This paper is not intended to be a comprehensive analysis of the history of the United Nations but rather a glimpse at the debates over some of the major issues that were a part of its creation. Many of these same discussions are still ongoing today and a review of the original debate, it is hoped, may shed light on the future evolution of the Organization. Much of the information has been gathered from a series of interviews with those people who were present at the key conferences and who worked as members of the delegations and behind the scenes as witnesses to the history that was being made. An attempt is made to include various points of view, representing the different countries that participated. However, because of the major role played by the United States, and the accessibility of Americans for interview, there is a preponderance of information from the American participants.

The interviews are a part of a collection of Oral Histories on the United Nations which are housed in both the UN Dag Hammarskjöld Library and Yale University Library. Each interview was recorded on audio tape and transcribed into a written document, both of which are included in the collection. There are two distinct sets of interviews used for this paper. Those indicated as UN Oral History Interviews were done by the United Nations during the mid-1980s. Others listed as Yale-UN Oral History Interviews were conducted under a project at Yale University under the direction of James Sutterlin for the UN between 1988 and 1990, and again in 1997 to the present. There are now over 150 interviews in the collection. We are grateful to the UN and Soka Gakkai International for their generous support for the Yale-UN Oral History project, and to the Better World Fund for its support in funding this series of publications. I would also like to thank Jonathan Cristol for his valuable assistance on this paper.
The UN General Assembly in session. (UN/DPI Photo 195009C by Eskinder Debebe)
Introduction

To most of the world, the United Nations symbolizes the hope for international peace and security through global cooperation, dialogue, and collective responses to security threats. The UN flag, as it flies over UN offices and peacekeeping missions around the world, is a constant reminder of this aspiration. The flag's blue field holds a lonely planet earth embraced by olive branches. This cloth was woven from the last remaining threads of hope which had survived two devastating world wars.

In 1945, when the UN was created, nations were emerging from a second world war. Millions had been killed and maimed and much of Europe lay in rubble. The truth of the horrific genocide perpetrated against the Jews and other groups in Europe by the Nazis was coming to light. Yet, only two decades before the outbreak of this renewed violence, the world had witnessed the close of what was thought to be "the war to end all wars." Modern warfighting technology had demonstrated in these two global conflicts its efficiency at killing and destruction. In World War Two, the bombing of innocent civilians and the razing of cities became a doable strategy. The inhumanity of mankind made the front pages of the news on a daily basis. Waves of fear and guilt, images of the very dark side of human nature, washed over us as we witnessed accounts of each new atrocity. Even as the deaths mounted, many began to seek some hopeful solution out of this despair. Many began to hope that those nations which united to defeat the Axis powers might stay united to prevent another world war.
Historical Base

The founders of the United Nations had history to draw upon for their plan. Nations had come together at various times to respond to crises, but the concept of an ongoing global organization was still considered experimental. The United Nations, as an intergovernmental organization, is based on the unit of the State, which in itself had not evolved until well into the 17th century, historically recorded by an agreement reached among several European nations at the Treaty of Wesphalia which ended the Hundred Years War in 1648.

At the onset of statehood, bilateral diplomacy was the primary means of communication and conflict resolution between States, but in nineteenth century Europe that process began to change, and the concept of large-scale, multilateral conferences emerged as a tentative first step toward developing a dialogue on cooperation. Four major conferences took place between 1815 and 1822 in response to the devastation created by the Napoleonic Wars. The first of these, the Congress of Vienna, marked the primary attempt to reach a broader peace through agreement among stronger and weaker powers, through a balance of power, to deter future aggression like that of France under Napoleon. Over the next one hundred years, leaders of Europe's greatest nations, referred to as the Concert of Europe, assembled some thirty times to discuss urgent political matters of the day. These resplendent gatherings took place in Berlin, Paris, London, and other cities around Europe. The most powerful countries became known as the "great powers" who formed a kind of executive committee of European affairs. The Concert gradually admitted new members, accepting Greece and Belgium in 1830 and Turkey in 1856. As UN scholar Inis Claude explains, "Diplomacy by conference became an established fact of life in the nineteenth century."¹

At the same time, in addition to the focus on security issues addressed by the Concert, Europe was also engaging in international efforts to organize across state territories on other issues. River commissions were created to manage navigation on the Danube and Rhine rivers. The Universal Postal Union and the International Telegraphic Union were created to address the increasing demand for intercommunication, institutions which still exist today. Increased trade and migration brought the spread of diseases like cholera which motivated a total of six international conferences dealing with health issues between 1851 and 1903.

At about the same time, two international “peace” conferences were held at the Hague in the Netherlands, the first in 1899 with twenty-six countries and the second in 1907 at which the number of nations was expanded to forty-four, including most of Latin America. The contribution of the Hague Conferences was not only the introduction of non-European states, but also the sense of equality given to all those participating, in contrast to the “great power” hegemony of the Concert. In addition, the Hague Conferences introduced the notion that international relations might be based on standard norms and the regular convening of members. These conferences did not create a permanent institution, but they laid the ground work for an established multilateral consultation process which eventually led to the formation of an international court (the Permanent Court of International Justice which was located in the Hague) and the League of Nations following the Great War.
The Creation of the League of Nations

The First World War brought an end to the Concert of Europe and a scheduled third Hague peace conference. But, following the War, the two concepts reappeared and were merged into the formation of the League of Nations which retained the great power executive committee status of the Concert in combination with the egalitarian universality of the Hague idea. The League’s Council became the executive committee, granting permanent status to five major powers, who would serve with a number of rotating members, but who enjoyed greater power and influence. The Council and Assembly, reflecting the egalitarian ideal of the Hague concept, granted equal voting rights to all League members. The League not only merged the two earlier ideas but added another layer by establishing a permanent Secretariat and regular meetings to further institutionalize the cooperation which had been initiated by the conferences, river commissions, and public unions.

However, the League experiment encountered a number of serious setbacks before its ultimate collapse at the outbreak of World War Two which it had failed to prevent. First, the United States, whose President Woodrow Wilson is credited with being the “father” of the League never joined. Wilson, a Democrat, did not succeed in convincing the Republican led Senate to give their consent to ratify the treaty which was required for membership. The permanent seat reserved for the US was left unoccupied throughout the League’s short life span. This comment about the absence of the United States was made by someone present at the first Council meeting of the League: “As the afternoon wore on, the sun which streamed across the Seine and through the windows cast the shadow of the empty chair across the table. The shadow lengthened that day and the days that followed until the League died.” State Department staff member, Alger Hiss explains:

Now it is true that in the early days of the League and up until World War II broke out, the State Department was so afraid of being identified with the League since the Senate had rejected the League, that we did not have a regular observer. We had Prentiss Gilbert in Geneva report unofficially; the League was hush-hush, but only for that reason; no real hostility to it. . . . .

\[2\] Ibid., p. 87; This comment by Edwin L. James was quoted in his obituary, New York Times, December 4, 1951.
\[3\] Yale-UN Oral History Interview with Alger Hiss, October 11, 1990, p. 5.
The other problem was that two of the permanent members on the League's Council were Italy and Japan who emerged as aggressor nations, forming an unholy union with Nazi Germany to ignite yet another global conflict. The League's rules of consensus gave everyone on the Council a veto which deadlocked the organization. The procedures were clearly a stumbling block, but the will to act was also weak, leaving it unable to effectively react when permanent member Japan invaded Manchuria and Italy invaded Ethiopia. While economic sanctions were imposed on Italy, in fact, they were removed when Italy completed its occupation of Ethiopia. The League's creators believed that war could be prevented through peaceful settlement and hoped to thwart aggression through collective action by its members. But, the League Covenant never condemned war and only asked its members to wait three months before resorting to war. The League had been built on the premise that war was a mistake and that dialogue and negotiation could resolve disputes that might arise among its members. Ultimately, League members lacked the will to deal with the purposeful aggression of the Axis powers.
The War Years

United States President Franklin Roosevelt and his Secretary of State Cordell Hull still believed in the Wilsonian concept of the League even though it had been discredited for failing to deal effectively with the aggressive tactics which eventually led to another worldwide conflict. During the war years, Roosevelt instructed his State Department staff to reconstitute a framework based on the League idea which would not only provide the means for consultation and peaceful settlement but also give the organization enforcement powers, or “teeth” to prevent aggression. It was assumed that the new institution would have a plenary assembly and an “executive” council much as the League had done. However, because the new organization was to have enforcement powers a new strategy had to be devised. Under the League, the Council and the Assembly had concurrent responsibilities. The Council had enforcement authority but neither the will nor the effective means to carry it through. Ruth Russell, in her excellent book on the drafting of the Charter describes the thinking of the State Department and Roosevelt at the time:

"Given the fundamental decision to clothe the new institution with some kind of enforcement power, it was natural to think of making the smaller organ more of an executive agent for the whole organization and of centering in it the control of the security function."\(^4\)

Roosevelt had expressed enthusiasm for an enforcement mechanism based on the wartime alliance of the four major powers: Britain, China, the Soviet Union, and the U.S. France, which had been occupied by Germany from the onset of the war, was not a part of these preliminary discussions. In the Moscow Declaration of October 1943, Roosevelt and Hull carefully orchestrated an agreement among the four foreign ministers to pledge their countries to continuing wartime cooperation through the establishment of an organization committed to the maintenance of international peace. The atmosphere at the 1943 Moscow conference was positive on the Soviet side, as well. Alexei Roschin who attended the meeting for the Soviets agreed: “Yes, it was positive at the Moscow conference on foreign affairs in 1943 when Molotov, Hull, and Eden met."\(^5\) In principle it was decided that a [founding] conference should take

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\(^5\) The Chinese foreign minister was not in Moscow at the meeting but signed later.
place and the organization was set up.” However, in Washington, a State Department committee created to study these proposals did not favor the idea of providing such predominance for the major powers and suggested that there be a larger body which would look more like the League Council in order to better balance the might of the “Big Four.” These powers would still make up an “Executive Committee” but any decision emanating from the body would have to have a majority of the whole Council membership, including the votes of those holding non-permanent seats.

It was felt that the consent of the major powers was necessary because they would be providing the military force required to give the organization the “teeth” it needed. These nations would not be willing to have their militaries conscripted into an enforcement action against their will. They would withdraw from the organization. On the other hand, unanimity of the whole Council as had been required under the League was to be avoided. To ensure the solidity of the enforcement threat, the decisions of the Council would have to be binding on all the members in the organization.

When President Roosevelt addressed the nation over the radio on Christmas Eve 1943, he had laid the ground work for his case to the American people:

> Britain, Russia, China, and the United States and their allies represent more than three-quarters of the total population of the earth. As long as these four Nations with great military power stick together in determination to keep the peace there will be no possibility of an aggressor Nation arising to start another world war.

> But those four powers must be united with and cooperate with all the freedom-loving peoples of Europe, and Asia, and Africa, and the Americas. The rights of every Nation, large and small, must be respected and guarded as jealously as are the rights of every individual within our own Republic.

The United States was the pivotal power and took the lead on the creation of this new organization. The fact that the US was also a democracy is key to the evolution of the conceptual development underlying the structure and wording of the Charter. Roosevelt knew that the United States could not become a member of the new institution without Senate approval. He had learned from Wilson’s experience that this could be difficult. He therefore set about early in

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6 Yale-UN Oral History Interview with Alexei Roschin on May 25, 1990, p. 3.
the process to bring leaders of the Senate into the dialogue through a special committee headed by Republican Senator Arthur Vandenberg and Democratic Senator Tom Connally. Roosevelt invited another leading Republican to the delegation, someone who had spoken out in favor of a United Nations, Governor Harold Stassen, who at that time was serving on the staff of Admiral Halsey:

Then that message from President Roosevelt showed that he had remembered my advocacy and he named me as the third [member] of our party, the Republican Party. Senator Arthur Vandenberg was the Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the leading Republican in the United States Senate. Congressman Eaton was the Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, the leading Republican in the House. I was then the third Republican that he appointed... As far as I know, I was the first one in active public life in the United States to advocate that there should be a United Nations.8

Senator Vandenberg was deeply concerned that the new organization would undertake to keep a “just” peace. In addition, the Senate foreign relations committee noted a concern expressed by a number of civic groups for the position of smaller states within the organization. Secretary Hull and Roosevelt took very seriously the Senators’ concerns because in the U.S. democratic system they needed the concurrence of the Senate and the American people. Senate concerns prompted Roosevelt to make this statement on June 15, 1944:

We are not thinking of a superstate with its own police forces and other paraphernalia of coercive power. We are seeking effective agreement and arrangements through which the nations would maintain, according to their capacities, adequate forces to meet the needs of preventing war and of making impossible deliberate preparations for war, and to have such forces available for joint action when necessary.9

Thus, Roosevelt worked out a strategy to sustain support for his proposal to create a multilateral permanent body. He carefully courted both political parties and the American people, while at the same time orchestrating his plan on a global level with the major powers.

8 UN Oral History Interview with Harold Stassen, April 29, 1983, p. 4.
Talks at Yalta. Seated, left to right: Winston Churchill, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Joseph Stalin (UN Photo)
When the preparations for a new international organization were ready for discussion by the major powers, Roosevelt called a meeting together which was held at a large estate named Dumbarton Oaks located in Washington, D.C. Secretary Hull was ill and Edward Stettinius was placed in charge. The US team that had contributed to the preparations included, among others, Ralph Bunche, Alger Hiss, Grayson Kirk, and an American of White Russian origin named Leo Pasvolsky. The creation of the United Nations was a US endeavor.

What was done by that research group up until at least the Dumbarton Oaks talks makes it proper to say that the United States really was the architect of the UN. That phrase has been prated about. But it's accurate - the Russians had too many distractions, the British didn't have the manpower, and we did - we had an extraordinary group of academic talent to work on all manner of things to indicate how much dedication was involved: when Ralph Bunche was invited to join, it was unusual at that time to have any black officer in a position of importance. Cordell Hull was then Secretary of State and was as interested in the UN as any, although the real father of the UN - almost an obsession - was Franklin Roosevelt. When those in charge of gathering staff, the research staff, wanted Ralph Bunche particularly because of his knowledge of Africa, Hull said OK (remember he was from Tennessee).

Hiss describes the attitude of the team towards the League experiment:

The League was regarded as definitely our forerunner. There was no hostility toward it. There was a feeling that it had to be improved upon, that it had failed, and that we could learn from its failure. It was not universal enough; it was too Euro-centered, and it didn't seem to us to have the necessary powers that an international organization should have. And also we knew we would in a literal sense succeed the

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10 Leo Pasvolsky spoke Russian and worked with the Soviets on language issues between English and Russian for the writing of the Charter in San Francisco. Ruth Russell dedicated her book to him.

League and take over its properties and its functions. But the UN in no sense was hostile. The League was considered a brave experiment and there was much we could learn from its few successes and its failures.\textsuperscript{12}

The team set about preparing for the meetings at Dumbarton Oaks which took place in two sessions. The Soviets and the British met with the Americans first, starting the discussions on August 21, 1944. The Soviets left on September 28 and the next day the Chinese arrived for a nine-day meeting with the Anglo-Americans. This procedure was a political necessity at the request of the Soviets who had not entered the war in the Pacific against Japan and did not want to appear to the Japanese that they were in collusion with the Chinese. The meeting with the Chinese was largely a formality and Hiss claims that they were not major participants in the process.

A significant outline of the Charter was produced at Dumbarton Oaks. It was agreed that there would be a Security Council, a General Assembly, a Secretariat, and an International Court of Justice. Alger Hiss who took the notes for the State Department at the meeting explains that the “Economic and Social Council was only barely sketched” and “Trusteeship was not taken up at all.”\textsuperscript{13} The voting on the Security Council, including the veto was discussed but not settled at Dumbarton Oaks and was taken up again at Yalta. In Washington, the Soviet Ambassador to the US, Andrei Gromyko, headed the Soviet delegation. Alexander Cadogan represented the British and Edward Stettinius headed the American delegation. The Chinese delegation was led by the Chinese Ambassador to London, V.K. Wellington Koo. Certain politically sensitive issues like the veto and trusteeship had to wait until the meeting at Yalta where the heads of State would take up these matters.

At Dumbarton Oaks there was no agreement on exactly what the membership of the new organization ought to be except that members should be “peace loving” nations. Under instruction from Moscow, Ambassador Gromyko stated that the Soviet Union wanted a seat for each of the fifteen Soviet republics plus a seat for the Soviet Union itself, for a total of sixteen members. Hiss remembers Roosevelt telling the American team to say to Gromyko that if they insist on that, “Tell him the whole thing's off.”\textsuperscript{14} Roosevelt basically took Gromyko's statement as a bargaining position, but nevertheless, this issue would go through various stages before it was finally settled. Both Stettinius and Cadogan found Gromyko quite “compatible” to work with and they felt that he understood the American position on the fifteen republics. It was mentioned that in that case, the US could invite all 48 states to join.

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., p. 3.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., p. 3.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., p. 6.
Another point of contention between the Soviets and the Western powers which surfaced at Dumbarton Oaks was the issue of what the competence of the organization should be. The British and the Americans both agreed that the organization should address economic and social issues as well as strictly security considerations. The belief was that hostilities in Europe which had contributed to conflict had in part arisen from economic and social problems and that any organization dealing with the prevention of war would have to also address those issues which underlay the fundamental causes. The Soviets, on the contrary, felt strongly that the new structure should only deal with security. Alexei Roschin, adviser to the Soviets, explains that they were “strongly against” any other competency for the organization. They were committed to the idea of collective enforcement even to the extent that they strongly supported the creation of the UN Military Staff Committee which would be made up of the military chiefs of staff of the five major powers. The Soviets also wanted the veto to apply to all decisions emanating from the Security Council even on procedural matters. Interestingly, Alger Hiss recounts that initially the British and most particularly Churchill were not in favor of the veto and had to be convinced.

The initial attitude of Churchill, we understood to our surprise, was against the veto... I think it's because he didn't fully understand the issue. We were told... that Marshal Smuts had persuaded Churchill to accept and to insist upon, to be in favor of the veto for the Great Powers.15

A number of things were resolved at Yalta a few months later which had been left unfinished at the Dumbarton Oaks meeting. In contrast to the Washington meeting, Yalta was at the level of heads of State. Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin met at Yalta from February 4-11, 1945. The issue of membership was essentially resolved even though some of the agreements unraveled by the time the delegates reached San Francisco later on. The term “peace loving nations” was defined at Yalta to mean those countries that had declared war on the Axis powers by March 1, 1945. Argentina still had not declared war and had been supporting Nazi Germany to the anger of the Soviets, in particular. The Soviets at Yalta felt that the agreement meant that Argentina would not become an original member and would not be invited to the San Francisco Conference where the Charter would be finalized.

On the issue of the fifteen republics, at Yalta Stalin suggested that the Soviet Union plus three republics should be original members: Lithuania, the Ukraine, Russia.

15 Ibid., p. 7.
The Meetings at Dumbarton Oaks and Yalta

and Byelorussia. The US position was absolutely negative. They were constituent parts of the Soviet Union and not sovereign states. But every time the issue came up, the Soviets would say to the British, “And what about India?” Churchill was adamant that India, which was still under British control, had to be a member however one might think about its sovereign status. That was the stalemate until a diplomatic mistake was made which ironically cleared up the matter. Alger Hiss, who again was the secretary and note-taker at Yalta, describes what happened. The foreign ministers (for Britain: Anthony Eden, for the Soviet Union: Vyacheslav Molotov, and for the US: Edward Stettinius – Stettinius had taken over as Secretary of State for the failing Cordell Hull on December 1, 1944) met in the morning at their dacha and the heads of government met in the afternoon at another dacha:

It was my duty to read the minutes as soon as they were completed, and to my surprise I saw that the minutes said that agreement had been reached, that votes would be given to White Russia [Byelorussia] and the Ukraine. So I rushed up to Eden and said, “Mr. Eden, it’s a mistake, we didn’t agree.” And he, quite testily – which wasn’t his usual manner – said, “You don’t know what’s happened, speak to Ed.” I went to Stettinius and he threw up his hands and said that after the meeting on which there was substantial agreement on many matters, he had reported to Roosevelt as he usually did and had started by saying, “Mr. President, it was a marvelous meeting. We reached general agreement.”

At that moment Bohlen brought Stalin in for a personal call on Roosevelt. Not a negotiating call, really just a courtesy call. Roosevelt in his expansive way said, “Marshal Stalin, I have just been getting a report from my Secretary of State on the morning meeting and he told me there was agreement on everything.” Stettinius started to grab at Roosevelt’s sleeve, but Stalin came back quickly “and the two republics too?” And Roosevelt said, “Yes.”

Once the error was made, Roosevelt thought about later saying to Stalin that it was a mistake but decided against it. He understood that Stalin was seeking a balance in what was heavily a Western organization. He did at one point ask Stalin if Hawaii and Alaska could be admitted as members and Stalin said “Sure,” but that would have been impossible under the US Constitution.

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16 Ibid., pp. 11-12.
17 Ibid., p. 13.
the end, it was generally agreed that the Ukraine and Byelorussia could come to San Francisco and once there they would be accepted as voting members. The other agreement on representation that was reached at Yalta was that Poland would be represented by a joint delegation made up of government members in exile in both London and Moscow.

Trusteeship was another contentious issue at Yalta, but in this case, Churchill was the one who bristled. At one of the plenary sessions, Stettinius read out the proposal for a trusteeship council. Churchill who had apparently not be briefed beforehand was completely caught off guard and literally “blew up.” Eden had not had time to clear it with Churchill before Yalta, even though Eden and Stettinius with the UK and US delegations had met first at Malta before going on to the Yalta conference. Eden had said at Malta that he had not had time to clear it with the Prime Minister. Churchill shouted that he had not been elected the King’s first minister “to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire.” Roosevelt, who was presiding, had to call for a recess. Churchill was simply fuming. Hiss was asked to write down in plain language what trusteeship stood for. So, in long hand he wrote, “the territories in trusteeship shall be territories mandated under the League, territories detached from the Axis powers and such other territories as any member nation may wish to place in trusteeship.” When Churchill read it, he said that it was in that case, “all right.” So, the crisis passed. Of course, the Americans were well aware that after the war, with the weakened condition of both France and the United Kingdom, their colonies might in fact fall under the Trusteeship Council. The Soviets were supportive of the trusteeship idea and held a very anti-colonialist position, which to some was pure hypocrisy.

The other issues which seemed to have been resolved at Yalta were the veto and the competency of the General Assembly. Stalin finally agreed to allow the General Assembly to deal with whatever issues that arose in the international arena, including economic and social subjects. They accepted that the Council would be reserved for security issues and would be the central mandatory body on security affairs. An important issue related to the veto was also met with general agreement. Gladwyn Jebb (UK) had served as Cadogan’s assistant at Dumbarton Oaks and again at Yalta. Jebb and Cadogan had discussed at Dumbarton Oaks the idea that when deciding on peaceful means of settling disputes which became Chapter 6 of the UN Charter, the great powers would lose the right to veto and that was surprisingly accepted by Stalin at Yalta. As Jebb describes, “a permanent member would have a veto [on Chapter 7], but that they would not have a veto on the previous section, which dealt with the pacific
Meetings at Dumbarton Oaks and Yalta

settlement of disputes.” Stalin also agreed that the veto could be limited to substantive issues and was not to be exercised on administrative matters or peaceful settlements. That agreement was later challenged by his foreign minister, Vyacheslav Molotov, at San Francisco. But, there was also general agreement at Yalta that there ought to be an Economic and Social Council.

Other ideas were floated during this period, some which were never taken up. Gladwyn Jebb describes a suggestion made by Churchill to create regional security councils:

That was Churchill’s idea, but I always thought that that was slightly dotty. He hadn’t thought it out. The idea was that there was going to be a Council of Asia... He thought that because we wanted a Council of Europe there should be a Council of Asia, but he hadn’t thought it out. It was nuts. Even his idea of a Council of Europe, nobody knew - and he was quite incapable of explaining - whether the Russians should be in or out, whether we should be in or out, what our influence should be.

These ideas which seemed so outlandish at the time, fifty years later are at the heart of current political debates. Nevertheless, ideas which were deemed unusable at the time were left for another day and the meeting at Yalta was generally congenial. It was felt by Alger Hiss that Churchill, Stalin, and Roosevelt believed that they had a cooperative arrangement and genuine agreement on the principles of the new organization. That spirit had begun well before Yalta at Dumbarton Oaks where Stettinius, Gromyko, and Cadogan had cultivated a cooperative atmosphere.

20 Ibid., p. 35a.
Revisions were made in the Dumbarton Oaks proposal after Yalta and the document was then distributed to the nations that were invited to meet in San Francisco to write the final Charter. However, the Latin Americans, who would make up 21 of the original 51 members, called a preliminary meeting in Chapultepec, Mexico (outside Mexico City) in February and March, called the “Inter-American Conference on the Problems of Peace and War.” Ambassador Perez Guerrero and Parra Perez of Venezuela among others attended the conference. Padillo Nervo and his assistant Alfonso Garcia Robles represented Mexico. Perez Guerrero explains that US Secretary of State Stettinius came to Mexico directly from Yalta. The Latin Americans had several concerns they called for a stronger General Assembly, universality of membership, and assured representation for Latin America on the Security Council. The role of regional organizations was of particular importance and this was discussed extensively in Mexico. As described by Perez Guerrero:

The Pan-American Union was in existence, not the OAS as it became later on after the Conference of Bogota. But there it was the opinion of Parra Perez among other people - others as well, and in the end it was the opinion that prevailed - that that organization should be called upon to play a role in conflicts that would arise within the region, involving the whole hemisphere.21

The Latin American countries were prepared to press for the role of regional organizations which was later taken up in San Francisco and became a part of the Charter. Also, in Chapultepec, there was support for Argentina to join the original members of the United Nations as well as support for issues like decolonization. They would take these ideas with them when they arrived in San Francisco the next month.

21 UN Oral History Interview with Ambassador Perez Guerrero, April 22, 1983, p. 12.
President Harry S. Truman's arrival at the San Francisco Opera House (UN Photo 2180)
The Conference at San Francisco was to finalize the structure and language of the Charter for the new organization now to be called the United Nations, named after the title given to those nations which had united as allies to defeat the Axis powers. While the atmosphere was enthusiastic as the war in Europe was drawing to a close, there were still a number of unresolved issues to be debated and resolved.

President Roosevelt who had been the energy behind the creation of the UN would not make it to San Francisco. He died of a massive cerebral hemorrhage on April 12 only days before the Conference opened on April 25, 1945. He was succeeded by his Vice President Harry Truman.

Many of the delegates had arrived by train, crossing the vast plains and winding through the high mountains of the western United States before arriving in the “City by the Bay” in early spring 1945. They were impressed by the massive size of this country which in contrast to Europe had not been touched by the devastating destruction of the war. There was a sense of enthusiasm and many had never been to such an international gathering. The Venezuelan Perez Guerrero describes: “There was a genuine spirit of co-operation, I suggest. Some of the countries, like Saudi Arabia, were very new. My first conversation on oil with Saudi Arabia dated from that time, from the train taking us to San Francisco with some of the younger chaps of the Saudi Arabian delegation.”

Spring in San Francisco was a welcome change from the bombing, fires, and rubble of the war. Plans were made to receive the international delegations with enthusiasm and touches of elegance. The main plenary sessions were to take place in the Opera House at the Civic Center and the adjacent Veterans’ Memorial Building. Special chefs were brought in to prepare the food and hotels made room to house these important guests.

In Washington, other preparations were being made. Oliver Lundquist, who was on loan to the State Department from the US Office of Strategic Services (OSS), was assigned to work on the graphic presentations for the San Francisco Conference. His team was in charge of designing an official delegate’s badge as a credential to identify members of the Conference. They did not really start out to design a logo for the UN:

“We were thinking in terms of getting a delegate button, badge and credentials made for San Francisco and it was not any long range plan on

\[\text{Ibid., p. 19.}\]
our part. We had several ideas on it and had a little contest among ourselves in the agency and came up with this one which was designed by a fellow named Donald McLaughlin – I have to give him primary credit for it – he was one of my assistants at the San Francisco Conference and he was more in charge of the actual graphic work there.23

Lundquist explains that the color blue was purposefully selected and when they showed the design to Secretary of State Stettinius, he responded:

“Oh that’s fine and I like that color.” We had used the blue color as the opposite of red, the war color, and then peace . . . So then we referred to it as Stettinius blue. It was a gray blue, a little different than the modern United Nations flag.24

Lundquist explains that the symbol of the globe was slightly different in the original design:

Well, actually, it looked superficially like the existing one except that the latest one has been changed slightly. We had originally based it on what’s called an azimuthal north polar projection of the world, so that all the countries of the world were spun around this concentric circle and we had limited it in the southern sector to a parallel that cut off Argentina because Argentina was not to be a member of the United Nations. We centered the symbol on the United States as the host country . . . Subsequently, in England our design was adapted as the official symbol of the United Nations, centered on Europe as more the epicenter I guess of the east-west world, and took into account the whole earth including Antarctica. By then, of course, Argentina had been made a member of the United Nations so that it was no longer necessary to cut them off.25

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23 Yale UN Oral History Interview with Oliver Lundquist on April 19, 1990, pp. 5-6.
24 Ibid., p. 6.
25 Ibid., pp. 6-7.
At San Francisco, the founders had to come to agreement on the major themes and language to be used in the Charter. While they had agreed upon the major purpose of the organization to maintain international peace and security, they had to reach consensus on other points: 1) membership in the organization; 2) competency of the General Assembly and Security Council; 3) Trusteeship; 4) the role of the Security Council and the power of its members, including the use of the veto; 5) the role of the Secretary-General; and finally 6) the framework for the use of force by the United Nations.

Membership

Immediately, the issue of membership exploded. The Latin American countries who had met in Mexico insisted that Argentina be accepted for original membership at the Conference. Assistant Secretary for Latin American Affairs in the US State Department, Nelson Rockefeller, was at the Mexico meeting and supported the Latin American position on Argentina. The Latin Americans wanted “universal membership,” meaning that all countries would be eligible for membership. Taking most of the delegations by surprise, including the Americans, Argentina was proposed for membership in the opening sessions at San Francisco. Foreign Minister Molotov, leading the Soviet delegation, was furious that the Yalta agreement had been ignored. But the Latin Americans had 21 votes at the Conference and refused to accept the membership of the Ukraine and Byelorussia. The US position taken by Truman was that while they had agreed to admit the two republics as members that did not necessarily mean that they could become original members and participate in the Conference.

The issue of the three candidates was sent to committee. Molotov tried unsuccessfully to have the Argentine issue removed from the agenda altogether. As a gesture of good will, the Latin Americans agreed to vote in favor of the two republics and the motion was passed unanimously. But Molotov still refused to equate this with an acceptance of Argentina, calling the Argentine government fascist and throwing himself into a tirade which was captured by the press covering the Conference. Senator Vandenberg thought that the entire episode had “done more in four days to solidify Pan America against Russia than anything that ever happened.”

26 Molotov, apparently in retaliation on the Argentine issue and because Poland was still not represented, began to object to limitations on
the veto and the broad competence of the General Assembly which had been resolved at Yalta. President Truman had to resort to sending a special envoy to Moscow to seek an audience with Stalin to clear things up. Alexei Roschin who was among the Soviet delegation in San Francisco says that Stalin accepted the envoy's presentation of the matter and informed Molotov to adhere to the decisions taken at Yalta on the veto and the General Assembly. Argentina was accepted as a member and the Conference proceeded. Molotov eventually left San Francisco, and to everyone's relief, Ambassador Gromyko took up the leadership of the Soviet delegation.

Competency of the General Assembly

Ambassador García Robles of Mexico who took part in the Chapultepec Conference and was also in the Mexican delegation at San Francisco recalls that the Latin Americans also emphasized the importance of enhancing and making more specific the powers of the General Assembly. It was agreed that the General Assembly could take up any matter considered important to the members, but that when the Security Council was seized with an issue, the General Assembly would refrain from taking up the matter. The competency of regional organizations in relation to the UN as had been discussed in Mexico was also agreed upon and this language was entered into the Charter. This provision recognized the right to resolve a local issue regionally before handing it over to the international body. Importantly, it was eventually agreed that the General Assembly would not only be able to address economic, social, and security issues, but that it would have power over the budget.

Trusteeship

The issue of trusteeship was resolved at the Conference, but again not without controversy. Majid Khadduri, a member of the Iraqi delegation, recalls that the Arab countries were concerned about the status of Syria and Lebanon which had been invited to participate in San Francisco. Both countries had been League of Nations mandates of France before the war. But because France had been occupied by the Nazis, it was not able to function as a mandatory power during the

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27 Oral History Interview with Alfonso García Robles on March 21, 1984, transcript is available in the Dag Hammarskjöld Library.
28 Ruth Russell describes that there had been general agreement even in earlier drafts that the Assembly would decide the budget but there continued to be discussion on what role the Council might also play in these decisions. Ultimately, it was agreed that the General Assembly would have that authority. See Russell pp. 377-8.
war years and Syria and Lebanon had been left on their own. They, therefore, considered themselves independent.

The Arab delegations wanted to make sure that countries that had been invited to become members of the United Nations would not fall into the category of trusteeship, throwing Syria and Lebanon back under French control. Because the League mandates were still in force, technically France was still the mandatory power over Syria and Lebanon. In response to the Arab proposal, France tried to force Syria to sign a treaty delineating certain demands that would maintain some French control. Syria refused and during the San Francisco Conference in May, France began bombing Damascus. The US and Britain protested the bombing and insisted that the French withdraw, highlighting that the world was trying to establish peaceful relations and ought not to resort to war tactics. When the French withdrew, the Syrians claimed their independence and refused to negotiate any further with the French. Khadduri explains that the Arab countries wanted assurances that these countries would not fall under the Trusteeship Council:

> For this reason Arab countries proposed that there should be something mentioned in the Charter of the United Nations that these countries should never be considered under the Trusteeship system of the United Nations but should be treated as independent since they had already been participating in the San Francisco Conference. This matter was taken to the steering committee. It was suggested to add a special Article, (Article 78) which states that “The trusteeship shall not apply to territories which have become members of the United Nations...”

Colonial issues, as such, were not to be discussed at the Conference so as not to alienate the colonial powers, but there was another reason. The United States itself had been internally split on the issue. Lawrence Finkelstein, as a young member of the staff, witnessed this debate from inside the State Department:

> The thing that I wanted to emphasize that I think is fascinating is that the reason that the colonial agenda was not as far advanced by the

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29 The League was not officially terminated until early 1946, a few weeks after the UN General Assembly's first meeting.
31 Ibid., p. 8.
time the San Francisco Conference began as were most of the other issues of the Charter is that there had been a deep split in the US government on this issue going back for years. This emerged sharply in the late spring of 1944 as planning for the Dumbarton Oaks conversations was moving into an advanced stage. There had been a lot of preparation in the State Department of drafts for a trusteeship plan and a declaration having to do with principles of colonial government. There had been some consultations with the British. Most thought that this plan was ready to proceed but, it was the military service which threw a monkey wrench into the works for two reasons. The first, they were very concerned that these questions would involve territorial issues which might open up disputes among the countries still conducting the war against the Axis. We are talking about 1944. Their main argument was that they didn't want to introduce any unnecessarily contentious issues that might cause splits particularly between us and the Russians. The second issue was the belief particularly in the navy that it had to have the islands which we were winning island by island from the Japanese, some of which had been under League of Nations mandate after WW I but others which had not. So, the navy was against any concept of trusteeship which might internationalize those islands and thus deprive the navy of US sovereignty over them. On this they were clearly opposed by the President himself, but somehow or another the navy managed to keep the issue alive. It persisted in the internal debates in Washington right up to the eve of the San Francisco Conference. Indeed they were settled only by a late hour decision, perhaps the last one President Roosevelt reached before he died in Warm Springs. The final shape of the US proposals did not appear until a working group on the train going from the East Coast to San Francisco on the way to the Conference reworked the proposals and came up with the draft that the United States introduced at the Conference.  

Still the issue was not completely settled and a debate arose on whether to use the word "independence" in the Charter when talking about the goal of the administration of colonies or trusteeship territories. According to Finkelstein, Stassen did not want to use the word independence because he was worried about getting the approval of the colonial powers, mainly the British. His staff tried to dissuade him in his car on the way to making his speech, but, ignoring  

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32 Yale-UN Oral History Interview with Lawrence Finkelstein, November 23, 1990, pp. 15-16.
them, he gave a powerful address against using the term which got very negative headlines in the press. This was a massive embarrassment to the US, itself a former colony.

General Carlos Romulo, head of the Philippine delegation at San Francisco, recalls the fight that ensued:

And in the Trusteeship Committee, we were discussing a proposal of the superpowers or the colonial powers then, that the aspiration of non-self-governing peoples should be self-government. I opposed that. I said, "That's not complete. Their aspiration should be self-government or independence. Because self-government is not independence." Well we had a real fight on that. . . . We discussed the point for 2 nights. Finally, we won. It's "self-government or independence." And I don't remember the number of votes. But I think, in the committee, we won by 12 or 14 votes. So, I got a note from Stassen after my reply to the statement of Lord Cranborne, [saying]: "Congratulations. Well done."

So that's why I always say that the contribution of the Philippines to the Charter were two words—self-government or independence. But that opened the door for the non-self-governing peoples which were under trusteeship at that time, to enter the United Nations.

Ultimately, a compromise was reached so that independence was included as a goal for the trust territories but was not included in the wording which dealt with all other colonies. The concept of self-determination also met with some confusion during the Conference. It did not signify, as we interpret today, democracy. It simply meant self-rule, as opposed to colonial rule, be it monarchy, oligarchy, dictatorship, or democracy. The term independence was seen as interchangeable with self-government or self-determination. So, these ideas did not include the concept of democratic rule, just national self-rule by whatever authority might emerge. "They put the word 'independence' in one part and not in the other. That's the compromise they consciously reached. Although self-determination was interpreted by Stassen and others as broad enough to incorporate independence."

33 The Philippines were not independent at the time in 1945.
34 UN Oral History Interview with General Carlos P. Romulo on October 30, 1982, p. 8
35 Interview with Finkelstein, p. 19.
Self-defense

Neither Dumbarton Oaks nor Yalta had addressed the issue of self-defense and it was not included in the Dumbarton Oaks provisions. The issue, however, launched a heated debate in the Mexico meeting which carried over to San Francisco. While Stassen had been against the use of the term independence, he explains he took a different stand on the issue of self-defense. Harold Stassen recalls that he threatened to withdraw from the Conference and let everyone know his reasons if the right to self-defense was not written into the Charter. Stassen explains why he took such a strong stand:

I was concerned as to the matter of self-defense in a circumstance if the Security Council was not acting and what effect that might have. So I originated the suggestion that there would be some kind of a section about nothing in the Charter shall impair the inherent right of self-defense if an armed attack occurs. And that was at first pretty much rejected; of course there was a general sort of a mind-set of those who had worked on the original Dumbarton Oaks draft of objecting to any change in it, especially in the early stages, but it soon became apparent that it needed changing. . . . I circulated it to our United States delegation, then after they agreed it ought to be in there, then they brought it up in the five-Power meetings and talked it over and it finally stayed in.36

The Veto Debate

The principle that there should be a veto was settled at Yalta, but the issue opened up again in San Francisco. In fact, the word veto never appears in the Charter and the San Francisco participants often referred to it as the “unanimity” clause. Nevertheless, the US needed the veto in order to gain Senate ratification and also because the US did not want to be put in the position of committing its resources and troops in enforcement action in all parts of the world against its will. The veto probably produced the most disagreement in San Francisco and according to US Conference participant, Lawrence Finkelstein, “came very close to wrecking the Conference.” Finkelstein explains:

So, the question was not whether there should be a veto but how far down in the process of decision making the veto should apply. Here

36 Interview with Stassen, p. 26.
the United States wanted to avoid the application of the veto to decisions that an issue should be discussed. The Russians were arguing that the decision to discuss should be subject to the veto as well.37

Molotov was very outspoken on the veto and it became a serious issue that divided the big five. The US delegation and the Republicans on the team were very concerned. Harold Stassen describes the discussion:

One of the crucial questions on the veto power was whether the veto could stop even a discussion and whether the veto could prevent any kind of action in the Assembly. There was a lot of earnest examination of just how that should work out. Really Senator Vandenberg and I, and I think the United States delegation, after a lot of discussion, concluded that if the veto could completely stop any kind of expression in the United Nations and any kind of inquiry, any kind of Assembly action, it would be better not to make a start under those circumstances. That led to President Truman sending Harry Hopkins over to see Marshal Stalin... Then out of those further negotiations and the further conference of Hopkins with Marshal Stalin came the revisions down to the point where the actual practice has followed since that time.38

President Truman sent Harry Hopkins to Moscow in May during the Conference and Hopkins went to see Stalin with US Ambassador to the Soviet Union, Averell Harriman. Hopkins was able to get Stalin to overrule Molotov. At that point then there was agreement amongst the five on the extent of the veto which was based on the “chain of events theory.”39 The theory contended that once an item was on the agenda, there could take place a “chain of events” which could lead to threats to the interests of the Great Powers which the veto was established to protect.

So, it came out that, although there can be no veto on discussion as such or on a decision to put an item on the agenda of the Security Council, beyond that the veto is pretty pervasive. That statement of the five powers that I referred to, that they imposed upon the rest of

37 Interview with Finkelstein, p. 23
38 Interview with Stassen, p. 10.
39 The chain of events theory was written by Leo Pasvolsky into the minutes of the American delegation in a volume of Foreign Relations of the United States, 1945, in an official document series of the Conference.
the Conference, also included the so-called double veto. Namely that if there were dispute as to whether the veto should apply or not, that decision itself would be subject to a veto.  

On the issue of the veto, Khadduri states that the Arab countries were essentially pro-Western and therefore accepted the great powers' need for a veto in the Security Council. The smaller countries were generally opposed to the veto but the major powers, now joined by France which had been liberated at the end of the war, presented a unified front. The Latin Americans were particularly resistant to the idea and along with General Carlos Romulo of the Philippines and Foreign Minister Herbert Evatt of Australia put up a fight but eventually had to retreat. The smaller powers, according to Finkelstein, “resented the notion of the veto to begin with and knew that they were going to have to swallow it because there would be no Charter without it and they couldn't afford not to have the Charter.” In the final vote on the veto, 33 nations supported it, two (Cuba and Colombia) voted against it, and 15 countries chose to abstain.

Larry Finkelstein relates an anecdote from the Conferences regarding the veto:

[Senator] Connally was sent on behalf of the US delegation to read the law, the riot act, to the other smaller countries on the question of the veto. He was sent deliberately because everybody understood that he would control whether or not there could be Senate approval. He was a large imposing man, a very memorable character. He always wore a black string tie and he had a twenty gallon hat. He was a Texan. He wore a sort of preachers' black coat. He was marvelous and he played it up. He built up this persona. He was a Fourth of July orator, a stump orator with oratund rhetoric. He was a lot of fun. There he was and he went down to this committee III, 3, to tell them that “if you don't lay off on this veto you're not going to have a Charter. You're going home without it.”

The place next to the US place was occupied by the British, the UK next to the US in alphabetical order around the table. The British on

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41 Interview with Khadduri, p.22.
42 Interview with Romulo, p. 4.
43 Interview with Finkelstein, p. 23.
44 Russell, p. 739.
this occasion were represented by a mild mannered, very distinguished
professor of history who later became Sir Charles Webster. There was
old Connally waving his arms as he spoke as though he were address-
ing 50 thousand people down there in Austin, Texas on the fourth of
July. I watched this poor old Charles Webster slump lower and lower
and lower to avoid having his head knocked off by this waving arm
and finally you could barely see the top of his head over the table.45

The Role of the Secretary-General

In San Francisco, the role of Secretary-General of the UN was considered pri-
marily an administrative position. Ruth Russell’s summary of the discussions on
the election of the chief administrator demonstrates that a number of options
were considered. It was suggested that the General Assembly elect the Secretary-
General on its own. Others proposed that the Security Council could nominate
three candidates from which the General Assembly could select one. It was also
discussed whether or not the deputy secretaries general ought to be elected by
the Assembly, as well. It was settled that the General Assembly would elect the
Secretary-General upon the nomination of the Security Council. The Soviet
delegate argued that the nomination of the Secretary-General was not a proce-
dural matter and therefore was subject to the veto. The British and French sup-
ported that point and the US highlighted that the major powers had to have
confidence in the chief administrator and therefore had to have some control
over the selection. The US also pointed out that the General Assembly had the
power to reject an unsatisfactory candidate. The position was generally consid-
ered as fulfilling a bureaucratic function. Nevertheless, the Secretary-General
was given the power under Article 99 of the Charter to bring an issue to the
attention of the Security Council, thus adding a political competence to the
office. Today, the nature of the office as global leader has evolved well beyond
the original intent.

45 Interview with Finkelstein, p. 27-28. Another version of the Connally story is that it was
rumored that while he was warning the delegates that killing the veto provision would kill
the entire Charter, he calmly tore the draft Charter into shreds and, at the climatic
moment, scattered the shreds on the floor. [letter from Inis Claude to Jean Kraus, April
2001]
The Use of Force

Clearly, the founders of the UN intended for the Organization to be able to use force to deter aggression. This was carefully delineated in Chapter VII of the Charter, specifically in Article 42. Alger Hiss, who was appointed Secretary General of the San Francisco Conference, recalls the attitude at the time:

One reason why I feel confident that military force was foreseen from the beginning is that this was one of the strong reasons why the veto was insisted upon. Because otherwise it would mean that American forces could be called out by non-American officials and this just wouldn’t go down with the American Congress. So I think we oversimplified the idea of a military contingent that would be readily available. This is why the Military Staff Committee seemed so important and of course when the Cold War began it fell into complete disuse, as we were assuming a unanimity of the Permanent Members on enforcement.

The allied powers had worked well together during the war to defeat the Axis Powers and it was felt that this cooperation could continue in peace time. The US had particularly worked closely with the British through the Combined Chiefs. It was a model that seemed immediately available. The Soviets initially also concurred. Alexei Roschin explains that at Dumbarton Oaks,

we insisted that the Military Staff Committee should function as a regular body and we even proposed the creation of [an] international army in order to mix in the different parts of the world to establish a guarantee of security. Later we changed this position; we considered that our attitude concerning the presidency of Truman and his administration was rather complicated and here it was the beginning of the Cold War.

46 Any enforcement, of course, would be subject to the veto and so would be applied selectively. Using collective force selectively does not convey the same meaning as collective security when it is defined narrowly to mean the calling for a guarantee of action against any and every possible aggressor. By inserting the veto provision, they clearly meant that collective action should only occur if the Big Five agreed, and certainly not against one of them. That would have been considered very dangerous. [Claude letter April 2001]
47 Yale UN Oral History Interview with Alger Hiss on October 11, 1990, p. 1.
48 Interview with Roschin, p. 9.
Roschin asserts that the Soviets did not know about the US atomic bomb during the Conference which ended in June and only found out at the time of the bombing of Hiroshima in August 1945. Roschin says that the bomb, of course, changed everything. But during the San Francisco Conference, not even the US delegation knew about the bomb, which was top secret. As the Cold War became more evident and Super Power cooperation less possible, no member State ever signed an agreement with the UN to provide troops. In addition, tired of the war, the troops wanted to go home. Once that happened, it was difficult to remobilize.

**Human Rights**

The global community that gathered in San Francisco to work on the Charter and to observe and influence the proceedings had been deeply troubled by emerging evidence of the holocaust and the contempt for human rights demonstrated by the Nazi regime. Human rights were considered important, but the Charter was primarily focused on collective action as a means of stopping aggression rather than dealing with individual suffering. Determining how to enforce respect for human rights was beyond the scope of the Conference but most felt the need to pay moral homage to the concept. As Inis Claude observes, the founders were remarkable in their ability to both look back and look forward. They did not know exactly what they were creating but they were determined to achieve a “just and lasting peace.”

Provisions on human rights brought up by the Americans at Dumbarton Oaks had been opposed by the other leaders. But in Chapultepec, the issue came up again and was discussed with Stettinius. The Latin American delegations and some forty groups representing professional, labor, business, religious, and women’s organizations strongly lobbied for the inclusion of human rights at San Francisco. Women delegates from several Latin American countries insisted that the phrase “to ensure respect for human rights without distinction as to race, sex, condition or creed” be incorporated. Ultimately, provisions for a Commission for Human Rights was written into the Charter. It is clear the Great Powers never intended to enforce these moral considerations, particularly with respect to the equal sovereignty of the members and other provisions in the Charter which specifically state that the domestic issues of a member were beyond the purview of the Organization. However, those who lobbied for the

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49 Ibid., p. 10.
50 Claude, p. 80.
inclusion of human rights were visionaries who knew, or at least hoped, that these words would take on greater impetus as the UN matured. At the first meeting of the UN General Assembly in 1946, Eleanor Roosevelt was asked to chair the human rights committee which was charged with writing the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

San Francisco Conference, 29 May 1945. Delegations of the “Big 5” [China, France, USSR, UK, and US] (UN Photo 50-22)
The United Nations is Born

The Charter of the United Nations was signed by fifty members at San Francisco on June 26, 1945; Poland which never arrived, was nevertheless allowed to sign as an original member in the months that followed, bringing the total of original members to fifty-one. Alger Hiss describes the euphoria as the final draft was signed. He explains that Truman placed tremendous importance on it, so much so that the original document was given its own parachute on the flight back to Washington even though Alger Hiss, who was carrying it, had to travel without one.

It was decided that there was no proper – let’s call it receptacle, place of safekeeping – for the Charter. The United Nations hadn’t come into existence, and the conference Secretariat would be disbanded. And it was agreed that Truman would keep it in the safe in the White House. Since the US had been the host, this would be appropriate. I was therefore deputed to carry the Charter to the White House and deliver it to him for that kind of safekeeping. And the army put a plane at my disposal for that purpose. The humorous aspect of this was that since the Charter was so valuable it had a parachute attached to it – and I didn’t.

After signing, each nation undertook through its own process to ratify the Charter. On July 28, 1945, the United States Senate approved the Charter by a vote of 89 to 2. With the Senate consent in hand, Truman signed the ratification act, and the Charter was thus ratified. The bipartisan participation by the Senate throughout the process proved to be a very successful strategy. Never before had a treaty been so publicly debated. By October 24th, 1945, twenty-nine countries had signed and ratified the Charter constituting a majority of the original fifty-one signatories. October 24th continues to be celebrated as the birth date of the United Nations. On that day, the United Nations was officially constituted and by December 27th, all the original members had ratified.

52 The Soviets had arrested the London Poles when they arrived in Moscow to meet with their counterparts, the Lublin faction. This was a clear violation of the Soviet’s agreement to let them meet and select a joint delegation to go to San Francisco. This event took place during the Conference and the news headlines created quite a stir, a warning that the Cold War was not far off. Toward the end of the Conference an agreement was finally reached on a provisional government for Poland but not in time to reach San Francisco. Russell, p. 929.

53 Yale UN Oral History Interview with Alger Hiss on October 11, 1990, p. 8-9.
While there had been inklings of the Cold War during the negotiating process, there was still a feeling of hope that this new international cooperation could be sustained. Delegates of the participating nations at San Francisco formed a Preparatory Commission and met in London to make arrangements for the first meeting of the United Nations and to plan for the transfer of certain activities from the League to the UN. Enthusiasm still filled the hall at the first opening session of the United Nations General Assembly in London on January 10, 1946.

The United Nations celebrated its 50th Anniversary in 1995. In the course of its first half-century, the UN has withstood the pressures of the Cold War, decolonization, and numerous regional crises. The UN Secretariat has matured into a competent international bureaucracy, much larger and more complex than anticipated in 1945; the Secretary-General, once primarily considered to be an administrator, has become a major world leader. With the end of the Cold War and the new era of globalization, the UN has been under pressure to reform. Suggestions are that the Security Council ought to reflect changes in the global power balance and should become more transparent. But the Charter has proven to be a flexible instrument, only amended three times to enlarge the Security Council from its original 11 members to today's 15 and to expand the membership on the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) twice to its present 54 members. The UN has grown from its 51 member-signatories in 1945 to 189 members in 2001. Decolonization, including the trust territories, so sensitive an issue at Yalta and San Francisco, was constructively and effectively overseen by the General Assembly and the Trusteeship Council. All the former colonies and trust territories are now independent members of the UN and the Trusteeship Council no longer has any real function.

Any organization must adapt to the changing times and the UN has continued to find ways to creatively shape itself to its new environment. However, the UN will need to continue to evolve and change as the political and security environment changes around it. If for some reason it fails to adapt, it may be pushed aside by more relevant institutions or it may cease to exist like the Concert and the League before it. An examination of the debates and issues of its birth facilitates an understanding of how it may or may not need to change. Perhaps the concurrence of the major powers is needed to solidify enforcement and maintain a credible deterrence. But by what criteria do we measure which are the major powers of a given era? If we give them this power, how can we be sure they will share the same sense of global responsibility and act in concert? Through the pressures of a growing democratic civil society, the UN is being forced to become more accountable for its actions as are the member states which drive the decisions and policies. The institution will have to adapt to this changing environment.
Carlos Romulo, one of the founders of the UN at the Conference in San Francisco in 1945, says quite succinctly:

"We have, in the United Nations, the only world forum that we will ever have. You abolish the United Nations and we'll have to create another one. Voltaire once said, the great French writer, "if we didn't have a god, we'd have to create a god." The same thing is true."

Today, the United Nations occupies a political space at the center of the global dialogue. You cannot pick up a newspaper without finding something on the UN. As was stated in the United Nations Millennium Declaration in 2000, "Responsibility for managing worldwide economic and social development, as well as threats to international peace and security, must be shared among the nations of the world and should be exercised multilaterally. As the most universal and most representative organization in the world, the United Nations must play the central role."

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54 Interview with Romulo, p. 11.
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Yale- United Nations Oral History Project

Interview Transcripts can be found at Yale University, New Haven, CT: Sterling Memorial Library and at the United Nations, New York, NY: The Dag Hammerskjöld Library

Lawrence Finklestein, November 23, 1990
Perez Guerrero, April 22, 1983
Alger Hiss, February 13, 1990, October 11, 1990
Gladwyn Jebb, June 21, 1983
Majid Khadduri, March 20, 1997
Alfonso Garcia Robles, March 21, 1984
Carlos P. Romulo, October 30, 1982
Alexei Roschin, May 25, 1990
Harold Stassen, April 29, 1983
Early Years of International Cooperation

- An examination of the Treaty of Westphalia which came into being in 1648
- A discussion of the international conferences which took place in Europe between 1815 and 1822, beginning with the Congress of Vienna, and how they contributed to international dialogue on cooperation
- An analysis of the Concert of Europe, how it was organized, what it achieved, who belonged, and why it broke down
- An examination of the establishment of river commissions, i.e., for the Rhine and Danube Rivers
- The creation of the Universal Postal Union and the International Telegraphic Union and their current status
- A discussion of the early conferences on health issues in Europe between 1851 and 1903 and how these conferences eventually led to the creation of a permanent World Health Organization
- An analysis of the Hague Peace conferences of 1899 and 1904; why they were called, what did they focus on, who came, what were the results

The League of Nations

- A discussion of US President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points and his role in creating the League of Nations
- The creation of the League of Nations as a part of the Treaty of Versailles
- The structure, bodies, and voting procedures of the League of Nations
- Why the United States did not join the League and the effect that had on the organization
- An analysis of the League's Covenant
Suggested Research Topics and Exam Questions

- The membership of the League of Nations and how and why it changed over its history

- The use of economic sanctions under the League

- The League mandated territories; what countries were given mandate control over what territories and why

- A discussion of League operations which included observer missions and electoral observation

- The creation of the Permanent Court of International Justice and its relationship to the League

- The League reaction to the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931 and the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1934

- An analysis of why the League failed

Preparations for the Creation of the United Nations

- Provisions in the Atlantic Charter of 1941 which refer to the creation of an international organization and how this agreement came about

- A discussion of the 1942 Declaration of United Nations during the Second World War

- An analysis of the contribution of the Moscow Declaration on General Security of 1943, the role of the four signatories, and how this led to further progress on creating the United Nations

- An examination of the Dumbarton Oaks conference, who came, what was decided, what was not decided

- A discussion of the Yalta meeting between the three heads of State and their staffs, what were the major topics and how they were resolved or not resolved

- The Mexico meeting at Chapultepec, why was it organized, who came, what were the main issues
· A discussion of the draft Charter as it existed before the San Francisco conference

The Final Writing of the United Nations Charter at San Francisco

· Who came to San Francisco, what were the controversies about membership at the conference and UN membership in general

· Describe the provision for the veto given to the five permanent members, what was controversial, what benefits and problems were considered, how was it worded in the Charter, and what was the outcome

· Describe the issues surrounding the creation of the Trusteeship Council, what countries would fall under trusteeship, and how this relates to decolonization

· Examine the role of the General Assembly versus the role of the Security Council as discussed in creating the UN

· Discuss the role of the Economic and Social Council as it was conceived in the formation of the UN

· Describe the creation of the International Court of Justice and its evolution from earlier bodies

· Analyze how the concepts of self-determination, independence, and self-government were understood at the time of the writing of the Charter

· Describe and analyze Chapters VI and VII of the Charter and what powers they give the UN Security Council

· Describe the provisions in the Charter for regional organizations and discuss what countries wanted this included and why

· Examine the issue of self-defense and why this was included in the Charter

· Examine how the founders intended for the United Nations to have a military component, what parts of the Charter provide a force, and what has been the outcome
· Discuss how the founders of the UN considered the role of the Secretary-General, how has that role changed, how has each Secretary-General contributed to the function of the post.

· Discuss how human rights were mentioned in the Charter, why it was considered important, and what, if any, provisions were made for the UN to address human rights.

· Discuss the concept of collective security and how the UN was, or was not, established to carry out collective security.

· Describe the role of non-government organizations in introducing concepts into the Charter.

· Explore the role of the United States in creating the United Nations.

· Describe some of the personalities of people who were instrumental in creating the Charter, how did they affect the outcome.