

75th Anniversary of the United Nations commemorated at UVU



Kyle Warren, UVU Rotaract President (R) introduces presenters

I am grateful that I had the opportunity to attend the conference commemorating the 75th Anniversary of the United Nations at Utah Valley University (UVU) on March 2, 2020. It was really nice that we had already gone over many of the things discussed in class through the event hosted by our peers as a student engaged learning. UVU Rotaract led by Kyle Warren assembled a panel of speakers from UVU and Utah county who presented on different aspects of the UN activities in relations to Utah and UVU. Speakers included: Dr. Baldomero Lago, CIO for Global Engagement at UVU, Dr. Geoffrey Cockerham, Associated Professor, History and Political Science, UVU, Professor Ryan Vogel, Director of the National Security Studies Center at UVU, Dr. Baktybek Abdrisaev, Lecturer, History and Political Science, UVU, and Mr. Clark Merkley, President, Orem Rotary.

This allowed to focus less on the information, like the members of the U.N. Security Council and their powers, and more on the information specific to each speaker.

With the beginning focusing on the creation of the U.N., following World War II, and the original intents of the goals of creating it. The 5 members of the security council basically hold all the power within the U.N. This is because of their permanent position. The rest of the members are barely represented by a rotating role they play.

The original goals of the U.N. were to stop another World War from happening. This was intended to be maintaining peace and limiting future conflicts. This was done through diplomacy and power. It has been very difficult to determine the actual benefit, and successes, of the U.N. It is hard to determine how much involvement is through the U.N. and hard to have empirical data to evaluate. There have been many debates about whether or not to expand the permanent members of the council but these have gone nowhere. This has been described as difficult due to determining who would be added and why. Another problem, and one that will probably never be overcome, is that it will lessen the powers of the current 5. They have veto power over every action and essentially are unaccountable in everything due to their powers. There is nothing that happens without their direct involvement and permission. This is the main argument to the ineffectualness of the U.N.



UVU students in the audience

These things have created a great deal of politics in every decision of the U.N. council. The financial backing lies mainly in the 5 permanent members and they consequently want their money spent on only things they care about and can justify. This creates the “Realist” view of self interest in the choices of the U.N. Similar to the current situation with Covid-19 and Taiwan, the actions of the U.N. are controlled by self interest and fear of other actions in retribution. The World Health Organization will not recognize Taiwan because of China and it’s position on the permanent council. If any member of the 5 do not want a nation included, then it will not be. These are examples which completely support the idea that the U.N. is largely unsuccessful. It is slow to act and then, generally, acts on self interest and politics.

This conversation was followed by a switch to discussing role of non-governmental organizations. Clark Merkley, current president of the Orem branch of the Rotary Club, spoke on the influence NGOs can have on the world. The Rotary has goals of promoting world peace, health, hygiene, etc. It has about 1.2 million members around the world and does a great deal to help. Their goals have led to supporting peace between nations, cultures, and religions. They raised over \$1.5 billion toward eradicating polio and fighting other diseases. They help provide clean water, sanitation, and general hygiene all over the world. Since they are a NGO, they can go many places that the U.N. can't due to all the politics and self-interest. They also have a strong focus on helping women and children in need. Among the U.N. council the Rotary has the highest status. It has a permanent representative and delegation.

I spoke with Mr. Merkley afterwards about their world involvement and working outside of the U.N. I asked him about whether they work in places like Taiwan, which is at the center of the controversy for U.N. and W.H.O. politically due to COVID-19 and China, and he said they work a lot there and have many members there as well.

Another NGO, recognized by the U.N., discussed was the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, or the LDS Church. They also work all over the world with similar goals as the Rotary and help countless people. The different organizations must promote their causes before the U.N. in order to be recognized. To do this they all need to have a coalition with other NGOs.

Lastly discussed, was the UVU goals to educate students to accomplish all the things previously discussed. To accomplish this UVU has new certificates on sustainable production development to provide more classes, including interdisciplinary. This helps provide additional places to educate in the market of political sciences. One specific accomplishment of UVU, and its' students, is student coalition efforts to assist "mountain people". These people live in mountainous regions usually far from the larger populations. Due to this they often get severely neglected. They have less, oxygenated environments, less education opportunities, and generally no one cares about them.

Like expressed, we live in a world that is very different from the one after WWII. The goals of the U.N., and all international organizations, need to adjust. The focus must be on uniting the world, not self-interest and politics. All people need to be treated as equals in humanity. Instead of protecting a geopolitical balance, it needs to be about advancing. Instead of deterring violence as a main focus, of course it is still vital, but it needs to be through peace and caring. It needs to be about attaining peace through global advancement and unity. The U.N., and many analysts, feel that increasing the permanent 5 council members would make this more difficult. If that is truly a problem then an entire haul over needs to happen because the permanent 5 also are keeping many things from happening due to continued self-interest, pride, fear, greed, and generally wanting to be better than everyone else. If they truly wanted to assist everyone, instead of perpetuating the image of world peace and equality by word alone, then things need to change so this can happen. Taking power away from them would be a start. The balance is obviously not keeping the rising threat of China and America, America and North Korea, and many more from advancing. As long as the deadlock created by the current U.N. stands, the power of other nations will continue to grow, generally unchecked other than threats, and we will still lead to the ends that the U.N. was created to stop.

Kelly Roark, UVU student