



An Insider's Guide to the UN

Linda Fasulo

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The United Nations increasingly finds itself at the center of world events in an age of rapid globalization. Now, more than ever, it is imperative that we understand its structure and functions. In this highly readable book, a prominent news correspondent at the UN provides a colorful introduction to its activities and goals. UN correspondent Linda Fasulo draws on her own observations as well as on the insights of other individuals who have been active in the UN, including US ambassadors Richard Holbrooke, Madeleine Albright, and John Negroponte. She explains how the UN came into existence, what governing principles guide its operation, and what it is like to be a participant. She describes the organization, responsibilities, and often-tense politics of the Security Council. Surveying the many humanitarian, crime-fighting, and peacekeeping programs of the UN, Fasulo concludes that there are important reasons for Americans to give the United Nations their support.

An Insider's Guide to the UN Details

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anique says

In no way shape or form does Fasulo, an NBC Reporter who it turns out was on UN lobby payroll [http://www.aim.org/aim_column/2598_0_...], get the story right about the UN. Her shoddy journalism reads like a sweetened-tea version of the behemoth bureaucracy. The fact that this book ever got published is infuriating.

Daniel Wrench says

A thorough overview of the United Nations, its history, its relationship with the US, and its huge array of programmes.

Kristel says

Nice detailed insight about the UN and its functions

Jordan says

Yawn... a few nice quotes but no real journalism here in my opinion, rather just a canonization of Kofi Annan. If you are a high school student looking for a general overview of the organization, then maybe it's worth your while.

SayHeyCrystal says

Great book, not too technical, easy to follow, very well written and enthralling. Love it!

Frank Stein says

This is not really an "Insider's Guide to the UN." No insider's guide would admit in its sources section that it "relied heavily on the web sites of the UN and its various organs, agencies, commissions, and programs," or cotton to heavily "consult[ing:] the standard reference work by the UN, 'Basic Facts about the United Nations.'" Websites and a reference book as your best sources? Come on! Sure, Linda Fasulo is a respected NPR reporter on the UN, and she did seem to interview everybody at the UN and their grandmother for this book, from Ban Ki-Moon to Richard Holbrooke to Zalmay Khalilzad, but most of them offered typical political bromides about how the UN is good for people and peace, all as dull as dishwasher. Inexplicably, Fasulo sometimes uses these platitude as pull quotes.

Still, the book did give me more or less what I wanted, a description of the intricate bureaucracy of the UN that seems so incomprehensible whenever I read about it in news reports.

There are also a few worthwhile stories she tells. Fasulo chronicles the increasing importance of the Security Council since the end of the Cold War (they've almost doubled their number of annual meetings, from 114 to 202, with fewer vetos used by the US, Russia, or, China, and a much wider concept of security which includes poverty and AIDS). She highlights the extreme importance of regional blocks (Western Europe, Latin America, East Asia, etc.) in both the Security Council and the General Assembly (the top positions all rotate based on region). Also, she surprised me by demonstrating the incredible size and scope of modern peacekeeping operations, which now cost almost \$7 billion a year (from just \$1.3 billion in 1997), involve over 100,000 troops, and have incurred almost 2000 casualties since they began with one operation in Palestine in 1948. Who foots the bill for all this? The US and Japan pay over 41% of all the UN's costs, almost 5 billion a year for the US alone, much of it purely voluntary. Hardly chump change.

In any case, for an in depth view of the UN, there's gotta be a better book out there.

Justin Espe says

Linda Fasulo's purpose in writing *An Insider's Guide to the UN* is to help anyone interested in international affairs understand the purpose on the United Nation's. Linda wanted to share with her reader's some important things about the UN. She wanted to make it easier for people interested in the program to understand its true purpose and the major role that it plays in today's society. Linda wrote the book to explain to the reader all the programs that are run through the UN. Overall she wanted to explain and clarify the United Nations.

The theme of *An Insider's Guide to the UN* is nation's complications and the programs that were developed to decrease these problems. Linda is telling about the problems that the united nation's have faced and how they overcame their problems. Linda explains the complications the world has faced since the foundation of the UN.

The style of the book is an exposition. Linda tries to bring out clarity on the struggles and achievements that the UN has gone through since it formation. She goes more in depth on the problems the UN has faced with people, wars and natural disasters. Linda tells about the achievements that has been accomplished through the program. Linda clarify's on what certain programs do and how they have benefited the world.

My overall opinion of the book is that it was a good book. The book explained some programs that I did not know existed and some great things it had accomplished. I liked the fact that it clarified some things such as the point behind programs and included pictures and diagrams. One thing I disliked was it was boring in some points. Some points in the book it would hold my attention for several chapters. Then there was a couple chapters that did not hold my attention and I would have to stop reading and come back to it later when I was more awake. If I were to change one thing I would some how make the more boring chapters better with some interesting facts. This book is not similar to ones that I have read before.

Leticia says

If you have a remote interest in International Affairs then this is the book for you. You learn about the inner working of the United Nations and their many branches of specialized organizations as well as their non-governmental partners around the globe.

Ursula Villarreal-Moura says

Contrary to what my librarian friend thinks, this is not a dry read. In fact, if you have any interest whatsoever in the inner workings of the United Nations, I highly recommend Linda Fasulo's book. The author details each division/council by chapter in a purposeful manner. The book also touches upon topics like international terrorism, the AIDS situation in Africa and war crimes. Kofi Annan's career as the Secretary General is discussed and the overthrow of Boutros Boutros Ghali is briefly mentioned. Overall, this is an insightful book.

Matt says

Very useful book. I learned a lot about the UN, its history, and its various components. Easy read too.

Cherika Hardjakusumah says

I bought this book at UN Bookstore. This book is really helpful for the beginner who's interested in United Nations thingy, especially if you're studying International Relations, this is a must-have one. You'll find some funny facts that you won't find in any other books.

Ken says

Very informative. Dry, at times, but most UN related things are pretty dry, no?

McKenzie says

United Nations is a fascinating organization.

Many people have different opinions about the UN. Some say that it contributes a lot to reinforcing world peace, while others claim that it lacks practical powers and oftentimes fail to properly put measures on certain problems. I personally really feel disappointed by it too, when I see crisis like the Syrian War that the UN should be putting appropriate measures on but it isn't. Regardless, I think that this book really has a lot of information about the organization and its functions, yet organized these in a very clean and concise way. I would recommend this book to people who are interested in the organization itself and also to teenagers who have the ambition of becoming a global leader in the future.

Becki Iverson says

This book is a resounding disappointment. It is rare that I am unable to slog through and finish a book, but I barely made it to about halfway through this before I gave up. On the surface it covers every topic one would need in order to understand how the U.N. works. Unfortunately, Fasulo is unable to resist keeping a running commentary of her personal opinion of each (contemporary at the time) office and officer, and her monologue thoroughly detracts and distracts from the rare nugget of nonfiction she actually includes.

With some very judicious editing and a thorough rewrite this could become THE textbook for explaining the basics of the U.N. Until that time, this will remain a dated and disappointing stab at such a tome.

Jedi Kitty says

I found about a quarter of this book to be useful/interesting. The rest read like an introductory textbook-passionless, trying very hard to be balanced with opinions from each side, and a bit obvious.

This is a solid introduction to the UN and the main issues the UN addresses. It is only 200 pages, so it is a succinct, straightforward and simple overview. I think it's useful for high school or college students' level.

The author offers a lot of quotes on various issues from people high in the UN- particularly from Americans. But I was a little annoyed at the lack of context given for each speaker. Obviously all these representatives have their own political agendas- but this isn't really addressed. Opinions are presented without comment from the author- very objectively. Perhaps the author is just letting the reader make their own judgements.

I wish there were more non-American perspectives presented here. The most quoted "alternate"/non-western perspective is the Pakistani Munir Akram. With so many quotes it would have been useful to know more about this person. Or even better to have a range of perspectives from the South or G-77 members of the UN, so I can see if Akram's positions are representative of the whole.

I was pretty annoyed by the pull-out quotes and excerpts from UN documents. Although some of the graphs were illustrative, the interruptions on every other page mostly felt like filler. The quotes were mostly the generic stuff you hear regularly in political speeches, and the excerpts could easily be moved to the appendix. The photos were also uninspiring. The activities of the UN are mostly people sitting at desks/standing at podiums in suits... activity that does not necessarily need illumination.

Finally, this book is dated. The second edition came out in 2009, but the author still offers statistics from the early 2000's to make her points. As I am reading this over a decade later (in 2014) these stats do not describe recent trends.
