of Nations (LoN) so how is UN different?

- LoN
  - Lack of power
  - No clear division of responsibility
- UN
  - Clear divisions of authority
  - Power and legitimacy
• UN Security Council (UNSC)
  • Primary responsibility: maintaining international peace and security
  • 15 members, with 5 permanent, veto wielding members
    • No coincidence who the 5 permanent members are
    • UN: liberal institution; UNSC: realist institution
  • Tension between power and ideals defines UN
  • Power of UNSC
    • Binding resolutions
    • Chapter VI
    • Chapter VII
• UN General Assembly
  • The keeper of international recognition
  • Seat of moral authority?
  • Largely left out of matters of peace and security

• Secretariat
  • UN Bureaucracy
  • Secretary General can bring matters before the UNSC
  • Role of moral authority, or the bully pulpit theory of politics
• Economic and Social Council
  • Plays a major role in the development of international economic system
  • Coordinates social and economic work of UN
    • World Heath Organization
    • International Labour Organization
    • United Nations Development Program
    • UN Children’s Fund
  • In many ways, the Economic and Social Council seeks to remedy the problems of inequality generated by the system
  • Are these efforts substantial or cosmetic?
International Court of Justice

- Reflects the liberal ideal of domesticating the international system
- In recognition of sovereignty, participation is voluntary.
  - Once a state participates, decisions are binding

- Tool of the weak?
• Impact of the Cold War
  • Political context matters
  • Vetoes in Cold War paralyze UNSC
  • Modern UN form arose out of compromises forced by Cold War
    • No standing army
    • Peacekeeping

• Peacekeeping
  • Limited operational capability
  • Respects sovereignty of the conflicting states, does not impose solutions
  • Does reflect, however, increasing concern over justice
• Does UN still matter?
  • Debates over UN authorization for Iraq war suggest it does
  • As do debates by Libyan rebels to ask for UN support
  • UN has power outside UNSC
    • World Heritage program
    • UNDP
    • Social and Economic programs
    • UNFCCC and COP
  • UN does fail
    • Little autonomous power
    • Bureaucratic politics
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