

A Brief History of the United Nations

What do you know about the UN?

(1) The United Nations promotes the work of the international body and reminds us how much more needs to be done to achieve peace and security.

(2) "On United Nations Day, we reflect on the progress we have made in the time since, resolve to carry this progress forward, and reaffirm our commitment to international cooperation rooted in the rights and responsibilities of nations across the globe," the White House said in a press release.

(3) The United Nations has been around for nearly three quarters of a century and we are now two generations removed from World War II—the war that inspired the world to come together to tackle international disputes in a global forum rather than on the battlefield. This has led to us forgetting how the United Nations came about and how it became the institution it is today.

(4) The United Nations, which is now mainly based in New York and Geneva, was the second iteration of an



international organization that was meant to settle issues of war and peace and protect the most vulnerable nations through collective security.

(5) The League of Nations, created in the aftermath of the brutal first World War, was a disaster from the start. While ambitious in scope, it was rejected by the United States Senate, it didn't represent those living under colonial powers, and it showed itself unable to deal with Japanese and Nazi aggression. The League, which was based in Geneva, dissolved quickly during the onset of World War II, which killed tens of millions of people around the globe and saw some of the most horrific mass murder in recorded history.

(6) After the war, representatives of 50 countries, with the leadership of the United States and its president Franklin D. Roosevelt, met in San Francisco at the United Nations Conference on International Organization. There and at Dumbarton Oaks in Washington D.C., they created the United Nations Charter, which was signed by 50 member states on June 26, 1945. The United Nations was born in October of that year, after being ratified by the world's largest powers.

(7) In essence, the United Nations was created with the belief that only a multilateral institution could



guarantee world peace. Talking to each other was better than the behind-the-scenes horse trading for power and prestige that was an essential part of foreign relations beforehand. It also rejected the balance of power-politics that characterized international relations a century before.

(8) The United Nations was primarily a security institution with the Security Council—along with the General Assembly—as its leading body. The United Nations' role has expanded since then to include refugees, environment, weapons, health, and even global criminal justice.

(9) There were 50 initial member of the United Nations. Decolonization, war, and independence movements have helped to create the current 193 member states.

