



# The Role of the United Nations

Books Reviewed:

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~~Editor's Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

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With the squalidity of current events (4/05/04) in Iraq and the knowledge of how they have been achieved, interest in the role of the UN should never be greater than now. But for most of us the Organisation (as it *used* to be called) is one of the eternal verities, like oak, granite, white lines on roads, Charlie Parker and the invincible Arsenal. How many of us know how the UN came into being, is run, is financed, does or is prevented from doing (hang on, the invincible Arsenal have just gone one down to Pompey!). Few of us, I guess and you can include me. And how many of us want to know? - few more, I suspect - and include me again. But for those of us who don't know but do want to, here's what looks like a helpful set of answers. From founding charter to present-day chuntering, the book traces (in un-engaging style) the activities and achievements of the UN. Facts are squarely presented as we learn of the (alleged) organisation's responsibilities - UNICEF, UNCTAD, UNFPA, UNDP and WHO knows what else - who pays for it (and who gets away without) and how its jobs are done. Commendably, Adams doesn't shrink from the UN/US logger-heading nor from its Asian, African and European failures; nor does editor Andrew Campbell (some relation?) exclude the least complimentary picture ever (p27) of Tony Blair. In sum, this is a book for the committed - either those who are or those who should be. Into which category my local High School librarian's student who 'wants to be a professional politician' falls will remain to be seen, but this one is for him (yes, it's definitely a him). And, of course, though the publishers decline to say so, it's 'ideal for citizenship'. And the invincible Arsenal have now equalised.

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