

The United Nations



In 1945 following World War II, fifty-one countries started an organization to keep the peace, develop friendly relationships among countries, and improve the quality of life for people around the world. This organization, called the United Nations (U.N.), has 193 member nations today. Countries can join the U.N. by decision of the General Assembly upon the recommendation of the Security Council. In its role as global peacekeeper, the U.N. sends troops of its member countries to troubled areas of the world. U.N. peacekeepers wear their own country's uniform, accompanied by the well recognized blue U.N. helmet or beret. The goal of these peacekeeping missions is to provide stability and to prevent further escalation of physical violence, especially against the civilians of a country where peacekeepers are stationed. Currently, the U.N. is involved in several peacekeeping missions around the world.

In its role to improve the quality of life for people around the world, two of the most well-known U.N. organizations are the United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and the World Food Programme (WFP). UNICEF works in areas of the world where children are vulnerable to disease, violence, and abuse. Through collaborative efforts, it works to improve children's health and to protect them from violence and abuse. UNICEF also supports the education of children whose studies have been disrupted by war and violence, as well as growing educational access to those who do not have it. The WFP works to end hunger around the world. The WFP does this by providing school meals to encourage families to keep their kids in school, helping farmers find suitable markets for selling their products and paying people with food in exchange for their labor-building improvements to their communities.



An advantage to the U.S. being a member of the U.N. is that it allows it to have an increased influence on international policy, to help protect American interests abroad, and to help shape international law. This international cooperation addresses economic, social, and humanitarian problems. The U.N.'s promotion of fundamental freedoms and respect for human rights can lead to more democratic governments worldwide. It also strengthens alliances and friendly relations among countries to help to maintain international peace and security.

Some believe that being a part of the U.N. has its disadvantages. First, some argue the U.S. is potentially giving up some of its sovereignty by being a member. Second, the U. S. budgets tax dollars to pay for membership in the U.N. which has led some to argue that money would be better spent at home than abroad. Third, it is difficult to force countries to follow the rules and regulations set by the U.N. Fourth, U.S. involvement with the U.N. could potentially endanger American troops in the wars of other countries. This involvement could become a long-term commitment that some feel does not advance U.S. interests and will result in the loss of life. An example of this is the Korean War.

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