

San Francisco Conference

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Description At the close of World War II, the prevailing states held formal talks on the establishment of a replacement for the defunct League of Nations. Delegates from fifty countries and a number of non-governmental organizations met for the United Nations Conference on International Organization in San Francisco between 25 April and 26 June 1945.

The catastrophic scope of both World War I and World War II imparted a desperate "common sense" to the project of developing a radically new order of peaceful international relations. Buoyed by an optimism arising from the unprecedented level of international and popular cooperation mobilized to defeat Axis militarism, conference delegates drafted the United Nations Charter on International Organization. The Charter was subsequently ratified at the first General Assembly session on 24 October 1945.

Signatories to the United Nations Charter on International Organization committed themselves to a principled world organization designed to prevent war, reduce poverty, protect human rights, and propagate international law. The dominant role of the established imperialist nations and emergent expansionist superpowers, however, had significant implications in terms of creating an unequal voice for poorer developing countries. Colonized, occupied, neutral and hostile nations were excluded from the conference. Despite widespread dissent, the proceedings established the position and right of veto for the permanent members of the Security Council: China, France, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

The San Francisco conference was animated by real desires for international cooperation in areas such as technology transfer, arms control, conflict prevention, and equitable development; however, many of the current problems faced by the United Nations, from crippling revenue shortfalls, political deadlock, and limited enforcement capacity, can be traced to an initial democratic deficit.