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THE UNITED NATIONS WINNERS AND LOSERS

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About the Author

Donald Wells is emeritus professor of philosophy from the University of Hawaii at Hilo; his earlier professorships were at Oregon State University (1946-48), Washington State University (1948-69), and the University of Illinois.

He has taught courses and written articles on the United Nations for the past twelve years. He is vice chair of the UNA of USA of Southern Oregon.

Earlier titles include, *God, Man and the Thinker: Philosophies of Religion* (New York: Random House, 1962) Dell paperback.

The War Myth (New York: Pegasus, 1967).

War Crimes and Laws of War (Lanham: University Press of America, 1984)

War Crimes and Laws of War revised 1991.

The Laws of Land Warfare (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1992).

An Encyclopedia of War and Ethics (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1996)

Sound Bite

Few Americans understand why the United Nations functions the way it does, and why it seems so ineffectual in facing catastrophes like those in the former Yugoslavia, East Timor, and Palestine/Israel. The author traces its weaknesses to its founding, and highlights all it has accomplished despite these handicaps.

About the Book

This book shows that the United Nations structure was basically US designed, in 1944, and was hamstrung from the start to assure that the US would always be able to veto what it didn't like and to ensure that decisions in the General Assembly, where we might well be outvoted, would be considered "recommendations" which could be ignored.

The US use of the veto is explored, especially as it has made it impossible for the U.N. to serve as the appropriate reconciler to resolve the Palestine-Israel conflict.

The U.N. has no army, no "power of the purse," no ultimate means to enforce its resolutions, and cannot even come to the aid of suffering humanity if the sovereign nation where they dwell denies entry. Yet, for all its warts and wrinkles, the UN has accomplished wonders and is still the best hope for "saving succeeding generations from the scourge of war," and "to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights," (preamble to the UN Charter).

Why did the US delegate vote *against* the Convention Against the Discrimination of Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Kyoto Protocol on Global Warming? These and similar questions are addressed.

The book explains the role of the U.N. Security Council in establishing when a "threat to the peace" exists, whether an embargo is legitimate, and whether, in the last instance, military action is justified.

The author considers both the importance of the newly ratified International Criminal Court (ICC), and the reasons for the US rejection of such a Court. In view of the current debates over the authenticity of the 1949 Geneva Conventions as they speak to the treatment of "prisoners of war," the role of U.N. declarations is especially critical. What is the legitimacy of special US military courts? Can the leader of any state arbitrarily invent international laws? Can the US justify rejecting the ICC even though it has been ratified by the U.N.?

Market

All readers seeking to understand current events including the US approach to Iraq, Iran, Korea, and the Israel-Palestine conflict; the role of the UN, the International Criminal Court, the status and treatment of prisoners of war. High school and up.