



Debatetrack



UN Security Council
April 2024 Public Forum Topic

Notes on Evidence

- **Purpose:** This brief is intended to be:
 1. **A starting point:** Please continue researching interesting & fruitful areas as you make cases.
 2. **A toolbox:** Not all of the cards in this brief will be useful to you—use them at your discretion.
- **Tags:** Cards are written with summaries (also called tags) to make understanding and presenting the material easier. However, many coaches and some high-quality briefs simply omit them, preferring to have students work more directly with the material to help with understanding and avoid power-tagging (ie, giving an inaccurate summary of the material). *To avoid accusations of power-tagging and increase your ability to actually use the cards, please read and understand each card before using it.*
- **Quality:** Evidence quality will vary. While we prefer to use high-quality sources from thinktanks, journals and seasoned experts, this won't cover all major angles. To provide more helpful evidence, we also mix in legitimate but less-vetted sources. Please be cognizant of this variation in quality.
- **Navigation:** please use the Navigation Panel to view this brief (View→ Navigation Pane in Word)
- **Mistakes:** please let me know if you find any mistakes! Especially glaring ones. I'm happy to correct and re-release the brief as an update version.
- **Blocks:** Blocks, ATs are rebuttals are grouped interchangeably here. The difference between a block and a rebuttal is how you use it!
- For questions, comments or suggestions on evidence, please reach out to **Joel:** joel@debate-track.com

Researcher

Elene Tsertsvadze is currently pursuing her master's degree in International Human Rights and Development at London South Bank University. She is originally from Tbilisi, Georgia, where she completed her undergraduate studies in Law with a minor in International Relations. Elene has passed the Bar Qualification Exam of Georgia and the Qualification Examination of the Prosecutor's Office. Prior to her master's studies, Elene gained valuable experience working at the Department of Legal Provision and Research in the Constitutional Court of Georgia.

V2 Changes

1. **Moved** some cards to bolster 'Permanent Members as Threats' contention
2. **Added:** Aff / AT: Effectiveness (**Sengupta 14**), AT: Funding Cuts (**Better World Campaign 21**), Neg / Status Quo Good: Reform (**Barber 23**)
3. **Changed:** Weiss & Kuele 13 → Weiss & Kuele 14
4. **Deleted:** AT: **Legitimacy** heading

Thank you for subscribing!

Your subscription fee keeps this project going and keeps PF lectures free and accessible to everyone who needs them. You're helping to power debate. Thank you.

Table of Contents

Background	7
UN Security Council - Overview	8
The UN Security Council, with its 15 member states including the 5 permanent members known as the P5, holds primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security.....	8
Double Veto	9
Each permanent member holds a ‘double veto’—they can veto resolutions to be discussed, and veto the resolutions themselves	9
Frequent Veto-ers	10
Data analysis shows changes in veto usage over time in the UN Security Council, with the Soviet Union leading initially, followed by increased activity from the United States, and currently, Russia has become the most frequent user of the veto.....	10
Pocket Veto	11
Even the threat of a Veto can be enough to stop UN Security Resolutions from being voted on	11
Solvency	12
Reforming the Security Council will be difficult – it requires a 2/3 vote of the General Assembly and approval from all 5 Permanent Members – thus, 64% of expert strategists believe that the Council won’t add a new member in the next 10 years	12
Tools	14
The Security Council utilizes a range of tools to enforce its resolutions, including diplomatic negotiations, sanctions, and authorization of military force.....	14
Veto Significance	15
The Veto Power can be ignored by any country that wishes to ignore the Security Council’s Resolutions—including the members of the P5 themselves. The Veto also provides deniability, in that countries can claim moral and political superiority for their intentions, without actually doing anything, because another country vetoed it.....	15
Aff	17
Africa	18
Africa: African countries are the subject of more than half of UNSEC resolutions and discussions—yet, the continent has no permanent seat on the council	18
Vetoes: More than 60% of UNSC discussions are focused on Africa, yet non-African countries – the G5 – can veto all manner of resolutions on the continent	19
Atrocities	20
Human Rights Abuses: The Veto is often used by Great Powers to provide cover for Human Rights Abuses and other atrocities.....	20
Congo: about 6 million people died in the ‘African World War’, while the UNSC failed to intervene...	21
Rwanda: the ‘pocket veto’ was used to block intervention in the Rwandan genocide	21
Syria: The Security Council has failed to adopt resolutions that investigate the use of chemical and cluster munitions in Syria	22
Impact – Legitimacy: The failure to stop atrocities has led to the weakening of confidence in the UN	23
Decolonization	24
The P5 is Eurocentric and heavily colonial – abolishing permanent membership would be a step towards decolonizing the Security Council.....	24
Existential Risks	26
When UN resolutions arise regarding existential risks, the P5 Veto should be suspended—and if permanent membership is abolished, this veto will never get in the way of addressing existential risks.....	26
Gridlock	27

Paralysis: The veto power in the UN Security Council often stops the council from taking action in urgent situations like Syria and Crimea, leading to a sense of paralysis.....	27
R2P: UNSEC has failed in its Responsibility to Protect, to respond to mass atrocities, due to the Veto Power.....	28
Impact – Ineffectiveness. Frequent veto use in the Security Council slows down urgent decisions on important issues because permanent members have conflicting interests.....	29
Legitimacy	30
Abolishing permanent membership and its accompanying veto power could help prevent the potential for illegal interventions and strengthen the authority of the UNSC.....	30
Reliability & Consistency: Removing the Veto Power would increase legitimacy and lead to more reliable and consistent decisions	31
Palestine.....	33
Israel: The US uses most of its Vetoes to protect Israel	33
No Ceasefire: The US used its veto power to stop a UNSEC resolutions calling for an Israeli Ceasefire	33
Permanent Members as Threats	35
Permanent members themselves pose threats to peace and security. Reforming or reevaluating the privileges and responsibilities of permanent membership may be necessary to address these issues effectively.....	35
Ukraine: Russia has used its veto power to stop UNSEC resolutions against the War in Ukraine	36
Representation	38
Regions: certain regions are overrepresented in the UNSC while others are underrepresented, which leads to imbalances in decision-making power.....	38
Major Powers: The UNSC is controlled by the P5 – other countries have no proportion or proper representation	39
Imperialism: The UN Security Council's veto power, controlled by major powers, has led to an imperialistic organization where only the dominant powers control decision-making.....	40
Impact—Splintering: As the World changes and the UNSEC remains the same, rising countries like India which lack proper Security Council representation are starting to look to non-UN forums to effect change—thus, leading to a splintering of multilateral institutions and a weakening of UN influence.....	42
Transparency	43
Many UN members want the Security Council to increase transparency by sharing all draft resolutions and limiting closed-door meetings.....	43
Vetoes.....	44
Confidence: The Veto power is often used to shield G5 members from resolutions that run contrary to their interest—this erodes confidence in the ability of the UN to function.....	44
Unjust: The Veto power is used by 5 countries to subjugate the other 200 countries of the world.....	46
Solution: Reform. Reforming the Security Council is deemed necessary to ensure that it can effectively address current global challenges and maintain the United Nations' relevance in the modern era.....	46
<i>Aff Blocks</i>	<i>48</i>
AT: E10 Representation.....	49
The Security Council is dominated by the P5; the E10 have relatively little power.....	49
AT: Effectiveness	50
The Veto makes the Security Council far less effective, by only approving resolutions that no country truly cares about	50
AT: Peace / Security	51
The P5 are often aggressors – like the US' invasion of Iraq, and Russia's invasion of Ukraine	52
<i>Neg</i>.....	<i>53</i>

Effectiveness54
Crises: Despite its procedural limitations, over the years, UNSC has successfully passed resolutions to support peace processes, resolve disputes, and respond to threats to peace which showcase its effectiveness in crisis management..... 54
Political Defense: The Veto Power is crucial for political defense of the United States and its Allies— removing it will weaken the Council’s effectiveness..... 55
30 Resolutions: All Permanent Members hope to preserve the image of the UNSEC as an effective body; In the 7 months after Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, the council passed nearly 30 resolutions 56

Major Power Backing.....58
The Veto Power was designed to make sure the world’s major powers support, or at least don’t oppose, large security decisions 58
Impact—Funding: The P5 are unlikely to keep funding United Nations missions if their vetoes were removed..... 59

Military Actions60
Removing the Veto Power would also remove incentive for the P5 – amongst the world’s most powerful militaries—to help out – this would lead to a security council that can’t enforce its own resolutions, leaving it weak and incapable..... 60

New Members.....61
Germany: Germany seeks a permanent seat on the Security Council, indicating a desire to join the existing permanent membership rather than abolish it..... 61

Nuclear Powers.....62
Current G5 members are all nuclear powers—removing the Veto vote could increase the chance of conflict between them..... 62

Responsibility63
The P5 have a special responsibility to maintain global security—alongside that responsibility, they require a special right—the veto power. This power also helps to maintain Security Council stability 63

Stability.....64
UNSC: The Veto Power keeps the Security Council stable – without it, the UN may have suffered the same fate as the League of Nations 64
Global Politics: Stripping the P5 of their veto power could lead to increased instability and the potential for unchecked power dynamics in the international system. 65

Solvency.....67
Structural changes remain unlikely due to the veto power held by the permanent members, which allows them to unilaterally block any actions. 67

Status Quo Good.....68
UNSEC Good: The only alternative to Permanent Membership is no security council, as the major powers would refuse to participate—and that would be worse 68
Reform: The General Assembly has already taken steps to fill in the gaps in governance where the Security Council can’t..... 69

Neg Blocks 73

AT: China-Russia 74
Data on voting behavior don’t support the concept of a China-Russia bloc in the UNSC..... 74

AT: Gridlock 75
Women & Girls: The Security Council unanimously voted to condemn the Taliban’s discrimination against women & girls in Afghanistan..... 75
Haitian Gangs: The Security Council unanimously voted to condemn the Taliban’s discrimination against women & girls in Afghanistan..... 76
Disagreements are a normal part of the Security Council’s functioning – despite what commentators say, the P5 always manage to patch over their differences..... 77

AT: Palestine	78
A resolution calling for humanitarian pause in fighting was successfully passed by UNSEC	78
AT: R2P	79
The Right to Protect is seen as some as a smokescreen behind which to hide unjust military intervention	79
AT: War Solvency	80
“Veto power hides behind military power”—the structures that make war a profitable business won’t be changed by abolishing permanent membership	80
<i>Impacts.....</i>	<i>81</i>
Human Rights	82
The Security Council has set standards for the countries of the world to protect human rights – this is uniquely possible through the Security Council.....	82
Nonproliferation	83
The Security Council is responsible for maintaining global nonproliferation systems.....	83
Peace.....	84
The UNSEC helps to maintain peace around the world	84
Norms.....	85
The Security Council helps to set norms and expectations for international behavior.....	85
Organized Crime.....	86
The Security Council works to fight international organized crime	86

Background

UN Security Council - Overview

The UN Security Council, with its 15 member states including the 5 permanent members known as the P5, holds primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security.

Notre Dame International Security Center 23 - | ND International Security Center. "A History and Overview of the United Nations Security Council." ND International Security Center. April 13, 2023. <https://ndisc.nd.edu/news-media/news/a-history-and-overview-of-the-united-nations-security-council/>.] Elene.

[Since 2008, the Notre Dame International Security Center (NDISC) has provided a forum for national security scholars at the University of Notre Dame and elsewhere to come together to explore the most pressing issues in national security policy.]

The UN was originally made up of six principal organs:

1. The General Assembly
2. The Secretariat
3. International Court of Justice
4. Economic and Social Council
5. Trusteeship Council (inactive)
6. The Security Council

To quote the UN, **"the Security Council has primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security."** This includes identifying potential threats to peace or aggressive acts and calling on involved parties to find peaceful settlements. In escalatory cases, the Security Council may "resort to imposing sanctions or even authorize the use of force to maintain or restore" peace and security.

The Security Council is authorized to impose mandatory sanctions: diplomatic actions of member states against states, organizations, or persons suspected of violating international law. At the time of this writing, there are 14 sanctions regiments.

The Security Council is made up of 15 members states. **This includes 5 permanent members: France and the Four Policemen—until the Russian Federation was recognized as the Soviet Union's legal successor in 1991. Together, they are known as the P5.**

The remaining 10 seats are held by elected representatives of their respective region for two-year terms.

The Security Council is responsible for overseeing the UN's Peacekeeping Operations.

The UN Charter requires all substantive matters the Security Council proposes to pass on a three-fifths majority (I.E., 9 of the 15 must agree). **However, the 5 permanent members hold veto power, which can strike down an otherwise approved proposal.**

The inclusion of the veto has occasionally proven controversial. For example, in 1946, France (another permanent member) held colonies in Syria and Lebanon. The Security Council was prepared to vote on the withdrawal of French forces from these colonies, until Soviet diplomat Andrei Vishinsky vetoed it. **This established a precedent of the permanent members vetoing resolutions outside their immediate concerns.** Some critics have pointed to the increasing use of the veto as an indication of the Council's decline in effectiveness and functionality.

Has Russia abused its veto power? Since 1991, Russia has vetoed 32 Security Council resolutions—combined, the other 4 with this power have used it twice more in the same period (the U.S. has used 18; China, 16). This included two vetoes to condemn Russia's invasion of Ukraine—leading to futile calls to remove Russia from the Security Council. Futile because such action would require unanimous agreement from the P5: in effect, it would require Russia to vote themselves out of the Security Council.

What does the future hold for the Security Council? Though the organ is flawed, studies have shown that it is mostly effective as a crisis management and peacekeeping body.

Double Veto

Note: In practice, this power isn't used these days.

Each permanent member holds a 'double veto'—they can veto resolutions to be discussed, and veto the resolutions themselves

Anand 22—["It's Time to Reform the United Nations Security Council - Australian Institute of International Affairs." 2022. Australian Institute of International Affairs. <https://www.internationalaffairs.org.au/australianoutlook/its-time-to-reform-the-united-nations-security-council/>.] Joel

[Anil Anand is an independent Canadian policy researcher and author with extensive experience in law enforcement, security, and social justice. Anil has taught Criminology, Management in the Criminal Justice System, Advanced Issues in Community Policing, and Issues in Culture and Ethnicity at Guelph-Humber University. He holds a Master of Laws from Osgoode Hall Law School in Toronto, Canada, an MBA from the Rothman School of Management at the University of Toronto, and a Global Executive MBA HSG from Universitat in St. Gallen, Switzerland.]

As far back as 26 June 1945 **Australia's Representative to the UN H.V. Evatt had expressed concern with the exclusive authority empowered to the Permanent Members noting that they would have a double veto, first on whether to accept issue before the Council, and then on the outcome. He said such a member, "can say not only I can veto the decision of the Council, but I will determine the question which I will veto."**

There is now a resounding view that too many conflicts, violations of the UN Charter, human rights abuses, and atrocities have been failed due to the competing self-interest of the P5 – Darfur, Myanmar, Eritrea, Yemen, Iraq, Syria, Russia's annexation of Crimea, the recent invasion of Ukraine to name but a few. Each failure further weakened the moral and systemic integrity of the institution empowered to uphold international order, peace, and accountability.

Frequent Veto-ers

Data analysis shows changes in veto usage over time in the UN Security Council, with the Soviet Union leading initially, followed by increased activity from the United States, and currently, Russia has become the most frequent user of the veto.

World Population Review 24 - [World Population Review. "Veto Power Countries / Countries with UN Veto Power 2024." 2024. Worldpopulationreview.com. <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/veto-power-countries>.] **Elene.**

[WorldPopulationReview.com is an independent for-profit organization committed to delivering up-to-date global population data and demographics.]

Within the United Nations Security Council, a handful of countries possess veto power. These countries can control whether a vote passes or fails within the United Nations. For the United Nations to pass new legislation, all five members with veto power must cast an affirmative vote. Therefore, if one country votes against the proposed bill, they effectively can cancel the vote or veto the resolution.

It is possible for members with veto power to also abstain from a vote. By abstaining from a vote, they have the ability to vote against the resolution, officially vetoing it effectively. The veto power was first established because of a hostile majority within the United Nations Security Council. Without the five countries being able to veto legislation proposed by the council, the UN was set up to fail.

The use of the veto power within the United Nations has shifted and changed throughout the history of the UN. Between 1946 and 1969, most motions and proposed legislation were issued by the United States. This country cast no vetoes during this time because it won every vote simply because it was initiating the new motions within the council. **As a result, the Soviet Union was responsible for 93% of all veto votes throughout this period to block Western influence throughout the United Nations.** Only France and the United Kingdom occasionally used a veto during this period, and the Republic of China only used its veto power once.

Changes in veto usage shifted after the 1960s, with the US utilizing 56% of the veto votes. Between 1970 and 1991, the Soviet Union and China used the fewest number of vetoes, showing a shift in the balance of Western powers. Between 1990 and 1993, there was the fewest number of vetoes and, therefore, the largest number of resolutions to pass. **In total, Russia has used its power to veto a resolution 120 times, the US has used the power 82 times, the UK has vetoed a resolution 29 times, France has vetoed a bot 16 times, and China has vetoed a vote 17 times, with most occurring in the past ten years.**

Pocket Veto

Even the threat of a Veto can be enough to stop UN Security Resolutions from being voted on

Dallas 18– [Dallas, Emmanuela Florence 2018 “The Security Council’s Sine qua Non: The Veto Power.”

<https://polisci.rutgers.edu/publications/occasional-paper-series/346-occasional-paper-8-florence-emmanuela-emmy-dallas/file>.] Joel

[Emmanuela Dallas is an Executive and Research Associate at the Asia Society, where she’s worked for 10 years.

She holds a Master’s Degree in Political Science and International Relations from Rutgers University. Her concentration has been in political risk and human rights analysis as well as in conflict prevention and atrocity crimes.]

Likewise, the concept of the "pocket" or "hidden" veto should not be neglected or overlooked, for **in many cases permanent members have been able to keep a resolution from coming to a vote or have tailored the language to fit their interests without casting a veto but rather by threatening its use** (Nahory, 2004). **"Pointedly, this type of veto is not reflected in statistics, and thus is very hard to document;** records only exist if a draft resolution is circulated as a Council document, and in most cases, this only happens if there is a reasonable expectation of adoption. **It refers to cases in which draft resolutions are not formally tabled because of the threat of veto by one or more permanent members"** (Nahory, 2004). To make this point, **press statements and meetings regarding the 2009 killing of Sri Lankan Tamils in the conflict between the nation’s army and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam provide one such example;** the issue was kept from being discussed in a thorough manner and the UNSC did not take necessary action.

The non-permanent members have expressed their dissatisfaction with the pocket veto claiming that it undermines the effectiveness of the Council. On the other hand, the P5 claim that this type of veto is used only as a "last resort." Nevertheless, **there has been evidence that the pocket veto is used continually, thereby enabling the P5 to control the work of the Council** (Nahory, 2004: 2). **This veto type operates in informal sessions and private settings where no records are kept,** contrary to the formal public sessions of the UNSC. It is under this classified atmosphere that the threat of the veto takes place. **For example, matters that concern Russia and China, such as the situations in Chechnya and Tibet respectively, have been subjected to this hidden pressure.** Russia, by virtue of its widespread interest in the Balkan region, vetoed a resolution on Bosnia and Herzegovina which would have declared the Srebrenica massacre as a "genocide" (S/PV.7481). It claimed that a vote in favor of this resolution would lead to further regional tension. **Likewise, China used its veto power in 1999 as a political instrument to punish Macedonia which recognized Taiwan as an independent nation (S/PV.3982). Another case would be France’s threat to block a resolution on the authorization of war against Iraq-2003.** The surmised nuclear stockpiles of Iraq, as suspected by the U.S., would be a future threat to the world and consequently had to be addressed through UNSC military action before the supposed nuclear weapons could be used. However, **in this instance France announced its action as a preemptive measure in order to prevent the use of military force in an area where no violence had been reported** and expected Council members to follow suit (Nahory 2004: 1). By openly commenting on its intent to veto the U.S. proposal to declare war on Iraq, then French Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin was able to positively influence the other members of the Council to reconsider the authorization of military action in hopes of preventing increased and unwanted deaths [civilian and military] for all parties concerned. In a reversal of its usual use, the announcement of France’s hidden veto resulted in the U.K. being the only member of the Council to vote in favor of the U.S. resolution.

Solvency

Reforming the Security Council will be difficult – it requires a 2/3 vote of the General Assembly and approval from all 5 Permanent Members – thus, 64% of expert strategists believe that the Council won't add a new member in the next 10 years

Xie 23– [Xie, John. 2023. "Biden's Call to Expand UNSC Membership Likely to Go Unheeded." Voice of America. Voice of America (VOA News). September 22. <https://www.voanews.com/a/biden-s-call-to-expand-unsc-membership-likely-to-go-unheeded-/7279316.html>.] Joel

[John Xie is Senior News Editor at Voice of America, where he's worked for 25 years. He holds a Master's degree in Journalism from Marshall University]

"The current increased competition makes countries even more sensitive to the zero-sum nature of those decisions ... and there's so little solidarity and trust right now," said Stewart Patrick, senior fellow and director of the Global Order and Institutions Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Patrick told VOA Mandarin in a phone interview that the deepening of frictions between the U.S. and China and between the U.S. and Russia have increasingly intruded on the ability of the council to address other matters such as climate change.

But Patrick said **there is "renewed momentum" on "the desire to reform the composition and perhaps the rules of the U.N. Security Council to make it more representative, but also more effective."**

The declaration that came out after the **BRICS summit in August included a line that supported calls for Brazil, India and South Africa to play "a greater role in international affairs, in particular in the United Nations, including its Security Council."** All three nations belong to the bloc, which also includes China and Russia.

Maya Ungar, U.N. project officer at the International Crisis Group who monitors the Security Council, told VOA Mandarin the BRICS declaration is "quite significant because it's the first time that [the bloc] has put out a statement bringing that much support ..."

Other groups of U.N. member states are advocating for particular types of reforms. The G4 group of Brazil, Germany, India and Japan have been campaigning for permanent council seats for years.

Patrick said the G4 countries have regional rivals that object to their permanent memberships. Pakistan opposes India, South Korea and Indonesia have objections to Japan, and Argentina and Mexico have concerns about Brazil.

"Each of the aspirants has regional rivals and they have their own coalition called the Uniting for Consensus Coalition," he said. "And what they are attempting to do is to offer an alternative plan for council expansion."

In addition, the 54-member Africa Group of U.N. members wants Security Council representation.

Algeria's foreign minister, Mourad Medelci, who spoke during the annual meeting of heads of state and governments at the U.N., said the council's "membership must be expanded to include new permanent and non-permanent members of the developing world, particularly Africa, the cradle of civilization."

Anjali Dayal, associate professor of international politics at Fordham University, told VOA Mandarin, "Everybody agrees that the Security Council needs to be reformed, but nobody agrees on how it should be reformed."

Besides the geopolitical hurdles, Patrick said, **"the procedural hurdles for actually extending the U.N. Security Council are quite daunting because it would require, even if it was only about elected members, it would require the approval of two-thirds of the members of the General Assembly and all of the P5 to get the required charter amendments. And then each of those approvals would have to be backed by domestic legislation in the relevant countries."** P5 refers to the Security Council's permanent five members.

Ungar said that while Biden expressed support for Security Council expansion, he did not make specific suggestions.

"The process of choosing who would join will be almost impossible to manage," Elliott Abrams, senior fellow for Middle Eastern studies at the Council on Foreign Relations, told VOA in an email. "Enlarging the UNSC will make it more unwieldy and even less able than it is now to reach decisions."

A survey of major strategists around the world released in July by the Atlantic Council, a Washington-based think tank, found that 64% of respondents believed that the Security Council would not add any new permanent members in the next 10 years. The survey found that if a new country were to be added it would most likely be India, Japan or Brazil.

Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, India's foreign minister, said last month that China is the only permanent member in the U.N. Security Council that opposes India joining the Council as a permanent member, according to *The Economic Times* of India.

Harsh Pant, vice president for studies and foreign policy at the Observer Research Foundation, told VOA Mandarin in an email, **"China is the only country on the UNSC that as a permanent member refuses to support India's permanent membership using procedural issues."**

China has insisted for many years that it supports necessary and reasonable reforms, but it advocates reaching the broadest consensus.

Zhang Jun, China's permanent representative to the U.N., said in 2021 that all parties still have major differences, so they should not act hastily. He **said member states should seek a package solution that takes into account the interests and concerns of all parties and reach the broadest political consensus.**

"It is very, very difficult to imagine the Chinese approving a permanent membership in particular for either Japan or India given that they are regional rivals. And in the case of India, they have significant territorial disputes in particular," Patrick said.

"China's stated position is to favor adding developing countries to the UNSC, but it has also said reforms must be made slowly and carefully," Abrams said. **"In reality, I do not think China wants to see the present makeup changed."**

Tools

The Security Council utilizes a range of tools to enforce its resolutions, including diplomatic negotiations, sanctions, and authorization of military force.

Council on Foreign Relations 23 - [Council on Foreign Relations. "The UN Security Council." Council on Foreign Relations. February 28, 2023. <https://www.cfr.org/background/un-security-council>.] Elene.

[The Council on Foreign Relations is an American think tank specializing in U.S. foreign policy and international relations.]

The Security Council aims to peacefully resolve international disputes in accordance with Chapter VI of the **UN Charter, which authorizes the Security Council to call on parties to seek solutions via negotiation, arbitration, or other peaceful means.** Failing that, **Chapter VII empowers the Security Council to take more assertive actions, such as imposing sanctions or authorizing the use of force "to maintain or restore international peace and security."** **Peacekeeping missions are the most visible face of the United Nations' conflict-management work;** as of early 2024, the Security Council oversees eleven operations across three continents, involving a total of nearly ninety-seven thousand uniformed personnel.

Constrained by U.S.-Soviet rivalry, the Security Council acted infrequently in the four-and-a-half decades between its founding and the close of the Cold War. During that time, **it authorized seventeen peacekeeping operations.** Since Russia's invasion and annexation of Crimea in 2014, tensions have flared between Russia and the Western members of the P5, leading to concerns that the body is less able to defuse crises. **Only two peacekeeping missions, in the Central African Republic and Haiti, have been authorized since 2014.** The Syrian conflict has proven to be particularly difficult to manage, given that Russia—sometimes joined by China—has used its veto power nearly twenty times to block resolutions aimed at holding the Bashar al-Assad regime accountable for atrocities documented by UN sources. Relations worsened further after Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022, and Moscow has since used its veto power to prevent several Security Council resolutions condemning the conflict.

The Security Council has authorized sixty peacekeeping operations in the years since the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, many responding to failing states, civil wars, or complex humanitarian emergencies and deploying to conflict zones in the absence of cease-fires or parties' consent. Under more muscular mandates, they have combined military operations—including less restrictive rules of engagement that allow for civilian and refugee protection—with civilian tasks such as policing, electoral assistance, and legal administration. Developing nations, particularly those in South Asia, provide the lion's share of personnel.

Regional organizations have played an increasingly important role in peacekeeping and conflict resolution, in some cases prodding the Security Council to act and in others acting as subcontractors on its behalf.

Veto Significance

The Veto Power can be ignored by any country that wishes to ignore the Security Council's Resolutions—including the members of the P5 themselves. The Veto also provides deniability, in that countries can claim moral and political superiority for their intentions, without actually doing anything, because another country vetoed it.

Bosco 12– [Bosco, David. 2023. "In Defense of the Veto Power – Foreign Policy." Archive.ph. August 3. <https://archive.ph/IHYEo#selection-1245.0-1253.1>.] Joel

[David Bosco is a professor at Indiana University's Hamilton Lugar School of Global and International Studies. He is the author of The Poseidon Project: The Struggle to Govern the World's Oceans.]

If jettisoning the veto power is both impractical and ill-advised, there is an alternative for those convinced that the world must put an end to the Syria violence, through forceful means if necessary: pretending that the veto power doesn't exist. There's ample precedent for that route just in the last couple decades, from Kosovo to Iraq. Brilliant and inventive international lawyers have periodically tried to argue that the "responsibility to protect" has somehow—through the mysterious workings of customary international law—rendered the veto power inapplicable in cases of mass atrocities. Whether taking that route is advisable in the case of Syria really depends less on the legal viability of that argument and more on the likely political effects. How would Russia react? How might reinforcing that precedent come back to bite those employing it? Is there a feasible intervention plan? Is anyone actually willing to commit forces?

My guess is that the answers to those questions will militate against international intervention. And that points to **another benefit of the veto power: it can be quite convenient in maintaining the fiction that someone else is keeping you from doing something you have no intention of doing in the first place.**

Voluntary Veto Restraint

The UN Security Council's veto power, mainly held by permanent members, often prevents action on genocide and human rights abuses, prompting calls for voluntary restraint to address these concerns.

Security Council Report 24 - [Security Council Report. "The Veto : UN Security Council Working Methods : Security Council Report." Securitycouncilreport.org. February 13, 2024. <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/un-security-council-working-methods/the-veto.php>.] Elene.

[Security Council Report (SCR) is the leading voice on UN Security Council matters, providing information and analysis to Council members to improve their effective participation, and to NGOs, UN member states, and the media to promote transparency of Council decision-making. The recommended grant will cover costs associated with the search for and recruitment of a new executive director.]

Beyond permanency itself, the **veto power is probably the UN Charter's most significant distinction between permanent and non-permanent members**. Article 27 (3) of the Charter establishes that all substantive decisions of the Council must be made with "the concurring votes of the permanent members".

Permanent members use the veto to defend their national interests, to uphold a tenet of their foreign policy or, in some cases, to promote a single issue of particular importance to a state. Since 16 February 1946—when the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) cast the first veto on a draft resolution regarding the withdrawal of foreign troops from Lebanon and Syria (S/PV.23)—the veto has been recorded 293 times.

In the run-up to the 2005 World Summit (following from the 2000 Millennium Summit), **the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change called on "the permanent members, in their individual capacities, to pledge themselves to refrain from the use of the veto in cases of genocide and large-scale human rights abuses"**. After the Summit, the governments of Costa Rica, Jordan, Liechtenstein, Singapore and Switzerland, collectively nicknamed **the Small Five (S5)**, **advocated for permanent members to "refrain ... from using a veto to block Council action aimed at preventing or ending genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity"**. Similar calls have been voiced by members at large in the open debates on working methods.

The S5 disbanded in 2012 but its agenda, notably its stance on the veto, was taken on in early 2013 by a group of states that emerged as an informal caucus to advocate for improved Security Council working methods. Publicly launched on 2 May that year, **Accountability, Coherence and Transparency (ACT) is a cross-regional group of 27 small and medium-sized states aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of the Council through the improvement of its working methods, including putting constraints on the use of the veto. ACT undertook work on a code of conduct for member states regarding Security Council action against genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes**. The code is meant to encourage timely and decisive action by the Council to prevent or end the commission of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. **It urges the permanent members voluntarily to agree to refrain from using their veto in situations involving mass atrocity crimes, but any member of the Council is invited to accede to the code, as is any other state that may, at some point, become a member of the Council**. On 1 January 2020, there were 120 member states supporting the Code of Conduct, including two permanent members of the Council—France and the UK—and eight elected members serving in 2020: Belgium, Dominican Republic, Estonia, Germany, Indonesia, Niger, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Tunisia.

Permanent member France has advocated a voluntary restraint on the veto on the part of the permanent members since the mid-2000s. In September 2014, on the margins of the 69th session of the General Assembly, France, joined by Mexico, organised a ministerial-level event on this issue. Then High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein made a statement in support of the French initiative. In a summary of the event, the co-chairs called on the P5 to "voluntarily and collectively pledge not to use the veto in case of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes on a large scale." However, from among the permanent members, only the UK has supported the initiative.

Aff

Africa

Africa: African countries are the subject of more than half of UNSEC resolutions and discussions—yet, the continent has no permanent seat on the council

Carvalho 20—[Council on Foreign Relations. “The UN at Seventy-Five: How to Make It Relevant Again.” 2020. Council on Foreign Relations. <https://www.cfr.org/article/un-seventy-five-how-make-it-relevant-again>.] Joel

[Gustavo de Carvalho is a Senior Researcher on Russia-Africa ties at the African Governance and Diplomacy Programme at SAIIA. Gustavo has over 15 years of experience supporting policy development, capacity building and research processes in Africa, focusing mainly on multilateralism and the relationship between African stakeholders and external partners.]

The United Nations was created in 1945 with the aim of consolidating a new world order that would achieve and protect peace by creating a multilateral system and intensifying global interdependence. Although most African countries were not independent seventy-five years ago, the colonized African territories seized the normative opportunity to pursue a sovereign quest for peace, security, and development. **In 2020, African member states made up 28 percent of the UN membership and were the subject of more than 50 percent of UN Security Council discussions and resolutions. This provides an important space for Africa to shape the debate at the United Nations.**

Since the 1990s, the dominance of intrastate over interstate conflicts, asymmetric wars, violent extremism, and climate change have all threatened the world and, in particular, Africa’s ability to effectively deal with international peace and security matters. As a result, the United Nations has been pushed not only to change, but also to create the space for enhanced regional multilateral responses that are now intrinsic to the global order.

Over the past twenty years, Africa developed a complex continental peace and security architecture, made up of its continental organization—the African Union—and its regional economic communities and mechanisms. Often facing numerous political, financial, and logistical challenges, **African organizations have sought to tread the fine line between maintaining and privileging the sovereign state on the one hand, and dealing with the constant threat posed by emerging nonstate actors on the other.**

The world needs to adapt strategically and functionally to remain relevant. Seventy-five years after its creation, **it is therefore critical that the United Nations continues to embrace the multiplicity of regional actors seeking to assist national governments and international institutions in maintaining the global order and achieving peace.** Only by adapting will it be able to achieve the principal goal of saving succeeding generations from the scourge of war, as presented by the UN Charter.

Debate Track: Evidence Packet (Abolish P5 Status) - Briefs

Resolved: The United Nations should abolish permanent membership on its Security Council.

Vetoes: More than 60% of UNSC discussions are focused on Africa, yet non-African countries – the G5 – can veto all manner of resolutions on the continent

Murithi 23–[Murithi, Tim. 2023. “A [New] World Order: What, Why, and How?” Stimson Center. July 12. <https://www.stimson.org/2023/a-new-world-order-what-why-and-how/>.] Joel

[Tim Murithi is Head of the Peacebuilding Interventions Programme, Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, and Professor of African Studies, University of Free State and Stellenbosch University, South Africa]

More than 60 percent of the issues discussed by the UNSC are focused on Africa, yet the continent does not have any representation among the P5 members of the Council. Given the fact that the P5 can veto all manner of decisions before the Council, it is a travesty of justice at its most basic level that African countries can only participate in key deliberations and decision-making processes as non-permanent members of the Council. UNSC negotiations and decision-making processes are, in effect, the highest manifestation of unfairness in the international system. If achieving fairness in negotiations among states is the preferred route to global legitimacy, then a fundamental transformation of the UNSC and the elimination of the veto for the P5 is a necessary pre-requisite action.

Atrocities

Human Rights Abuses: The Veto is often used by Great Powers to provide cover for Human Rights Abuses and other atrocities

D'Alessandra & Whidden 23—[“Whither Atrocity Prevention at the UN? Look beyond R2P and the Security Council • Stimson Center.” Stimson Center. November 6. <https://www.stimson.org/2023/whither-atrocity-prevention-at-the-un-look-beyond-r2p-and-the-security-council/>.] Joel

[Gwendolyn Whidden is a DPhil candidate in International Relations at the University of Oxford, where she received an MPhil in International Relations in 2022. Her doctoral research examines under what conditions the UN Security Council intervenes in situations of mass atrocity.

Federica D'Alessandra is the Deputy Director of the Institute for Ethics, Law, and Armed Conflict (ELAC), and Director of the Oxford Programme on International Peace and Security at the Blavatnik School of Government. She is also a member of the Steering Committee of the School's Alfred Landecker Programme, an Academic Affiliate of the Oxford Bonavero Institute of Human Rights, and on the Steering Committee of the Oxford Network of Peace Studies.]

Such contestation around R2P has undoubtedly contributed to the breakdown of Security Council diplomacy over responding to mass atrocities, but it is not the sole culprit. As argued elsewhere, it is crucial to recognize that the broader context in which this crisis of diplomacy has occurred matters equally if not more. In other words, **Security Council gridlock in mass atrocity situations over the past decade cannot simply be ascribed to norm contestation and R2P's “death” or “decline.” The roots of this crisis are both broader and deeper, and can be traced, in the first place, to a shifting geopolitical environment and the great power dynamics it is producing. Whereas the adoption of R2P was enabled by a unique geopolitical environment defined by unprecedented multilateral cooperation and liberal international politics — made possible by the end of the Cold War and the “unipolar moment” of the U.S. — the past two decades have seen a shift toward a multipolar world order and increased great power rivalry. This, in turn, has led to the rise of the “great power perpetrator”: a P5 directly involved in the commission of mass atrocities — think China in Xinjiang, and Russia in Ukraine — while abusing its institutional privilege to block international action through the veto, and systematically contesting key laws and norms that underpin both protection agendas such as atrocity prevention, and the multilateral system itself.**

Indeed, as one of us wrote elsewhere, **we believe the rise of the “great power perpetrator” is one of the — if not *the* — biggest contemporary and systemic challenges to the state and progress of atrocity prevention**, for at least three reasons. First, by simultaneously leveraging multiple dimensions of “great power” — including *institutional* power by virtue of its P5 membership; *productive* power by virtue of its prominence and role in norm life cycles; and *systemic* power, by virtue of its ability to leverage political, economic, and military dependencies to align the positions of other states with its interests — it poses a “system-level” challenge to the U.N. in its unmatched ability to grind multilateral action to a halt. Second, in doing so, the *great power perpetrator* turns on its head the very foundation upon which R2P was built — that is, the promise of P5 guardianship, rather than abuse, of the international peace and security architecture. Finally, **the rise of the great power perpetrator challenges the theoretical assumptions upon which the atrocity prevention field was itself conceived — i.e., that atrocities are committed by weak and failed states or non-states armed groups, rather than great powers with unmatched capabilities, influence, and resources.** Precisely on these latter grounds, we believe that the increased role of great powers in the direct commission of atrocities may call for a review of the tools currently available to policymakers in the atrocity prevention toolkit, for they were conceived to respond to atrocities committed by actors pulling on radically different levers of power than those available to the *great power perpetrators* now committing the abuse.

Congo: about 6 million people died in the 'African World War', while the UNSC failed to intervene

Mbombo 22– [Mbombo, Jean-Marie Kasonga. 2022. "A Rework of the P5 as a Cornerstone for Peace through Multilateralism - Georgetown Journal of International Affairs." Georgetown Journal of International Affairs. December 19. <https://gjia.georgetown.edu/2022/12/19/a-rework-of-the-p5-as-a-cornerstone-for-peace-through-multilateralism/>.] Joel

[Dr. Jean-Marie Kasonga Mbombo is a graduate of Trinity College Dublin and a senior lecturer and researcher at the Centre for Peace and Strategic Studies. His research interests include liberal peacebuilding, the United Nations, conflict management in the Great Lakes region of Africa, and restorative justice. Dr. Mbombo is also the founder and CEO of Peace People Network, an organization whose vision is to give peace a human face.]

Notably, **the 1994 genocide in Rwanda could have been avoided had the UNSC taken a decisive position. Between 1996 and 2002, approximately six million people perished during the "African World War" in the Democratic Republic of Congo, but world leaders applied the "ostrich policy," pretending there was no threat to international peace and security.** The abuse of veto powers and a failure to provide vital support has led to many unjust wars affecting millions worldwide. For instance, in the aftermath of the September 11 terrorist attacks, **US troops invaded Afghanistan in November 2001 without the seal of approval from the Security Council.** Similarly, **nor did all P5 members support the preemptive war in Iraq that toppled the Saddam Hussein regime, the OTAN bombardment of Libya in 2011 that facilitated the capture of Kaddafi, or the Western support of the Free Syrian Army's actions against the regime of Bashar al-Assad.** It is worth mentioning that **the UNSC holds the power to impose an arms embargo on sovereign states deemed untrustworthy,** but it falls short of exposing the military capability of armed non-state actors that are engaged in endless wars against legitimate governments. As an illustration, in a September 2022 interview with France24, the UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres described the terrorist group M23 operating in D.R. Congo as a modern army equipped with more sophisticated and advanced weapons than the UN Stabilization Mission, MONUSCO. Over the years, such shortcomings of the UNSC have attracted an outpouring of suggestions intended to overhaul the highest decision-making body.

Rwanda: the 'pocket veto' was used to block intervention in the Rwandan genocide

Dallas 18– [Dallas, Emmanuela Florence 2018 "The Security Council's Sine qua Non: The Veto Power." <https://polisci.rutgers.edu/publications/occasional-paper-series/346-occasional-paper-8-florence-emmanuela-emmy-dallas/file>.] Joel

[Emmanuela Dallas is an Executive and Research Associate at the Asia Society, where she's worked for 10 years. She holds a Master's Degree in Political Science and International Relations from Rutgers University. Her concentration has been in political risk and human rights analysis as well as in conflict prevention and atrocity crimes.]

Additionally, as Nahory points out, **"hidden vetoes are not only used to block action, but also to weaken the definitions of crises under international law."** **The Rwandan genocide of 1994 is one such situation, where the use of the word "genocide" would have required intervention by parties according to the 1948 Genocide Convention.** **Consequently, it was downgraded to a definition that did not require such severe action by the UNSC.** National interests and perspectives of the P5 instigated these actions. **France's interests in Rwanda led it to support the then Rwandan government, while the United States, bruised after the failed Somalia intervention, was reluctant to authorize another intervention.** **As a result, UN response was muted until most of the killing had ceased, and the genocide was a concrete truth for all to see** (Nahory 2004: 2). In hindsight, and in a "too little, too late" speech known as the "Clinton Apology", the former President of the United States, Bill Clinton, voiced his regret for not acting sooner in the blood-stricken country of Rwanda (Wirkola, 2010: 34).

Syria: The Security Council has failed to adopt resolutions that investigate the use of chemical and cluster munitions in Syria

Siboe 19 - Siboe, Nancy. "The Non-Effectiveness of the United Nations Security Council's Role in the Syrian Conflict." OHRH. July 26, 2019. <https://ohrh.law.ox.ac.uk/the-non-effectiveness-of-the-united-nations-security-councils-role-in-the-syrian-conflict/>.] Elene.

[Nancy Namisi Siboe is a Lecturer in Constitutional Law at ICP (University of Portsmouth, UK), Senior Doctoral Candidate in Law at the University of Portsmouth and an Advocate of the High Court of Kenya. Holder of a Master of Laws (LLM, International Law) from the University of the West of England, UK, an MBA (Strategic Management) from Daystar University, Kenya. Research interests include humanitarian intervention (use of force) in civil wars, Public Law and the use of Artificial Intelligence in the legal profession.]

As with every legislation, the preamble of the United Nations Charter reflects the spirit in which the legislation was enacted. The Charter's Preamble appears, at least at first sight, to be the harbinger of a radical transformation of the international system – especially in its handling of the problems of war.

The first lines of the preamble do set the target quite high, stating:

'We the peoples of the United Nations.....determined, to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind...'

In furtherance of its main purpose, the UNCS enjoys broad powers under the Charter on enforcement measures, which include the power to impose non-military sanctions, and other measures for the maintenance of international peace and security. In accordance with accepted international law, **the UN Security Council is empowered to make final decisions on global conflicts. Yet in the Syrian war, a crisis that began in 2011, over several million people, including women and children, have died. Many people have been displaced and many more are fleeing the country through life-threatening means of transportation, in a desperate attempt to preserve their lives. Parties to the conflict have continued to use unlawful weapons such as internationally banned cluster munitions and chemical weapons. However, the UNSC has, on many occasions, actively failed to adopt resolutions that would allow the investigation of the use of such weapons in Syria (most recently in 2018). In fact, it is on record that Russia has vetoed resolutions for UNSC action in Syria on multiple occasions (as has China).**

The lack of representativeness of the UNSC is a critical issue in considering how to unlock this impasse. The UNSC consists of 15 members. However, only 5 are permanent (drawn from the victors of World War II), and hold veto power. **Attempts at intervention have been hampered by the vetoing of resolutions.**

Although the UNSC has significant accomplishments to its name in maintaining international peace and security in several distressed countries like Libya, Kosovo, Rwanda among other states, it now appears to be regenerating into a system of providing selective security. For instance, in 2011, the Security Council authorized unprecedented interventions to protect civilians in Libya and Ivory Coast in a space of two weeks. Compared with the amount of time it has taken for the Security Council to agree on a resolution that would remedy the continued crisis in Syria, it is evident that it has been slow to act.

The systematic widespread of the violence in Syria, with no signs of an end to the atrocities that have continued over the last decade, has posed important questions with regard to the effectiveness of the UNSC in carrying out the responsibility entrusted and mandated by the 193 members of the United Nations.

Impact – Legitimacy: The failure to stop atrocities has led to the weakening of confidence in the UN

Anand 22– [“It’s Time to Reform the United Nations Security Council - Australian Institute of International Affairs.” 2022. Australian Institute of International Affairs. <https://www.internationalaffairs.org.au/australianoutlook/its-time-to-reform-the-united-nations-security-council/>.] Joel

[Anil Anand is an independent Canadian policy researcher and author with extensive experience in law enforcement, security, and social justice. Anil has taught Criminology, Management in the Criminal Justice System, Advanced Issues in Community Policing, and Issues in Culture and Ethnicity at Guelph-Humber University. He holds a Master of Laws from Osgoode Hall Law School in Toronto, Canada, an MBA from the Rothman School of Management at the University of Toronto, and a Global Executive MBA HSG from Universitat in St. Gallen, Switzerland.]

As far back as 26 June 1945 Australia’s Representative to the UN H.V. Evatt had expressed concern with the exclusive authority empowered to the Permanent Members noting that they would have a double veto, first on whether to accept issue before the Council, and then on the outcome. He said such a member, “can say not only I can veto the decision of the Council, but I will determine the question which I will veto.”

There is now a resounding view that too many conflicts, violations of the UN Charter, human rights abuses, and atrocities have been failed due to the competing self-interest of the P5 – Darfur, Myanmar, Eritrea, Yemen, Iraq, Syria, Russia’s annexation of Crimea, the recent invasion of Ukraine to name but a few. **Each failure further weakened the moral and systemic integrity of the institution empowered to uphold international order, peace, and accountability.**

In a rare move, the General Assembly on 26 April 2022, adopted a landmark resolution aimed at holding the P5 accountable for use of the veto amid growing criticism of inaction by the Security Council on the war in Ukraine: a small step, long overdue.

In 2013 Saudi Arabia turned down an offer of a non-permanent seat on the Security Council. The Saudi foreign ministry noted “work mechanisms and double-standards on the Security Council prevent it from carrying out its duties and assuming its responsibilities in keeping world peace.” The minister added that Saudi Arabia had no option but to turn down Security Council membership until the Council was reformed and given the means to accomplish its duties and assume its responsibilities in preserving peace and security.

The exclusion of any African, Latin American, or Middle Eastern representation within the P5 has also diminished its legitimacy. It is unlikely that someone setting up the UN today would give veto power and permanent membership to middle-ranking powers such as Britain and France but not to India, Japan, or Germany.

Decolonization

The P5 is Eurocentric and heavily colonial – abolishing permanent membership would be a step towards decolonializing the Security Council

Ryder, Baisch & Eguegu 20 - [Ryder, Hannah. Baisch, Anna & Eguegu, Ovigwe. 2020. “Decolonizing the United Nations Means Abolishing the Permanent Five.” Foreign Policy. September 17, 2020. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/09/17/decolonizing-united-nations-means-abolish-permanent-five-security-council/>.] Elene.

[Hannah Ryder is the CEO of Development Reimagined, Senior Associate at the Center for Strategic International Studies Africa Program, and former Head of Policy and Partnerships for UNDP in China.

Anna Baisch is an International relations researcher at Development Reimagined.

Ovigwe Eguegu is a policy advisor at Development Reimagined and columnist for the China Africa Project, specializing in geopolitics, globalization and Africa-China relations.]

The U.N. and its agencies are constantly fighting for new money to cover escalating costs of various missions such as on health, education, and peacekeeping, despite global improvements in poverty.

The typical responses to the U.N.’s failure have been to enlarge the P5, the five permanent members of the Security Council who represent the chief victors of World War II. Bring in other global powers such as India or Turkey. Move around the representational seats and create new categories. Create more seats for Africa. Dilute the veto power exercised by the P5.

But all of these measures are tinkering. None are adequate. **The only way forward is to acknowledge the key difference between 1945 and 2020, decolonization, and abolish the permanent members of the Security Council altogether. Here’s why and how.**

The roots of the U.N. are deeply colonial. Back in 1945 four out of the five members of the P5 were colonial states. Over the 75 years of the U.N.’s existence, 80 former colonies have gained independence, from India to Kenya, to Nigeria and Kazakhstan. In 1945 the P5—China, the United States, the United Kingdom, France, and Russia—accounted for 10 percent of member states and over 50 percent of the world’s population, within their empires. Now, **the P5 account for 26 percent of the world’s population, and just 3 percent of the U.N. member states.**

Even with the 10 additional nonpermanent members of the Security Council—who have to compete to be elected to sit on the council for two years, which costs millions of dollars in lobbying—**Security Council seats are distinctly Eurocentric.**

This poorly distributed allocation is reflected in other parts of the U.N.—in particular the secretary-general position itself. Since 1945, four out of the nine secretaries-general have been white European men. There has never been a Muslim secretary-general.

Why does this distribution matter? **The shift in postcolonial (and post-Cold War) membership is essentially the U.N.’s only major shift in composition in 75 years.**

Contrary to what many observers—especially economists like ourselves—might have us believe, there has not been a great economic rebalancing. Our calculations suggest—again including former colonies—that the P5’s share of global GDP in 1940 was around 47 percent. Today, the P5 accounts for just 2 percentage points more of GDP—49 percent of the global total.

The U.N.’s structural inability to compel the P5 countries themselves to act decisively for the greater good is often acknowledged as a key justification for change, but this is often countered with economic arguments

that we are all better off now. This counter does not hold water. The P5's failure to distribute economic benefits to the rest of the world despite decolonization is also a structural problem that justifies change.

There is no country in the world that deserves a permanent seat. Veto-based decision-making on behalf of others, as the Security Council does, should be earned, and criteria for responsibility and capability transparently demonstrated and rewarded.

A reimagined structure for a Security Council would see all 15 seats being made temporary, for periods of five years to provide more continuity, with wide, nonregional open competition for each seat, alongside clear, monitored restrictions on lobbying expenses and two-term limits within a cycle of 30 years to reward excellence while avoiding domination.

Such a structure would not be a toothless democratic body like the U.N. General Assembly, where every country has one vote, regardless of its record, wealth, population, or military might, and no country has a veto. Nor would it be an easy and potentially diverse yet unaccountable “coalition of the willing,” nor a supposedly elite and powerful grouping of countries such as the G-7, BRICS, or G-20, subject to groupthink and hiding behind each other.

These 15 countries, just as nonpermanent members have established precedent for doing now, would need to be elected by others—they would need to prove their worth to others. They would need to build allies within the U.N., for instance within their groupings, and campaign to show they are indeed responsible and capable to be trusted to help the world tackle issues from poverty and climate change to pandemics and financial crises. P5 members could thus arguably remain on the council, but they would need to compete and pitch to do so.

While a 15-seat Security Council might initially seem large, a council that aimed to be effective in decision-making while embedding the principle of collaboration would also implement a rule that veto power can only be exercised by two members together—i.e., any country would need to find another supporter to oppose a decision. Preserving the veto would also maintain its distinction from the General Assembly and from the pre-World War II League of Nations, the U.N.'s failed predecessor.

Detractors will immediately contend that the P5 will not accept this. Nor would they submit to decisions made by others. Indeed, some P5 members have remained out of certain U.N.-based mechanisms for this reason. Three out of the five permanent members do not recognize the U.N. General Assembly-endorsed International Criminal Court (ICC) decisions. Yet the ICC has made important contributions to justice for thousands, if not millions of people. **The U.N. can and does still play a guardian role, even if P5 members remain outside.**

The world cannot take another 75 years of unaccountability and inequality. A reimagined, stronger structure has a chance of creating a more fit-for-purpose and adaptive U.N., ready to face the challenges of the future.

Existential Risks

When UN resolutions arise regarding existential risks, the P5 Veto should be suspended—and if permanent membership is abolished, this veto will never get in the way of addressing existential risks

Sasnal & Zaręba 20—[Council on Foreign Relations. “The UN at Seventy-Five: How to Make It Relevant Again.” 2020. Council on Foreign Relations. <https://www.cfr.org/article/un-seventy-five-how-make-it-relevant-again>.] Joel

[Patrycja Sasnal is a political scientist, philosopher and Arabist specializing in IR in the Middle East, with a focus on radicalization, political violence, postcolonial theory and migration. She is currently the head of the Middle East and Africa programme at the Polish Institute of International Affairs.

[Szymon Zaręba is Head of the Global Issues Programme at the Polish Institute of International Affairs]

There is no longer any doubt that three primary threats endanger the existence of humanity: climate change, infectious disease, and nuclear weapons. They differ in their origins and degree of immediacy, yet they share one commonality: **only global, multilateral efforts can reduce their destructive potential. No other forum is more suitable for such efforts than the United Nations.**

The United Nations can prioritize these threats by debating and drafting a resolution—symbolically numbered 0000—identifying them as the core global challenges. A permanent coordinating platform should be set up to integrate the UN response across agencies, funds, and related organizations, and to act quickly, comprehensively, and efficiently in various fields, such as the International Atomic Energy Agency and the World Health Organization. Establishing such communication channels will bolster cohesiveness, which is fundamental when dealing with ongoing, multidimensional threats in a fragmented UN system.

This coordinating platform could be created in one of two ways: set up from scratch or, preferably, through the existing Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB). The latter option, however, would require transforming the CEB and increasing the frequency of its meetings (currently two per year) because existential threats pay no heed to biannual schedules. The platform’s goal would be to link threat mitigation to all policy fields in the UN system when planning, deciding, and assessing results.

Ideally, the Security Council should be stripped of veto power when a matter relating to these existential threats is on the agenda; such a move, however, is unfortunately unrealistic. More realistically, prioritizing this debate would lead to greater focus on what matters most. On its seventy-fifth birthday, the United Nations needs to think big if it is to see its one hundred and fiftieth.

Gridlock

Paralysis: The veto power in the UN Security Council often stops the council from taking action in urgent situations like Syria and Crimea, leading to a sense of paralysis

Weiss & Kuele 14 - [Weiss, G. Thomas. & Kuele, Giovanna. "The Veto: Problems and Prospects." E-International Relations. March 27, 2014. <https://www.e-ir.info/2014/03/27/the-veto-problems-and-prospects>.] Elene.

[Thomas G. Weiss is Presidential Professor of Political Science at The CUNY Graduate Center and Director of the Ralph Bunche Institute for International Studies, and research professor at SOAS, University of London. He was a president of the International Studies Association (2009-10) and past chair of the Academic Council on the UN System (2006-9).

Giovanna Kuele is a PhD at the Graduate Center and a non-resident research fellow at the Igarapé Institute.]

As has occurred over almost seven decades of UN experience (more often during the Cold War, less often since), some 232 actual or countless threatened vetoes loom large, circumscribing debate and policy options. For Ukraine it was Russia's, but there have been numerous other instances of single, double, and triple vetoes.

In fact, there have been a total of 190 resolutions vetoed since the Security Council's first meeting on 17 January 1946 – 162 through 1989 and 28 since. In fact between 1946 and 1956, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) vetoed 50 resolutions before other permanent members used the privilege. 161 resolutions were by a single member of the P5, but there were 16 double vetoes, and 13 triple ones. Diplomatic protocol and political practicalities make these numbers lower than they otherwise might have been because **a threatened veto often means that other states return to the drawing boards rather than pushing immediately for a showdown**. For instance, **over the last three years, there have actually been only three vetoes over Syria (all double-vetoes, by Russia and China) despite the real-time horror of 150,000 deaths and 9 million people forcibly displaced**. Paralysis pervades despite overwhelming revulsion categorically expressed in the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council.

In short, the veto means that the world organization is as ineffective in Syria and Crimea as it was in Iraq in 2003. The UN's constitution requires the P5 to agree or at least not object. Hence, proponents for the Iraq War complained that the UN was powerless to stop Saddam Hussein, whereas those against the war complained that the UN was powerless to stop Washington and London. Both sides were correct.

No question has uselessly spilled more ink or printer toner than reforming the Security Council. The 1965 UN Charter amendment that increased the numbers of elected members from 6 to 10 is one of the few such changes which reflected the influx of new member states following decolonization (along with increased membership in the Economic and Social Council). The demand for further changes – increasing the numbers of elected and permanent members as well as eliminating or expanding the veto – has been a permanent feature of UN debate ever since. **Unfortunately, while everyone agrees that the Security Council reflects the world of 1945 and not the 21st century's distribution of power, no one has a solution that satisfies the various factions**.

Permanent Security Council membership and the veto in particular appear anachronistic relics; but they are here to stay because every proposed change raises as many problems as it solves. If it was not clear earlier, **the crises in Crimea and Syria demonstrate now why Russia will not agree to set aside the veto just as ongoing troubles in the Middle East indicate unequivocally why the US Senate will not agree to any such change**.

R2P: UNSEC has failed in its Responsibility to Protect, to respond to mass atrocities, due to the Veto Power

D'Alessandra & Whidden 23—[“Whither Atrocity Prevention at the UN? Look beyond R2P and the Security Council • Stimson Center.” Stimson Center. November 6. <https://www.stimson.org/2023/whither-atrocity-prevention-at-the-un-look-beyond-r2p-and-the-security-council/>.] Joel

[Gwendolyn Whidden is a DPhil candidate in International Relations at the University of Oxford, where she received an MPhil in International Relations in 2022. Her doctoral research examines under what conditions the UN Security Council intervenes in situations of mass atrocity.

Federica D'Alessandra is the Deputy Director of the Institute for Ethics, Law, and Armed Conflict (ELAC), and Director of the Oxford Programme on International Peace and Security at the Blavatnik School of Government. She is also a member of the Steering Committee of the School's Alfred Landecker Programme, an Academic Affiliate of the Oxford Bonavero Institute of Human Rights, and on the Steering Committee of the Oxford Network of Peace Studies.]

If the breakdown of Security Council diplomacy over meaningful response to the Syrian civil war is often cited as the first sign of the decline of the atrocity prevention agenda at the U.N., the Council's inaction over **Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine — and the horrific atrocities perpetrated in its wake — has returned the UN's crisis of legitimacy over its ability to prevent and respond to mass atrocities to the forefront of international affairs. Despite mounting evidence of Russia's war crimes during one of the most blatant instances of state aggression in the history of the U.N., the Council has failed once again to adopt any measures in response.** It is well known, however, that **Security Council gridlock has been ongoing since well before the war in Ukraine. Over the past ten years, even limited cooperation on responding to mass atrocities among the Council's five permanent members (P5) has almost entirely collapsed, as evidenced by the persistent use of the veto or its threat — particularly by China and Russia— to block action in response to horrific human rights abuses committed in Syria, Myanmar, Xinjiang, and North Korea, just to name a few.** Given its protractedness and high degree of visibility, this state of affairs in the Council has created a general — and not unreasonable — perception that the role of the U.N. in global atrocity prevention and response has declined (if not become nearly irrelevant), and that efforts to advance the atrocity prevention agenda operationally have all but been abandoned.

Critics often attribute the increased use of the veto in the Security Council over the past decade almost exclusively to block action in situations of mass atrocity to the “death” or “decline” of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) norm, particularly with respect to its third pillar. They highlight the norm's “loss of legitimacy” after the controversial 2011 NATO military intervention in Libya authorized by UNSC Resolution 1973 such that today Council members — as do most actors — refrain from framing atrocity situations in terms of R2P, and almost never reach a consensus on how to collectively respond. In addition to controversy over Resolution 1973, others point to a persistent lack of political will among U.N. member States to fully implement R2P. Given that these controversies and failures are widely (and, we argue, incorrectly) taken to indicate an erosion of the normative foundations underpinning R2P — i.e., that the risk or commission of mass atrocities activates an international responsibility to respond to them — it is perhaps unsurprising that the U.N. is assumed by many to no longer be a key player meaningfully involved in global atrocity prevention and response efforts.

Impact – Ineffectiveness. Frequent veto use in the Security Council slows down urgent decisions on important issues because permanent members have conflicting interests.

United Nations 11/23 - [United Nations. “With Violent Conflicts Increasing, Speakers Say Security Council Reforms Crucial to Ensure International Peace, Stability, as General Assembly Begins Debate | UN Press.” Press.un.org. November 16, 2023. <https://press.un.org/en/2023/ga12562.doc.htm>.] Elene.

[The United Nations is an international organization whose stated purposes are to maintain international peace and security, develop friendly relations among nations, achieve international cooperation, and serve as a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations. It is the world's largest international organization.]

With increased violent conflicts around the world and heightened scrutiny of the Security Council’s actions as a result, the **General Assembly met today for its annual debate on how to reform the 15-nation organ, with speakers reiterating their calls to make it more representative, transparent and accountable in order to address the most serious threats to international peace and security.**

Noting that the issue of its reform has been on the Assembly’s agenda for 44 years, speakers differed on how to reshape the Security Council, with some delegates highlighting the need for more inclusive and representative membership and others arguing for limiting the use of the veto.

“Never before has this issue been more pressing, both contextually and practically,” said Dennis Francis (Trinidad and Tobago), President of the Assembly, in his opening remarks. **At a moment of increased violence, the United Nations seems paralysed largely due to divisions within the Security Council, which is falling dangerously short of its mandate as the primary custodian for the maintenance of international peace and security.** Without structural reform, the performance and legitimacy of the Council will continue to suffer and so will the credibility and relevance of the United Nations itself, he said, urging Member States to break through ingrained positions and take practical steps in support of effectiveness and inclusion.

Drawing attention to the underrepresentation of countries on the African continent, the delegate of Sierra Leone, speaking for the African Group, observed that **“Africa remains the only major continent without representation in the permanent category of the Security Council, and under-represented in the non-permanent category”**.

Highlighting the Council’s role in maintaining international peace and security, the representative of Bahrain, speaking for the Arab Group, pointed to the recent violence in Gaza and **urged Member States to ensure conflict prevention becomes more representative, transparent, neutral and credible.** If the enlargement of the Security Council happens, he requested Arab representation among the permanent members in addition to a fair representation of Arab countries in the non-permanent category of seats.

Also spotlighting the crisis in Gaza, the representative of Singapore said it took the Council 40 days to adopt a resolution on the Gaza Strip while the Assembly was able to act much earlier. Turning to the process of elections for a non-permanent seat, he said that in theory it is democratic and open to all States but that in practice there is no level playing field as elections are often dominated by larger regional States, making it extremely challenging for a small State to campaign with any success. There is a “glass ceiling” that discourages or disadvantages small States from getting elected, he said.

Spotlighting voting in the Council, the representative of the Philippines said the **use of the veto often hinders the Council's ability to act swiftly on critical issues, reflecting a more polarized world and the conflicting interests of its Permanent Members.** Since it might be a challenge to remove the veto privileges of the permanent members, curtailing its exercise should be considered. “The veto should not paralyse the Security Council in dealing with issues concerning peace and war,” he emphasized.

Legitimacy

Abolishing permanent membership and its accompanying veto power could help prevent the potential for illegal interventions and strengthen the authority of the UNSC.

Narvaez 23 - [Narvaez, Sabina. 2023. "Veto Power in the Security Council Should Be Abolished." The Stork. January 5, 2023. <https://www.iestork.org/veto-power-in-the-security-council-should-be-abolished/>.] Elene.

[Sabina Narvaez holds a Master's degree in Philosophy, Politics and Law and mostly writes about these topics. She is also interested in sustainability.]

The Security Council consists of 15 members, five of which are permanent. These five are the victors of the second world war: the UK, the US, China, the Soviet Union (now Russia), and France. **As well as having a permanent seat, they have the additional privilege of being able to exercise a veto.** This means that any of these five states can unilaterally block any resolution, even if all other members support it.

There are key conflicts that the UNSC can't intervene in because of the veto. For example, the US has used its veto to block action on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict 43 times, including resolutions calling for Israel to respect Muslim places of worship and abide by the Geneva Conventions in its military occupation of Palestinian territory. Meanwhile, Amnesty International has accused Russia and China of abusing their veto power during the Syrian war. This includes preventing the UNSC from holding the Syrian government accountable for illegal chemical attacks. **Clearly, the veto is still being used by world powers to protect allies who have committed crimes against humanity.**

However, it could be argued that the veto is still useful. Some of its proponents have argued that without it, the UNSC risked becoming irrelevant. Although not all of the permanent members remain world powers, it is clear that at least three of them are (the US, Russia, and China). **If they did not have the power to block UNSC resolutions that went against their interests, it is possible that these world powers would switch to other methods of conflict resolution, which would inevitably undermine the Security Council.** This argument has been raised by Russian President Vladimir Putin, and implied by the Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi. As a result of their positions, both of them should have a good idea of how their countries might react if the veto was abolished.

Arguably, **the presence of a veto can also provide an incentive for world powers to operate without Security Council approval.** A good example of this is the US and UK invasion of Iraq in 2003. There are two legal ways of using force according to the UN Charter; self-defence and collective enforcement, which require UN approval. Unable to use self-defence as an argument, the US and UK attempted to get the Security Council to pass a resolution authorising a war in Iraq. Unfortunately, France was strongly opposed and indicated that it would use its veto if necessary. **Instead of waiting for their resolution to be voted down, the US and UK proceeded to invade Iraq without UN approval, leading to an illegal war that lasted nearly a decade. Whether a veto is or isn't in place, world powers will always be tempted to undermine the Security Council when their interests are threatened.**

Finally, it could be argued that the use of the veto itself threatens to weaken the power of the UNSC. GA Resolution 377, also known as the Uniting for Peace resolution, was passed during the permanent deadlock of the Cold War. It states that if the Security Council can't act because of a veto, the General Assembly has the right to immediately consider the matter. This gives it the power to decide on

issues that it wouldn't normally have the power to. This is particularly the case as the Uniting for Peace resolution also gives the General Assembly the power to authorise the use of force. **As a result, a permanent member could use their veto to block military intervention, only to find that the question goes to the General Assembly, which may have the power to authorise it. In this situation, the veto is essentially irrelevant. Furthermore, the Security Council is weakened as it loses the power to decide on a situation under its authority.**

The veto does more harm than good, both to the UN's overarching mission and to the Security Council's role in it. The UNSC is meant to maintain international peace and stability, which it can't do when conflicts involving the five permanent members frequently lead to vetoes. In the short run, this sometimes means that the UN fails to maintain peace and stability. In the long run, this will probably also mean that the Security Council is increasingly not the body entrusted with fulfilling this objective, as the General Assembly gains more powers to take action in its place. The only way of preventing both these things from happening is to abolish the veto.

Reliability & Consistency: Removing the Veto Power would increase legitimacy and lead to more reliable and consistent decisions

McKenna 15 - [McKenna, Michelle. 2015. "Benefits of Reforming the UNSC." Human Security Centre. June 15, 2015. <http://www.hscentre.org/global-governance/benefits-reforming-unscc/>.] Elene.

[Michelle is a Senior Fellow at the Human Security Centre. Her research interests include military interventions in the Middle East and Africa, international development and the plight of small island states against climate change. She completed her final year thesis on the Responsibility to Protect in the context of the Libya conflict.]

Since its inception in 1945 the Council has been plagued with problems, but never have these been more prevalent than in the current state of global affairs. The idea of Security Council reform has been batted about for years and, indeed, several attempts to table coherent proposals for it have failed. However, it is imperative that the Council reforms in order for it to continue effectively protecting international peace and security.

There is one major issue that faces the Security Council: legitimacy. Nearly 70 years on from its creation, it is no longer seen to be legitimate to concentrate power in the hands of a few states premised on their winning of the Second World War. **The veto power is the most controversial aspect of the Council, which has been exemplified by the ongoing atrocities in Syria where the Council has been unable to act due to opposition from some permanent members.** Whilst it is unlikely that we will ever see the veto power completely eradicated, it is vital that limits are placed on its use and the international system will benefit from this. There are several options for restricting the use of the veto, including a voluntary restriction from the PMs that they will not use their veto when *jus cogens* crimes are involved, primarily genocide and crimes against humanity. By agreeing to this, the Security Council would once again be able to exercise its Chapter VII powers effectively. If this restriction were in place now, the Council would have been able to intervene militarily in Syria with legitimacy and halt the atrocities long before now. Instead we are left with a situation where the Security Council has taken no action and other states are afraid to do so as well for fear of reprisal, which is not what we want to see going forward. **By limiting the power of the veto, the appeal of the Security Council could be expanded and states will be more likely to go to it for help. This would also help to make the Council's decisions more reliable and consistent, as it would be expected that it would act the same in a similar situation and reduce the power of the Permanent Members to take arbitrary decisions.** By building up a body of jurisprudence, there will no longer be the requirement for

Debate Track: Evidence Packet (Abolish P5 Status) - Briefs

Resolved: The United Nations should abolish permanent membership on its Security Council.

states or organisations to intervene in situations without Council authorisation, which will strengthen international law and the United Nations and stabilise international relations.

The Security Council also faces a legitimacy and accountability issue through its lack of representativeness, particularly of the Global South. Increasing the number of members of the Council could eradicate this problem as a more representative body would give it more authority to deal with situations and would remove the perception that the Council is a means for the West to impose its views on the rest of the world. As above, this would help enhance the Council's appeal, to African states in particular, and make it stronger going forward. If the Council doesn't reform and continues to be inactive, states will instead turn to their regional organisations for assistance, which has already been seen in the past in the case of Kosovo. If this continues to happen going forward, then these organisations will get stronger and the Security Council will become marginalised. This is not a situation that anyone would want to see happen as a return to a piecemeal approach to security is likely to heighten tensions rather than unite the world.

A radical overhaul is needed to prevent it becoming stagnant once again. The Council's enforcement power needs to be increased through strengthening the world's perception of the body and reducing its dependence on America's military power, which will be very difficult to do. If the Council achieves this, not only will it bolster its own enforcement powers and capabilities going forward, but it will contribute to strengthening the UN as a whole, where wider reforms have been held back as a result of the Security Council dilemma. This will ensure that the Council and UN continue to be the leading body for upholding peace and security for the future and will not suffer the same fate as its predecessor.

Palestine

Israel: The US uses most of its Vetoes to protect Israel

Dallas 18 – [Dallas, Emmanuela Florence 2018 “The Security Council’s Sine qua Non: The Veto Power.”

<https://polisci.rutgers.edu/publications/occasional-paper-series/346-occasional-paper-8-florence-emmanuela-emmy-dallas/file>.] Joel

[Emmanuela Dallas is an Executive and Research Associate at the Asia Society, where she’s worked for 10 years.

She holds a Master’s Degree in Political Science and International Relations from Rutgers University. Her concentration has been in political risk and human rights analysis as well as in conflict prevention and atrocity crimes.]

Following the end of the Cold War, the UNSC appeared to be on a more cooperative track with its members. Many resolutions were adopted pointing to a more cooperative approach in the Council (Wallenstein and Johansson, 2015: 37). However, this should not be mistakenly understood to mean the veto has disappeared. For the most part the United States has retreated from using its veto power with the exception of resolutions critical of Israel, e.g. **over the last 20 years, the U.S. has used 15 out of 24 of its vetoes to protect Israel.** The Russian Federation has not stopped using it either as demonstrated by vetoes of resolutions dealing with Georgia- 2009, Ukraine- 2014 and Syria- 2011-2012/2014-2018, (Einsiedel et al., 2015: 918).

No Ceasefire: The US used its veto power to stop a UNSEC resolutions calling for an Israeli Ceasefire

Fassihi et al. 12/23 – [The New York Times. 2024. “U.S. Vetoes Israel-Hamas Cease-Fire Resolution at U.N. Security Council.”

<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/12/08/world/middleeast/israel-hamas-gaza-aid.html>] Joel

[Farnaz Fassihi is a reporter for The New York Times based in New York. Previously she was a senior writer and war correspondent for the Wall Street Journal for 17 years based in the Middle East. Fassihi has covered wars and uprisings across the Middle East, including in Iran, Afghanistan, Iraq, Israel, Gaza, the West Bank, Egypt, Turkey, Lebanon, and Syria. Fassihi has been honored with more than a dozen national journalism awards including Overseas Press Club’s Hal Boyle Award, Robert F. Kennedy Award and Society of Professional Journalists Award for best international reporting.]

The United States on Friday vetoed a United Nations resolution calling for an immediate cease-fire in the Gaza Strip, where Israel has launched hundreds of strikes, relief efforts were faltering and people were growing so desperate for basic necessities that some were stoning and raiding aid convoys.

The U.N. secretary general, António Guterres, and most members of the Security Council had backed the measure, saying that the humanitarian catastrophe in the coastal enclave where 2.2 million Palestinians live could threaten world stability.

But the United States, which is one of the five permanent members of the Security Council, blocked the resolution, arguing that Israel has the right to defend itself against Hamas attacks. The vote was 13 to 1, with Britain abstaining and some U.S. allies like France voting for a cease-fire.

Robert A. Wood, who was representing the United States on the Council, said after the veto that the resolution for an unconditional and immediate cease-fire “was not only unrealistic, but dangerous — it would simply leave Hamas in place, able to regroup and repeat what it did on Oct. 7.”

Debate Track: Evidence Packet (Abolish P5 Status) - Briefs

Resolved: The United Nations should abolish permanent membership on its Security Council.

The failed resolution came as the United Nations reported that it was struggling to deliver essential goods like food, medicine and cooking gas to desperate civilians who have packed into shelters and tent cities after two months of war.

“Civil order is breaking down,” Thomas White, the Gaza director of the United Nations relief agency for Palestinians, wrote Friday on social media. He added: “Some aid convoys are being looted and UN vehicles stoned. **Society is on the brink of full-blown collapse.**”

Mr. White spoke a day after the Biden administration warned that the Israeli military had not done enough to reduce harm to civilians in Gaza.

“It is imperative — it remains imperative — that Israel put a premium on civilian protection,” Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken told reporters in Washington on Thursday. “And there does remain a gap between exactly what I said when I was there, the intent to protect civilians, and the actual results that we’re seeing on the ground.”

Permanent Members as Threats

Permanent members themselves pose threats to peace and security. Reforming or reevaluating the privileges and responsibilities of permanent membership may be necessary to address these issues effectively.

Charbonneau, Patrick, Tonra & Ülgen 23 - [Charbonneau, Louis. Patrick, Stewart. Tonra, Ben. Ülgen, Sinan. "Is the United Nations Still Fit for Purpose? Interview by Judy Dempsey." September 21, 2023. <https://carnegieeurope.eu/strategieurope/90606>.] Elene.

[Louis Charbonneau is the United Nations director at Human Rights Watch.

Stewart Patrick is a senior fellow and director of the global order and institutions program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Ben Torna is a professor of international relations at university college dublin.

Sinan Ülgen is a senior fellow at Carnegie Europe.

Judy Dempsey - the interviewer - is a nonresident senior fellow at Carnegie Europe and editor in chief of the Strategic Europe blog. She is also the author of the book *The Merkel Phenomenon* (Das Phänomen Merkel, Körber-Stiftung Edition, 2013).]

LOUIS CHARBONNEAU

When people ask whether the UN is relevant today, they usually have in mind the UN Security Council. It is definitely one of the most dysfunctional parts of the UN, largely due to the **widening ideological gulf between the five veto-wielding permanent members (P5)—usually pitting Russia and China on one side and the United States, UK, and France on the other.** Time and again, the Security Council has failed to take any action on Ukraine, Israel, Sudan, and countless other crises because one or more P5 members blocks things.

In terms of human rights, the UN leadership is too often afraid to call out big powers. **It tends to have a blind spot when it comes to calling out China's abuses in Xinjiang, Tibet, Hong Kong, and elsewhere. China represents an existential threat to the UN's human rights architecture.** The question is whether the UN leadership will confront that threat head on or continue to bury its many heads in the sand.

STEWART PATRICK

The UN's most important institutional flaw is the outdated composition of the Security Council, which poses an existential threat to the long-term credibility and legitimacy of the world's premier organ for international peace and security.

It is past time for the UNSC to expand its permanent membership to include Japan, Germany, and India, as well as influential countries from Africa and Latin America. Such a change would be no silver bullet, of course, since it could complicate decisionmaking on the Council. More fundamentally, it would not alter a structural reality inherent in the Charter and evident in the war in Ukraine: Each of the world's great powers will always insist on the right to veto enforcement action under Chapter 7 that it deems as contrary own vital interests.

BEN TONRA

If that purpose is still defined as maintaining "international peace and security" and taking "effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression," then manifestly the organization is failing—and failing spectacularly.

The fact that Security Council members themselves constitute an active threat to peace and security only makes that failure all the more egregious. It also underlines the urgent need for profound institutional reform—most especially in the representation and rights of Security Council members. UN reform however, at least in the practical sense, has been a non-starter to date. It is difficult to conceive of any scenario on the near horizon where such reform can take place.

SINAN ÜLGEN

As a post-World War II construct, the UN reflects the world order that has emerged after 1945. Despite several well-meaning attempts over the years, it has not sufficiently reformed itself to change with the times. And times have changed. Geopolitical shifts have empowered nations that were not even on the political map when the UN was created. **Today it is really difficult to champion the legitimacy of a global system where the veto right remains in the hands of the five nations that happened to be on the winning side of a global conflict almost eighty years ago.**

So, the real question is how to ensure not only the legitimacy but also the effectiveness of this institution? There are several aspects to UN reform but undoubtedly the most critical one relates to the Security Council where **new rules will need to be designed to blur the stark contrast between permanent members and the rest of the world. The permanent members may want to reconcile with the thought that this anachronism needs to end very soon.**

Ukraine: Russia has used its veto power to stop UNSEC resolutions against the War in Ukraine

Magid & Shalomov 22—[Dickinson, Peter. 2022. “Russia’s Veto Makes a Mockery of the United Nations Security Council.” Atlantic Council. March 15. <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/russias-veto-makes-a-mockery-of-the-united-nations-security-council/>.] Joel

[Shelby Magid is the deputy director of the Atlantic Council’s Eurasia Center. In this role she oversees the Center’s programming and policy work on Ukraine and the wider region, as well as the Center’s operations, including fundraising and development.

Yulia Shalomov was an associate director for the N7 Initiative with Atlantic Council’s Middle East Programs, where she supported the Center’s research and programmatic work on Israel. Prior to joining the Council, Yulia contributed to policy research and multilateral advocacy in peace and security issues at the International Crisis Group and International Peace Institute. She has also worked extensively in the social sector on human and minority rights issues and civil society engagement.]

“This is an extraordinary moment,” declared US ambassador to the United Nations Linda Thomas-Greenfield during a recent UN General Assembly (UNGA) emergency special session on Ukraine. “Now, at more than any other point in recent history, the United Nations is being challenged. If the United Nations has any purpose, it is to prevent war, it is to condemn war, to stop war.”

With this purpose in mind, in a sweeping show of international unity, **141 countries voted in favor of an UNGA resolution demanding an immediate end to the Russian offensive in Ukraine. While non-binding and largely symbolic, this overwhelming show of global support for Ukraine came at a time when it was doubly needed, both for Ukraine itself and for the sake of the UN.**

Only four countries joined Russia in voting against the resolution. To the surprise of nobody, the list included Belarus, North Korea, Eritrea, and Syria. Thirty-five nations abstained.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy applauded the outcome, declaring “Destructive results of the vote in the UN for the aggressor convincingly show that a global anti-Putin coalition has been formed and is functioning. The world is with us.”

Yet while Zelenskyy’s description of a global anti-Putin coalition may ring true for the UNGA, a meaningful multilateral response is still being blunted by Russia’s veto power in the UN Security Council (UNSC).

While the UNGA vote showed overwhelming global support for Ukraine, just a few days earlier the UN’s most powerful body sent a very different message. Despite the support of 11 Council

members, the UNSC failed to adopt a resolution necessitating the immediate cessation and withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukraine following a single “no” vote from Russia. This once again highlighted the privileged and troubling role the five permanent members (P5) enjoy within the international body’s most powerful organ.

Under the UN Charter, the Security Council is imbued with both primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security and the capacity to pass binding resolutions. Such decisions, however, are to be made with “the concurring votes of the permanent members,” thus requiring unanimous support (or abstention in lieu of) from the P5 nations.

While the UN Charter endeavors to restrict member states party to a conflict from blocking UNSC action, the provision has rarely been enforced by members reluctant to see similar caps placed on their own powers. As a result, no member state has moved to forestall or challenge Russia’s veto of the resolution.

The P5 have frequently wielded their veto power to torpedo resolutions incongruent with their national and foreign policy interests. Such machinations have been at the root of repeated Council inaction on Syria, Israel, and perhaps most memorably, Ukraine following the 2014 annexation of Crimea by Russia.

Representation

Regions: certain regions are overrepresented in the UNSC while others are underrepresented, which leads to imbalances in decision-making power.

Gould & Rablen 17 - [Gould, Matthew. & Rablen, D. Matthew. "Reform of the United Nations Security Council: Equity and Efficiency." *Public Choice* 173 (1-2): 145–68. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11127-017-0468-2>.] Elene.

[Matthew Steven Gould CMG MBE is a British former civil servant and diplomat who is the Chief Executive Officer of international science-led conservation charity ZSL.

Matthew D. Rablen is a former government economist, where he advised on issues relating to tax compliance and savings tax policy.]

The UN Security Council (UNSC) is its most powerful organ, with the authority to make legally binding resolutions to fulfil its mandate of maintaining international peace and security. To that end, it can suspend economic and diplomatic relations between countries, impose blockades, and authorize the use of armed force.

Two distinct sets of criticisms are widely levelled against these arrangements: one relating to the efficiency with which they allow the UNSC to respond to its member's preferences, and another relating to the degree to which they achieve democratic equity in the allocation of power.

On efficiency grounds, critics argue that the UNSC is too often impotent, not least because a preference against a resolution by a single PM can override a preference for the resolution by all remaining members. For instance, the UNSC is presently under criticism for its inability to respond decisively to the conflict in Syria. The UNSC also has appeared slow to react to earlier conflicts, notably the 1994 genocide in Rwanda.

On democratic equity grounds, it is widely acknowledged that the UNSC needs to be seen as fair and legitimate in order to effectively fulfill its mandate. Critics raise two distinct sets of issues, **one relating to equity at the country level, and the other relating to equity at the level of regions.**

Assessing these claims, the study of Gould and Rablen finds that, at the level of countries, the *conjunction* of preferential voting power when a member of the UNSC *and* the right to be ever-present gives the PMs substantially too much representation. There is thus a need to dilute the representation of the PMs. **At the level of regions, the authors also uncover significant levels of inequity—Asia and Africa are both substantially underrepresented,** while EE and the WEOG are both heavily overrepresented. This implies a broader representational imbalance between North (EE and the WEOG) and South (Africa, Asia and the GRULAC).

We appraise eight proposed reforms to the UNSC's rules ("structural" reforms) that appear within 11 recent reform proposals. We then analyze separately the impact of expanding the membership of the UNSC above the current 15 members through the addition of new NPM seats. We find disappointing results for the structural reforms considered: only one of the eight improve upon the status quo in both the equity and efficiency dimensions, one leaves efficiency unchanged and improves equity, five leave efficiency unchanged but worsen equity, and one strictly worsens both equity and efficiency. **Enlarging the UNSC's membership does permit an improvement in equity, but is no panacea, for it comes at the price of worsened efficiency.** Moreover, the equity gains from expansion display diminishing returns, while the costs in terms of lost efficiency display increasing returns.

The most promising structural reform we consider is to require two PMs to vote against a resolution for a veto to be effective. This reform improves both equity and efficiency, but, like any proposal for reform of the UNSC, faces severe political constraints. Overall, we fail to see that any of the reform proposals presently under consideration will (or should) break the reform impasse.

Our basic normative notion of democratic equity is that, from behind a veil of ignorance as to what a citizen's preference is, and to which country or region they belong, a citizen should be equally able to influence outcomes in the UNSC. That is, we require that expected voting power (before it is known which countries will vote in the UNSC) be equal across citizens. This notion of equity acknowledges that the democratic power of a world citizen in the UNSC depends not only on the voting rights of his or her country when it is a member of the UNSC, but also on how frequently his or her country is a UNSC member.

Major Powers: The UNSC is controlled by the P5 – other countries have no proportion or proper representation

Salim 21–[“A More Responsive United Nations Security Council: Necessary Reforms” PKSOI. June 2021. <https://pksoi.armywarcollege.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/A-More-Responsive-United-Nations.pdf>.] Joel

[Ferdous Salim is a Commander in the Bangladesh Army]

Besides the P5, the UNSC comprises of 10 nonpermanent members who are elected for two-year terms by the UNGA. For non-permanent members, the allocation of seats is “five for African and Asian States; one for the Eastern European States; two for the Latin American and Caribbean States; and two for Western European and other States.” Critics argue that **the allocation of non-permanent member seats as per this ratio is not demographically representative or “equitable” geographically. Also, all states are supposed to be considered “equal” by law; but in the executive decision-making process, they are not. Non-permanent members have no way of blocking a P5’s decision.** Furthermore, other aspiring nations of the world are asking for permanent membership, to which no progress has been made so far. Thus, the UNSC suffers from the following structural difficulties:

- **The UNSC is controlled by the P5; the collective voice of 193 states is irrelevant in the UN decision-making process.**
- The organization acknowledges that there are other emerging powers in the world but disagrees about their inclusion as permanent members.
- **The UNSC does not account for regional preferences.** - Continental representation is inaccurate. Asia, Australia, and Oceania have the highest population and number of countries as a region yet have only one permanent seat in the Council.
- The present composition of the UNSC is from 1965. Since then, geopolitically, the world has changed. The 13 UNSC should reflect the realities of today rather than basing itself on a Cold War era form.

The Veto and its Criticism The veto is the most debated issue during any reform discussions of the UNSC. Under Article 27 of the UN Charter, UNSC decisions on all substantive matters require the affirmative votes of nine members and no veto by a P5. **A P5 veto prevents the adaptation of a proposal, even if it has received the required votes.** Abstention is not a veto, though all five permanent members must concur to amend the UN Charter or to recommend the admission of a new

member state. Procedural matters are not subject to a veto, but they can be used to avoid the discussion of a non-procedural issue.

As discussed earlier, the veto has always drawn sharp criticism as it supposedly discriminates between the P5 and other members. The P5 argue that this privilege implies the “ability to exercise international responsibility,” and not only power. However, in an organization that champions democracy and human rights, the veto is an obvious contradiction. As Richard Butler, Permanent Representative of Australia to the UN once said, **“It is absolutely clear that the Security Council we have today is yesterday’s Security Council. It cannot do the job we need done today and will certainly need in the future.”** Similarly, as Roberto R. Romulo, Foreign Minister of the Philippines told the Assembly, **“It is ironic that in the midst of the rapid spread of democracy . . . and the expanding membership of the United Nations, the Security Council remains unrepresentative in its size and the geographic distribution of its membership, and undemocratic in its decision making and working methods.”** Those supporting the veto insist that the most powerful countries must have special privileges at the UN so that they remain in the organization. Many view this compromise as unjust and blame the UNSC and the veto as only a platform for protecting interests, not peace. This is contrary to the values of equality in the UN. Powerful nations use the Council when it suits them and turn their back on it as they choose.

Apart from being the largest procedural obstacle against any reform of the UNSC, the veto can also stall any peace effort or prevent an intervention during grave humanitarian situations. However, the veto, no matter how powerful, cannot prevent unilateral interventions, especially if it was a P5. Thereby, it is deemed as being obstructionist and biased. Consequently, the UN has become more a tool for power politics rather than an organization that promotes freedom and equality. For the UN to remain as an advocate of freedom and equality, the veto process must be reviewed and reformed.

Imperialism: The UN Security Council's veto power, controlled by major powers, has led to an imperialistic organization where only the dominant powers control decision-making.

Lopez-Claros 22 - [Lopez-Carlos, Augusto. “The Origins of the UN Veto and Why It Should Be Abolished.” Global Governance Forum. April 28, 2022. <https://globalgovernanceforum.org/origins-un-veto-why-it-should-be-abolished/>.] Elene.

[Augusto Lopez-Claros is Executive Director of the Global Governance Forum. He is an international economist with over 30 years of experience in international organizations, including most recently at the World Bank. For the 2018/2019 academic years, Augusto Lopez-Claros was on leave from the World Bank as a Senior Fellow at the Edmund Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University.]

Related to concerns over the voting mechanism, was the perception that a Security Council in which the five permanent major power members had veto power—France was included in 1945—and that **the UN would turn into an imperialistic organization in which the permanent members of the Council would be, de facto, running the world.** The veto itself was perceived by many as undermining the democratic legitimacy of the organization, a practice that could not be defended on the basis of any principle of just governance. Non-permanent members of the Security Council accepted to be limited by a two-thirds majority, whereas the permanent members accepted no such constraints. More importantly—and with huge practical and political implications—**some argued that a system was being created in which the organization would not be able to deal with problems and/or conflicts between the major powers or between a major power and a smaller country.**

Meyer was particularly harsh in his characterization of the veto power seized by the major powers for themselves. Among the consequences of the veto he noted that, **“a major power can violate every principle and purpose set forth in the Charter and yet remain a member of the Organization by the lawful use of the veto power expressly granted to it;”** amendments to the Charter required ratification by the five veto-wielding powers, **a feature that gave them the power to permanently prevent any change or reform whatsoever;** and if one of the Big Five was not a party to a dispute, it could “prevent even the investigation of the case by the Security Council.” The veto power would also have consequences for the application of the provisions included in the Charter allowing for the use of force in certain circumstances.

Meyer thought that such a system, exempting the major powers in its most fundamental provisions for the application of the principle of the use of force, could not be characterized as being law-based in any meaningful sense of the word. Instead, it bordered on “hypocrisy or self-delusion” since the use of violence could be justified as police action only in a system in which the same rules applied to all participants in an even-handed way. In summary, he wrote, **“the International Organization is, at present, as incapable of dealing with the probable causes of another war as a fire extinguisher is of quenching a forest fire”**—again a sad commentary on the current impotence of the UN to address the dire situation in Ukraine.

Perhaps nothing expresses more eloquently the deeply flawed nature of the distribution of power within the UN than to notice that if the UN had adopted for itself the system of weighted voting adopted by the Bretton Woods institutions in 1944—assume, for argument’s sake, a voting power linked to population size, global GDP share, and a membership share equal for all 193 UN members—**Russia’s voting power in the UN today would be equal to 1.68% and rapidly declining** since the Russian economy is likely to contract sharply in coming years as a result of the war and associated sanctions. (In fact, the voting power of the United Kingdom and France, two other veto-wielding members, would also be under 2%, 1.41% in the case of the UK and 1.39% in the case of France). The UN veto power has paralyzed the UN at a time when the multiple global crises we confront call for an effective, problem-solving organization that will enhance our capacity for international cooperation. If it is not abolished it will not only hamper the organization in its effort to remain faithful to its noble founding principles, but it will ultimately corrupt its remaining moral authority without which it cannot hope to remain relevant in an interdependent world.

Impact—Splintering: As the World changes and the UNSEC remains the same, rising countries like India which lack proper Security Council representation are starting to look to non-UN forums to effect change—thus, leading to a splintering of multilateral institutions and a weakening of UN influence

Pant 20—[Council on Foreign Relations. “The UN at Seventy-Five: How to Make It Relevant Again.” 2020. Council on Foreign Relations. [https://www.cfr.org/article/un-seventy-five-how-make-it-relevant-again.](https://www.cfr.org/article/un-seventy-five-how-make-it-relevant-again)] Joel

[Professor Harsh V. Pant is Vice President – Studies and Foreign Policy at Observer Research Foundation, New Delhi. He is a Professor of International Relations with King's India Institute at King's College London. He is also Director (Honorary) of Delhi School of Transnational Affairs at Delhi University]

The United Nations turns seventy-five years old at a time when the old, post–World War II multilateral order—for which it is a critical anchor—is facing strong challenges from multiple directions. **The pillars of global governance are undergoing rapid transformation, institutional infirmities are being revealed, and a normative shift is becoming increasingly palpable.** The stakes could not be higher for India, which aims to shape rules in the international system and not merely be a follower.

In the eyes of the rest of the world, India’s pursuit of permanent membership on the UN Security Council is evidence of its global ambitions. That is only part of the story, however. It is equally important for New Delhi that global institutions better reflect contemporary global realities. The security dynamics in the immediate aftermath of World War II focused on managing a divided Europe and safeguarding its peripheries from the Soviet bloc. Today, the Indo-Pacific is driving the global economic and political agenda. Global institutional frameworks should reflect this shift, especially when a weakening United Nations is leading to a proliferation of self-selected groups—the so-called plurilateral and minilateral forums. These coalitions of the willing are viewed as more effective and efficient ways of dealing with not only traditional security issues but also nontraditional ones, such as the ongoing COVID-19 crisis. Definitions of security have changed considerably; the Security Council has yet to adapt to the new reality. Failure of the UN system to rise to the occasion during the COVID-19 crisis will have significant bearing on its global influence.

The issue of UN reform is also linked with that of ensuring proper resourcing. Discussing reforms without making provisions for adequate resources will lead nowhere; the flip side is that channeling more resources in the absence of genuine reforms only perpetuates the status quo. **While some countries have gradually deemphasized the United Nations in favor of new frameworks to address their most pressing challenges, others have been gaming the UN system to further their narrow interests.** For example, the danger in having UN officials and agencies champion China’s Belt and Road Initiative is immense.

These and other challenges are mounting. **For India, as with many other states, the status quo is no longer a viable option. If UN reforms fail, New Delhi’s approach to the United Nations could significantly alter in the coming years as India would feel it necessary to look elsewhere for solutions. And India wouldn’t be the only country doing so.**

Transparency

Many UN members want the Security Council to increase transparency by sharing all draft resolutions and limiting closed-door meetings

United Nations 9/23 - [United Nations. “Security Council Must Be More Transparent, Inclusive to Address Conflicts, Crises, Speakers Stress in Open Debate on 15-Nation Organ’s Working Methods | UN Press.” Press.un.org. September 5, 2023. <https://press.un.org/en/2023/sc15401.doc.htm>.] Elene.

[The United Nations is an international organization whose stated purposes are to maintain international peace and security, develop friendly relations among nations, achieve international cooperation, and serve as a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations. It is the world's largest international organization.]

The Security Council must be more transparent and inclusive in conducting its business to meet the challenges posed by current global, regional conflicts and crises, speakers stressed today, as they called for improved working methods, including a more equal distribution of duties to draft resolutions and fewer closed-door consultations.

Challenging political dynamics worldwide and divisions within the Council have prevailed, critically inhibiting the Council’s ability to fulfil its duties, he warned, stating: **“At stake is not only the Council’s reputation, but the overall reputation of the United Nations.”**

Cuba’s representative said that **veto power should be terminated altogether.** Until that happens, however, new positions in the permanent category should have the same rights and prerogatives of the current permanent members, including veto power.

Norway’s delegate, speaking for the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency Group, urged the Council to return to its agreed practice of sharing all draft resolutions “in blue” with the wider membership before adoption. She also underlined that it is vital to “democratize its procedures”, including systematic consultations with affected countries.

Echoing this, Liechtenstein’s delegate observed that **the flow of communication between the Council and UN membership is critical to fulfilling Charter obligations.** For informed assessments of situations of concern, it is important to hear relevant experts, including women and civil society briefers. It is also important to hear from briefers who may not speak in an official UN language as long as interpretation is provided, she said.

Australia’s representative, along with several delegations opted for limiting the number of closed-door meetings. “Effective multilateralism isn’t just about the discussions inside this Chamber, it’s also about being inclusive,” he said.

To this point, Pakistan’s diplomat proposed that interested non-member States be invited to closed meetings and summary records of such meetings should be circulated to all Member States.

Veto

Confidence: The Veto power is often used to shield G5 members from resolutions that run contrary to their interest—this erodes confidence in the ability of the UN to function

Magid & Shalomov 22—[Dickinson, Peter. 2022. “Russia’s Veto Makes a Mockery of the United Nations Security Council.” Atlantic Council. March 15. <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/russias-veto-makes-a-mockery-of-the-united-nations-security-council/>.] Joel

[Shelby Magid is the deputy director of the Atlantic Council’s Eurasia Center. In this role she oversees the Center’s programming and policy work on Ukraine and the wider region, as well as the Center’s operations, including fundraising and development.

Unilateral obstruction in the Council has over time fed into growing criticism of the UN’s alleged irrelevance on the international stage. Established to foster global cooperation for the common good and consensual laws governing international behavior to preempt and mitigate interstate conflicts, **today the UN is becoming increasingly captive to geopolitical rivalry and indecision. Russia is using its perch on the Security Council to distort international norms and sow discord in the pursuit of national interests.**

In a series of perturbing televised addresses on February 21 and 24, Russian President Vladimir Putin evoked terms of international law in an undisguised bid to cloak Russian military aggression behind the guise of self-defense against alleged abuses and genocide perpetrated by Ukraine against Russians and Russian-speaking minorities in the Donbas, and the existential threat posed to “the very existence of [the Russian] state and to its sovereignty” by the West. The utter absurdity of these statements belies the extent of Russia’s exceptional interpretations and weaponization of normative frameworks governing national sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the use of force.

Russia’s invasion of Ukraine represents the largest conventional military attack since World War II. Over 2.8 million Ukrainian refugees have fled the country since the start of the assault as the civilian death toll continues to rise. Global outrage over the invasion has been powerful and the collective response has been surprisingly united, swift, and increasingly bruising.

Russia has faced a multifaceted international backlash with repercussions for its war on Ukraine hitting the nation in all parts of its economy and society. As British foreign minister Liz Truss said, Russia is becoming a “global pariah” and facing deserved isolation on the global stage.

A major part of such isolation has come through enactment of massive sanctions targeting Russian commerce and banking systems. Societal backlash has also been extensive, as a slew of multinational corporations from Apple to Boeing have suspended operations in the country.

Furthering its ostracization on the global arena is a growing movement to boycott Russian sports and cultural engagement. Perhaps most noteworthy is the galvanization of dramatic reversals in European foreign and security policy away from engagement with Russia.

Yet whereas much of the global response has been decisive in its freeze out of Russia, the UN remains a disappointing if not surprising holdout. The failure to mount more than symbolic condemnation for an attack perpetrated by a member of the P5 is irresponsible at best and evidence of a system fundamentally unable to live up to its mission.

The magnitude and sheer audacity of Russian actions must represent an urgent wake-up call for the global community. **This includes a pressing need to reevaluate the very institutions that enable the perversion of international laws and permit totalitarianism to flourish with no retribution.**

Such reevaluations must include the United Nations. As the premier intergovernmental organization with the aim of maintaining peace and security, **the United Nations has a unique responsibility to question how it moves forward.**

Addressing the UN General Assembly, the Austrian ambassador to the UN warned, “The Security Council cannot remain silent when basic principles of our international rules-based order are trampled by military boots and squashed by tanks.” **Anything less than a resolute response to Russia’s systemic cooption and undermining of UN values puts the institution at risk of losing its moral grounding and irrevocably shattering public faith in the multilateral system.**

Since the start of Putin’s invasion, numerous countries have joined calls for more punishing consequences for Russia in the UN Security Council. A gamut of responses, ranging from the pragmatic to the sobering, continue to be discussed. These include a mandated convening of the General Assembly after any use of veto power in the UNSC.

Some have also questioned the legitimacy of Russian succession to the USSR’s UNSC seat. This issue was raised most vocally by the Ukrainian ambassador to the UN. **Given the gravity of the situation, there have also been demands for Russia’s removal from the UNSC, including in a recent US Congressional resolution. Others have advocated ending veto power entirely.**

Change will not come easily. **Security Council reform has been on the Assembly’s agenda for more than two decades to little avail.**

However, Russia’s latest actions have given renewed impetus to reform discussions. At no point in time has a member of the P5 so blithely abandoned international law to launch an unsanctioned assault on another country and used their position in the Security Council to shield itself from punishment.

Perfunctory warnings about the futility or infeasibility of censuring Russian actions threaten to make a mockery of the multilateral system. Recent reports of the UN’s internal guidance to avoid usage of the words “war” or “invasion” in reference to the Russian assault on Ukraine further underscore this point.

Putin’s war has fundamentally transformed the geopolitical landscape. This new reality must be reflected in the way the United Nations functions. If not now, when?

Unjust: The Veto power is used by 5 countries to subjugate the other 200 countries of the world

Dallas 18– [Dallas, Emmanuela Florence 2018 “The Security Council’s Sine qua Non: The Veto Power.” <https://polisci.rutgers.edu/publications/occasional-paper-series/346-occasional-paper-8-florence-emmanuela-emmy-dallas/file>.] Joel

[Emmanuela Dallas is an Executive and Research Associate at the Asia Society, where she’s worked for 10 years. She holds a Master’s Degree in Political Science and International Relations from Rutgers University. Her concentration has been in political risk and human rights analysis as well as in conflict prevention and atrocity crimes.]

Many argue that the veto power of the P5 is "anachronistic and unjust" (Ziabari, 2011), **because if the UN was created to support and represent its Member States equally, then why are some states more equal than others?** According to Ziabari, **the veto is "a discriminatory and biased privilege given to five countries to dictate their own will to some 200 countries as they wish"** and he has called it **"the most unfair and inequitable law of the world which enables a powerful and authoritative minority to determine the fate of an indispensable and subjugated majority"** (Ziabari, 2011). An example of the handcuffing of the UNSC can be seen when Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko addressed the UN General Assembly regarding the Russian annexation of Crimea, saying in relation to the effect of the veto: "In every democratic country, if someone has stolen your property, an independent court will restore justice, in order to protect your rights, and punish the offender. However, we must recognize that in the 21st century our organization lacks an effective instrument to bring to justice an aggressor country that has stolen the territory of another sovereign state" (KyivPost, 2015).

Solution: Reform. Reforming the Security Council is deemed necessary to ensure that it can effectively address current global challenges and maintain the United Nations' relevance in the modern era.

United Nations 22 - [United Nations. “Concluding Debate on Security Council Reform, Speakers in General Assembly Urge More Representation for Developing Countries, Ending of Permanent Members’ Veto Power | UN Press.” Press.un.org. November 18, 2022. <https://press.un.org/en/2022/ga12473.doc.htm>.] Elene.

[The United Nations is an international organization whose stated purposes are to maintain international peace and security, develop friendly relations among nations, achieve international cooperation, and serve as a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations. It is the world's largest international organization.]

As the General Assembly today concluded its discussion on Security Council reform, **Member States once again broadly agreed on the need to modernize the 15-member body to maintain the relevance of the United Nations in the twenty-first century but diverged over the appropriate use of the Council’s veto authority, especially in instances of mass atrocities.**

The Assembly began its discussions on the need to reshape the Council, its sole body, with the authority to make decisions with legal force, in a way that enables it to better address current global challenges, on 17 November.

Georgia's representative said that unfolding events have made it clear that **the Council is failing to live up to its *raison d'être* - the maintenance of international peace and security, with veto power reform particularly urgent.** The failed attempts to pass Council resolutions to stop the aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine are a clear attestation to this, he said, cautioning against the use of the veto by a member who is involved in that conflict and hence is unable to exercise the power impartially.

The representative of Ukraine said that his country’s experience speaks volumes, stressing that **it is inappropriate that a country in the permanent seat has a privilege to exercise veto during consideration of a conflict it instigated.** Member States should focus on this issue during the next intergovernmental negotiations cycle of Council reform.

Debate Track: Evidence Packet (Abolish P5 Status) - Briefs

Resolved: The United Nations should abolish permanent membership on its Security Council.

The veto is not a right, but rather a privilege unfairly granted to some Member States in violation of the United Nations Charter, the representative of Iran emphasized. He also noted that the majority of the Council's members are Western nations.

The veto power must go as it is anachronistic and counterproductive to the goal of maintaining international peace and security, said the delegate of Ghana. **But if it exists, it must be constrained by rules.** Given the entrenched interests made possible by permanent membership, some Council members may find it challenging to answer the question of what reform will look like. “But the question that we should address is whether we want to keep a limited privilege over a dysfunctional system or to strive for a permanent influence over an effective instrument of world peace,” she said.

Several Member States supported expanding both the permanent and non-permanent member categories when it came to the Council's membership. Additionally, many speakers endorsed adding more seats for Africa.

The representative of Zimbabwe said that Africa's quest for two permanent seats and five non-permanent seats on the Council is a matter of right and wrong. “The fact that Africa, a major geographic region, remains underrepresented and unrepresented in the permanent category of the Security Council is unjustified,” she stressed.

Aff Blocks

AT: E10 Representation

Argument: The P5 doesn't need to be abolished; the E10 gives adequate representation to the global community on the security council

The Security Council is dominated by the P5; the E10 have relatively little power

Dallas 18– [Dallas, Emmanuela Florence 2018 “The Security Council’s Sine qua Non: The Veto Power.”

<https://polisci.rutgers.edu/publications/occasional-paper-series/346-occasional-paper-8-florence-emmanuela-emmy-dallas/file>.] Joel

[Emmanuela Dallas is an Executive and Research Associate at the Asia Society, where she’s worked for 10 years.

She holds a Master’s Degree in Political Science and International Relations from Rutgers University. Her concentration has been in political risk and human rights analysis as well as in conflict prevention and atrocity crimes.]

Criticism of the veto has increased in recent years. Much of what drives and preoccupies the Council today can be traced back to a number of developments and events that date back to the year 2000. They are responsible for making the present-day Council very different from 15 years ago. As such, new fears have arisen about the increase in the use of the veto, and in particular by Russia and China who have cast four double vetoes on Syria and double vetoes on Zimbabwe and Myanmar, along with lone Russian vetoes on the Ukraine, Georgia, and Srebrenica. **Focus on the tensions among the P5 has overshadowed the fact that on a day-to-day basis, the division that matters most is between the P5 and the 10 elected council members.** It is difficult to overstate the degree to which the P5 dominate the Council’s agenda, and this has not improved over recent years. The phenomenon of the "who holds the pen" is a key culprit; **the P5 claim to have the responsibility for the drafting of Council resolutions of almost all situations, thereby largely marginalizing the E10.** It is important to note that for all the divisions in the UNSC, **the P5 have expressed a very strong solidarity in fighting off any effort to weaken their grip on power within the Council.**

Concerning the P5's veto power, going back to the 1990s, 185 Member States found fault in the veto and claimed it was unfair (Weiss, 2005: 30). Ahmad Kamal [then ambassador of Pakistan to the UN] claimed that "in a democracy no one can be more equal than the others" and labeled the veto anachronistic and undemocratic. This point of view has been shared by many African countries (Lund, 2010). At present, there are few countries apart from the P5 which support the veto power. The P5 continue to defend the veto as seen in 2007 when the Russian Deputy Foreign Minister, Vladimir Titov, threatened to veto a resolution which would recognize Kosovo as an "independent state and thus undermine Serbia’s sovereignty" (BBC news, 2007). He argued that "the threat of a veto would stimulate the sides to find a mutually acceptable mechanism" (BBC news, 2007).

Many members of the UN have come to question the UNSC's structure where power and privileges are afforded to a select few nations of the world. Robert Hill, former Australian ambassador to the United Nations, summarized the position as follows, **"the Security Council is a club and the P5 is a club within a club"** (Okhovat, 2011:9).

AT: Effectiveness

Argument: The Veto Power ensures that the P5 are all on board with a resolution, making the Security Council more effective

The Veto makes the Security Council far less effective, by only approving resolutions that no country truly cares about

Sengupta 14 - [The New York Times. 2024. "Why the U.N. Can't Solve the World's Problems (Published 2014)."
<https://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/27/sunday-review/why-the-un-cant-solve-the-worlds-problems.html>] Joel.

[Somini Sengupta is an international reporter for the New York Times. She earned a bachelor's degree in English and development studies from the University of California, Berkeley, and spent a summer studying politics at the University of Oxford. She's spent many years as an international correspondent. As a reporter, she's led NYT coverage of West Africa and South Asia. She's worked in more than 50 countries, including 10 conflict zones.]

THERE has been no dearth of feeling around the horseshoe table of the Security Council in recent days.

The American ambassador, Samantha Power, choked up as she spoke of infants who perished in the Malaysia Airlines crash in Ukraine. The Dutch foreign minister, Frans Timmermans, could barely contain his anger as he recalled seeing pictures of "thugs" snatching wedding bands off the fingers of the victims. The Palestinian envoy, Riyad Mansour, grew quiet in the middle of a long recitation of names and ages — all belonging to children killed in the latest Israeli offensive in Gaza.

The conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza, not to mention the war in Syria, have presented diplomats with emotional testimonies of civilian suffering, even alleged crimes against humanity. Yet the 15-member Council has been unable to end these conflicts.

The problem is not that the major world powers don't care. It is that they care too much.

Russia and the United States have a great deal at stake in each conflict, and the rules of diplomacy enable them, as well as the other three permanent members — Britain, China and France — to veto any Security Council action. Since the end of the Cold War, the United States has vetoed 14 draft resolutions, most of them involving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; Russia has vetoed 11 concerning its allies, like the government of Syria.

"When you have a crisis where a major power has a national interest involved they will try to block interference by the Security Council," said Gérard Araud, the French ambassador to the United Nations, who finished his term here on Friday. **"The U.N.,"** he said, **ends up being "in charge of crises that are of no interest to anybody."**

Or, occasionally, mainly of interest to France, such as the conflict in the Central African Republic, where France corralled the world powers to authorize a United Nations peacekeeping mission.

Not so in the case of Gaza. As the death toll in the fighting climbed past 800, no swift movement was expected on a draft resolution circulated to Council members last week on behalf of Arab countries calling for the protection of civilians. Late last week, Council members said they were waiting for Secretary of State John Kerry's cease-fire efforts to bear fruit before taking action. In the case of Ukraine, the Council seems equally incapable of devising a political solution to the crisis, which has become what Richard Gowan, an analyst at the Center on International Cooperation at New York University, calls a proxy war between Russia and the West. And with Syria, Russian support for President Bashar al-Assad's government has led to four successive vetoes of resolutions on the conflict. The right of veto has long enabled the permanent members to reject anything that threatens their strategic interests, despite the organization's lofty principles, notably its mandate to protect civilians when their own state authorities cannot.

AT: Funding Cuts

Argument: If the Veto Power is abolished, countries will leave, and the big funders won't pay their dues at the UN anymore – thus leaving the UN unable to function

UN payments are made according to a calculation that takes into account National Income, Debt and Population – its not based on generosity or good feelings

Better World Campaign 21–[Better World Campaign. 2021. “The Scales of Assessment: Understanding the UN Budget.” Better World Campaign. December 13. <https://betterworldcampaign.org/us-funding-for-the-un/un-budget-formula>.] Joel.

[The Better World Campaign (BWC) works to foster a strong, effective relationship between the United States and the United Nations to promote core American interests and build a more secure, prosperous, and healthy world. BWC engages policymakers, the media, and the American public alike to increase awareness of the critical role played by the UN in world affairs and the importance of constructive U.S.-UN relations.]

How is the formula determined?

Every three years, the 193 Member States of the UN collectively decide on a formula – known as the Scales of Assessment – to determine how much each country contributes to the UN regular budget and to peacekeeping operations.

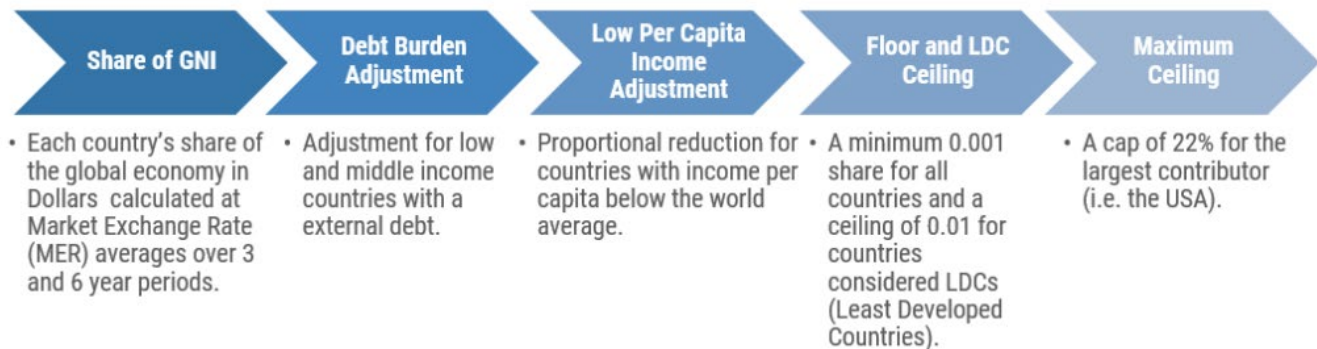
There are two main budgets of the UN: the regular budget and the peacekeeping budget.

For the regular budget, each country's contribution is based on a formula intended to represent a country's “capacity to pay.” The formula starts by using a country's share of global gross national income. Adjustments are then applied for factors like their debt and population, with a minimum and maximum determined for least developed countries and the largest contributor – the U.S.

The peacekeeping budget is also determined by the formula, but includes additional adjustments, such as whether a state chooses to contribute troops. These discounts are made up for by Permanent Members of the Security Council, who pay a premium that reflects their oversight of peacekeeping operations.

Here's a closer look at the Scales of Assessment:

UN Scale of Assessments: Methodology



AT: Peace / Security

Argument: *The P5 are important contributors to peace & security*

The P5 are often aggressors – like the US’ invasion of Iraq, and Russia’s invasion of Ukraine

Patrick 23 - [Patrick, Stewart. 2023. “UN Security Council Reform: What the World Thinks.” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. June 28, 2023. <https://carnegieendowment.org/2023/06/28/un-security-council-reform-what-world-thinks-pub-90032>.] Elene.

[Stewart Patrick is senior fellow and director of the Global Order and Institutions Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. His primary areas of research focus are the shifting foundations of world order, the future of American internationalism, and the requirements for effective multilateral cooperation on transnational challenges.]

Compounding these frustrations about membership, each of the P5 countries retains a veto permitting it to unilaterally block Security Council resolutions inimical to its national interests (as Russia has done with respect to Ukraine). The result is frequent council paralysis, exacerbated by deepening geopolitical rivalry between Western democracies and authoritarian China and Russia. To a growing proportion of the world’s governments and citizens, the council today is both feckless and unjust, dominated by irresponsible and unrepresentative powers inclined to abuse their position rather than safeguard the peace. Restoring the council’s effectiveness and legitimacy, critics contend, requires updating its anachronistic composition and unfair decisionmaking rules to better reflect ongoing shifts in global power and emerging centers of moral authority.

Although **the council has suffered previous blows—among them the ill-fated U.S. decision to invade Iraq in 2003 without its authorization—Russia’s brazen aggression against Ukraine in February 2022 and ability to veto any council response have radicalized reform demands. “Where is this security that the Security Council needs to guarantee?”**

Yet, pressure for Security Council expansion and veto reform will surely grow as the distribution of power and the nature of security threats shift ever further from what they were in 1945. Absent structural changes, the council’s performance and legitimacy will inevitably suffer. Given these stakes, the world requires fresh thinking on reform pathways that will help the council meet the moment.

Most contributors believe the council’s performance and legitimacy have declined, particularly since Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. To be sure, **its effective functioning has always been contingent on trust among the P5 and their willingness to withhold the veto.**

Rather than act as guardians of peace, **the P5 have often contributed to violence. Russia, most egregiously, is embroiled in a war with Ukraine that many fear could trigger a third world war.** Other permanent members have also been implicated in major conflicts on the Security Council’s agenda, including the United Kingdom’s support for Saudi Arabia’s war in Yemen, France’s interventions in the Sahel, China’s support for Myanmar’s military junta, and the United States’ (as well as Russia’s) ongoing involvement in Syria.

As currently configured, the Security Council is unable to fulfill its mandate to maintain international peace and security.

Neg

Effectiveness

Crises: Despite its procedural limitations, over the years, UNSC has successfully passed resolutions to support peace processes, resolve disputes, and respond to threats to peace which showcase its effectiveness in crisis management

Sonnback 20 - [Sonnback, Anette. "How Successful Has the UN Been in Maintaining International Peace and Security?" E-International Relations. November 8, 2020. <https://www.e-ir.info/2020/11/08/how-successful-has-the-un-been-in-maintaining-international-peace-and-security/>.] Elene.

[Anette Sonnback is co-founder and director of A Path for Europe. Her areas of interests include EU Foreign Affairs and Security, EU Neighbourhood policy and Enlargement, Governance and Democracy.]

The UN Security Council (UNSC) is the organ with the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. These were considered the main military powers when the UN was founded **and their veto right would prevent them from going to war against each other, while creating a necessary balance when taking decisions on security issues that would be collectively enforced** (Goodrich 1965: 430). This illustrates how the constellation itself was based on peace and security considerations, and **there has in fact never been a direct physical war between the P5 since the UN's beginning.**

Despite a period of inaction during the Cold War, many UNSC resolutions have also been passed to support peace processes, solve disputes, respond to illegitimate uses of force and enforce sanctions in situations where peace and security has been threatened. This involvement ranges from Bosnia in 1993 to Afghanistan in 2001 to its Anti-Piracy resolution in 2008 (Mingst and Karns 2011: 108). **UNSC resolutions have been central for tackling conflict situations and have also demonstrated that extensive joint action can be taken to respond to crisis, such as in the case of Iraq's occupation of Kuwait in 1990** where it condemned its action and authorized states to "use all necessary means" to stop the occupation (Mingst and Karns 2011: 105). Such examples would challenge the realist assumption that there is an inherent collective action problem in international relations and the system of anarchy. Nevertheless, the UNSC has attracted vast criticism for upholding procedures that impede robust action in important situations where international law has been violated but the P5 disagree, such as in Syria (Nadin 2017), as well as for keeping an outdated permanent membership and for being undemocratic (Weiss & Kuele 2014).

Beyond internal tensions, the UN has an active presence in the world through peace operations, which has become central for the UNSC and its approach to maintaining peace. The mandates range from protecting civilians to supporting state-building efforts, a list that has become more extensive in its attempt to improve the strategy towards sustainable peace. Traditionally, the presence of UN forces was to be approved by all parties in the host country, they were to be impartial, lightly armed, with the main goal to maintain a truce. **The peace has indeed been kept between states such as Israel-Syria or Iraq-Kuwait, indicating the success of UN deployment for preventing interstate conflict** (Mingst and Karns 2011: 130). Peacekeepers were deployed in situations where there was no peace to keep, and they encountered atrocities that put both them and civilians in danger, demanding greater military response (Bellamy & Hunt 2015: 1277, Doyle & Sambanis 2008: 2). Their mandate therefore expanded and started bordering on enforcement, as was the case of Bosnia in the 1990s. One problem was the discrepancy between the expectations of the operations and the actual capabilities in form of manpower or resources, showing a political unwillingness to transform the operations to more robust ones (Thakur 2006: 62, Autesserre 2019). Bosnia was a clear example of the failure that can ensue when undertaking ad hoc responses to a situation that does not match the original mandate, as it might lead to the inability to perform the envisioned tasks entrusted upon peacekeepers as they are prevented by nation state reluctance (Crossette 1999).

Political Defense: The Veto Power is crucial for political defense of the United States and its Allies—removing it will weaken the Council’s effectiveness

Abrams 22 - [Abrams, Elliott. 2022. “Why ‘Reforming’ the United Nations Security Council Is a Bad Idea.” Council on Foreign Relations. September 23, 2022. <https://www.cfr.org/blog/amnesty-internationals-attack-ukraine>.] Elene.

[Elliott Abrams is senior fellow for Middle Eastern studies at the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) in Washington, DC. He served as deputy assistant to the president and deputy national security advisor in the administration of President George W. Bush, where he supervised U.S. policy in the Middle East for the White House, and as Special Representative for Iran and Venezuela in the administration of Donald Trump.]

In his remarks to the UN General Assembly this year, President Biden embraced deep changes to the Security Council.

He said this: “I also believe the time has come for this institution to become more inclusive so that it can better respond to the needs of today’s world. Members of the U.N. Security Council, including the **United States, should consistently uphold and defend the U.N. Charter and refrain — refrain from the use of the veto, except in rare, extraordinary situations, to ensure that the Council remains credible and effective. That is also why the United States supports increasing the number of both permanent and non-permanent representatives of the Council.** This includes permanent seats for those nations we’ve long supported and permanent seats for countries in Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean. The United States is committed to this vital work.”

Expansion of the Council has been thought about for decades. Why then has it never been achieved? Because no formula for expansion has been acceptable. Italy would fight adding Germany; Pakistan would fight adding India; Argentina would fight adding Brazil; Nigeria would struggle with South Africa; China would reject adding Japan; and those five countries are the most logical new additions given their size and global influence. Does the president really want some Caribbean country to be added as a permanent Council member, as his remarks suggest? Why? **Adding members will also make the Council more like the General Assembly. Is that supposed to make it more effective and efficient?**

The veto is a critical tool of self-defense for the United States in the UN, and for the defense of U.S. allies. The president says we should “refrain from the use of the veto, except in rare, extraordinary situations.” **Between 1973 and 2021 we used the veto 53 times to protect Israel from unfair, unbalanced, hostile resolutions. Are all those “rare” and “extraordinary” situations—or par for the course in the UN? And how does permitting the passage of bad resolutions that undermine U.S. interests make the Council “credible and effective?”**

I wish I believed the president were speaking cynically and realizes that **Security Council reform is bad for the United States and unlikely to happen.** But there’s no evidence of this, so I will have to hope that the current “reform” efforts fail as all past ones have.

30 Resolutions: All Permanent Members hope to preserve the image of the UNSEC as an effective body; In the 7 months after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the council passed nearly 30 resolutions

International Crisis Group 22 - [International Crisis Group. "Ten Challenges for the UN in 2022-2023." Www.crisisgroup.org. September 14, 2022. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/b8-united-states/ten-challenges-un-2022-2023>.] Elene.

[The International Crisis Group is an independent, non-profit, non-governmental organisation committed to preventing and resolving deadly conflict.]

Russia's attack on Ukraine has caused turmoil at the UN, but not quite as much as seemed possible in February and March. The Security Council began to discuss signs of an invasion in late January. In the weeks before and after the launch of all-out hostilities on 24 February, many Council members worried that the war would not only stir up great friction in its own right – which it did – but also make Russian-Western diplomacy on other issues in UN forums difficult or impossible. In the event, the impact has been mixed. **Major powers have managed to maintain a modicum of cooperation on non-Ukraine matters at the Security Council.**

The second diplomatic track has involved all other Council business. For some time – and especially after Russia's occupation of Crimea in 2014 – **Council members have talked about the need to "compartmentalise" major-power disputes.** This philosophy has held strong in 2022 to date. While the mood in the Council is reportedly extremely tense, **the body has passed nearly 30 resolutions on issues other than Ukraine since 24 February** – almost exactly the same number as in the same period in 2021. Russia has used its veto on two issues other than Ukraine, blocking U.S. proposals for additional sanctions on North Korea in tandem with China in May and – as discussed below – shooting down Western proposals to extend the Council mandate for UN humanitarian aid to non-government-controlled north-western Syria in July.

There are a number of possible explanations for the Council's ability to keep functioning at this level. One is that its Western members have often shied away from picking unnecessary fights with Russia on sensitive issues, extending existing Council mandates in many cases with only limited revisions. **France in particular has frequently cautioned against forcing Moscow into unnecessary vetoes, a stance that it had also adopted before the war.** China, meanwhile, has lobbied both Russia and other Council members to avoid breakdowns that could work against mutual interests, for example warning them not to link Ukraine to Afghanistan in March. **For Russia itself, keeping the Council open as a channel for talking to the West on files other than Ukraine may look like a useful way to avoid deeper diplomatic isolation** and to retain a little leverage over Washington and its friends over issues like Syria. **Neither Russia nor any other of the Council's permanent five members want to give ammunition to those states that say the body is irredeemably broken and irrelevant.**

Veteran observers of the Council differ over whether these symptoms of dysfunction are direct results of tensions over Ukraine or simply extensions of frictions among the major powers at the UN that date back to at least the start of the Libyan and Syrian crises in 2011. It is true that the number of Russian and Chinese abstentions, and debates over appointments, were all on the rise before the invasion. In this sense, the escalated war has aggravated existing problems in the Council rather than creating entirely new ones, while also making it harder to reverse the negative trends. Council members also caution that the current level of Council functionality is not guaranteed in perpetuity, noting that Russian-Western exchanges in Council discussions have grown harsher in recent months. Worse may lie ahead.

Debate Track: Evidence Packet (Abolish P5 Status) - Briefs

Resolved: The United Nations should abolish permanent membership on its Security Council.

Major Power Backing

The Veto Power was designed to make sure the world's major powers support, or at least don't oppose, large security decisions

Thomson et al. 22– [Thompson, Shamala. Landgren, Karin. Romita, Paul.. 2022. “The United Nations in Hindsight: Challenging the Power of the Security Council Veto.” Just Security. April 28. <https://www.justsecurity.org/81294/the-united-nations-in-hindsight-challenging-the-power-of-the-security-council-veto/>.] Joel

[Shamala Kandiah Thompson (Singapore) has been with Security Council Report since 2006. As Chief Operating Officer, she provides overall operational oversight and oversees the organisation's administrative, financial, and donor activities, as well as its capacity-building training programmes. As a research analyst Ms Thompson covered a range of topics, including Asian and European issues, non-proliferation, the Secretary-General's selection process and children and armed conflict.]

The veto power conferred by the United Nations Charter is, after permanency itself, the most significant distinction between permanent and non-permanent members of the Security Council. The U.N. would not have been founded without the five permanent members having the power of the veto; indeed, the organization was designed so that all major decisions would require the support, or at least the acquiescence, of the big powers. But from the start, the veto has been a steady source of tension between the permanent members and the wider membership of the U.N. Since the end of the Cold War, veto reform has been an element of many initiatives seeking structural reforms of the Council. These initiatives have come from member states that believe that the Council no longer reflects the ways the global order has changed since 1945. Frequently, member states also take up the perceived “abuse” of the veto in discussions of Council working methods, including during the body's annual working methods debate.

Debate Track: Evidence Packet (Abolish P5 Status) - Briefs

Resolved: The United Nations should abolish permanent membership on its Security Council.

Impact—Funding: The P5 are unlikely to keep funding United Nations missions if their vetoes were removed

Hooper 21 - [Louisiana State University. "Human Rights as a Means to Peace: Why the UN Security Council Should Lead on Human Rights April 2021. https://repository.lsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1682&context=honors_etd] Joel.

[Arden Hooper is a Master of International Relations student and a public servant in Washington, D.C. with a passion for all things foreign affairs, diplomacy, and national security. Bilingual in English and Spanish with experience living abroad in a Spanish-speaking country.]

In the search to find a solution for the ineffectiveness of the UNSC, many UN delegates have loudly expressed their support to abolish the veto. The P-5, of course, would never allow this to happen; each P-5 state would have to vote affirmatively to give up its veto power. **Even if the UN were able to find a loophole in its charter and abolish the veto without the consent of the P-5, abolishing the veto would make the organization less powerful and less effective. P-5 states are among the largest financial contributors to the UN system.** With the exception of Russia, all P-5 nations ranked in the top six largest contributors to the UN regular budget for the 2019-2021 period. **The contributions of these four nations make up forty-three percent of the total budget.** The United States and China alone are responsible for thirty-four percent of the total budget, with the United States holding up the heavier end at twenty-two percent ("UN Funding," 2021). **The UN risks losing a significant amount of funding if it takes away the veto from the P-5, which would reduce their power and influence. It is unlikely these nations would be willing to maintain these large contributions if their power to control the direction of the organization is overtly taken from them.** The power these countries hold on the Security Council is a massive incentive to pump money into the organization, which the organization needs to operate effectively.

Military Actions

Removing the Veto Power would also remove incentive for the P5 – amongst the world’s most powerful militaries—to help out – this would lead to a security council that can’t enforce its own resolutions, leaving it weak and incapable

Hooper 21 - [Louisiana State University. “Human Rights as a Means to Peace: Why the UN Security Council Should Lead on Human Rights April 2021. https://repository.lsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1682&context=honors_etd] Joel.

[Arden Hooper is a Master of International Relations student and a public servant in Washington, D.C. with a passion for all things foreign affairs, diplomacy, and national security. Bilingual in English and Spanish with experience living abroad in a Spanish-speaking country.]

Not only would it be nearly impossible to pass a resolution abolishing the veto, but **the Council will likely become even more ineffective. The UNSC has the unique power to take military action against aggressors,** as it is authorized to use force to intervene in situations it deems necessary. **The UN does not have its own independent military, which means it must rely on national militaries and military coalitions to get the job done when the UNSC authorizes force. All P-5 countries consistently rank in the top ten most powerful militaries in the world. While sources vary on their military power indices, the P-5 states are always among the top ten strongest militaries with the United States, Russia, and China in the top three.** Members of the UNSC must be willing to employ their own militaries when they authorize the use of force, and those militaries must be powerful enough to fix or alleviate the problem. Now **let us imagine, for example, that the veto did not exist, and non-permanent members were pushing for military intervention in a small country in turmoil.** Let us further imagine the permanent members agreed that military intervention was premature, but the non-permanent members overwhelmed the vote and passed a resolution to use force. **The non-permanent members cannot force the permanent members to use their own militaries for a cause they do not support and may actively oppose, even militarily. If they cannot coordinate a coalition that is powerful and advanced enough to settle the issue, their resolution is useless, and nations will view the UNSC as weak and incapable.** It is for this reason that the abolition of the veto cannot and will not lead to a more effective Security Council.

New Members

Note: Don't run this as a counterplan.

Germany: Germany seeks a permanent seat on the Security Council, indicating a desire to join the existing permanent membership rather than abolish it.

German Federal Foreign Office - [German Federal Foreign Office. "Reform of the United Nations Security Council – Questions and Answers." German Federal Foreign Office. https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/aussenpolitik/internationale-organisationen/vereintenationen/reformsr-fragen/231618#content_6.] Elene.

[The Federal Foreign Office is the foreign ministry of the Federal Republic of Germany, a federal agency responsible for both the country's foreign policy and its relationship with the European Union.]

The United Nations Security Council is the international community's principal organ for peacekeeping and conflict management. Unlike the decisions made by the General Assembly, its decisions (known as resolutions) are binding on all member states. That means it has wide-ranging powers and can, if necessary, take actions – e.g. the imposition of sanctions – that encroach on state sovereignty. It is right and important that the Security Council should have these powers, but **if its resolutions are to be respected and implemented by all countries, the Council needs to have the necessary authority and legitimacy.** This means it has to be representative.

The current composition of the Security Council reflects the geopolitical situation of 1945. The Security Council's enlargement in 1963/65 did not significantly change this.

Alongside the call for a geographically balanced distribution of seats, the Charter of the United Nations also expressly states that **countries that make considerable contributions to the UN should be members of the Security Council. This is why Germany and Japan are regarded as candidates for new permanent seats.**

Germany's role in the wider world has changed radically since 1945. **The country is no longer the "enemy state" of 1945 or the accession state of 1973 and, especially since its unification, it has developed into one of the staunchest advocates of multilateralism** under the banner of the United Nations. This role is one of the new realities of the 21st century world, which is why, since the start of the debate on UN reform, other UN member states have repeatedly expressed the view that Germany is a natural candidate for a permanent Security Council seat.

With an additional Security Council seat, would Europe not be overrepresented on the Council?

Article 23 of the Charter of the United Nations states that the main criterion for Security Council membership is the contribution countries make to the United Nation's work. The issue of equitable geographical distribution is only a secondary consideration.

Europe – particularly the European Union (EU) member states – **is one of the largest contributors to the United Nations. EU member states fund nearly 39 percent of the United Nations' budget and contribute more than half of the financial support for development cooperation** around the world (60.5 percent in 2011).

The G4 reform proposal would not in fact increase the EU members' relative share of seats: up to now, three to five EU members can have Security Council seats at the same time – the two permanent members France and the UK and one to three non-permanent members representing the Western European and Others Group and/or the Eastern European Group in the Council. Following the reform, the EU would probably have up to six or seven of the then 24 or 25 seats. Rather than an increase, that would in fact mean a slight proportional decrease to less than a third of the seats on the Security Council.

Nuclear Powers

Current G5 members are all nuclear powers—removing the Veto vote could increase the chance of conflict between them

Soltes 23— [“A Path Forward on UN Security Council Reform | Geopolitical Monitor.” 2023. Geopolitical Monitor. March 29. <https://www.geopoliticalmonitor.com/a-path-forward-on-un-security-council-reform/>.] Joel

[After completing his studies at the University of Virginia, Alec Soltes contributed regular posts to the Mechums Delta Analytics blog after which he began to submit opinion pieces to the geopolitical intelligence magazine Geopolitical Monitor on topics such as reforming the UN Security Council and how Russia must negotiate a way out of its war in Ukraine. He is also the author of a short book titled "Voting For Dummies: A Crash Course Guide to the Most Prominent Electoral Systems and Why They Matter"]

One major category of criticism involves the use of the veto by the UNSC’s permanent members – the ‘P5.’ The second involves the expansion of the UNSC to include more permanent and non-permanent seats on the council.

Critics of the P5 veto power argue that its use is undemocratic, and that resolutions supported by the vast majority of states are subjected to the whims of five countries on the Security Council. Supporters on the other hand argue that it allows these powerful countries to guard against threats to their national interests.

Getting rid of the veto for resolutions concerning the use of military force is neither realistic nor particularly desirable given the current geopolitical climate.

The P5, specifically the US and Russia, have prolifically exercised their veto powers since the UN was founded. An argument in favor of getting rid of the veto is that P5 members do not have a monopoly over security concerns. After all, why should India and Japan have to abide by UNSC decisions while Russia or the United States can simply veto decisions that go against their interests?

The unfortunate reality is that **all P5 members are at present nuclear armed “great powers.”** They are not the only ones, however, and the relative arbitrariness of their status as permanent members on the UNSC is a valid issue. But **the reality today is that war and conflict between these powers is still a possibility. Regardless of the moral dimension, abolition of the veto in this instance is highly impractical as it would require the P5 to surrender on issues that may directly affect their national security.**

When it comes to the UNSC authorizing military force that could directly affect global security, as permitted under Article 42 of the UN Charter, the veto should remain in place.

Other resolutions, such those pertaining to Article 41, which permits the UNSC to impose economic sanctions against threats to peace, have consequential effects on peace and security. Critics of the veto frequently stress that the UNSC veto threatens the ability of the international community to act when there is a clear violation of international law or security perpetrated or supported by a P5 member. There is a need to balance the need for the international community to be able take concrete steps to respond to violations while at the same time trying to safeguard the fundamental interests of existing P5 powers so long as the current climate persists.

One solution would be to provide for a Security Council veto override mechanism, when it comes to the imposition of sanctions against states under Article 41. This override would be unanimous, requiring the approval of all other UNSC members. Allowing for and requiring an overwhelming consensus among the international community to impose economic consequences on states which brazenly break international law and hide behind a veto would provide a capacity to hold those states to account.

Responsibility

The P5 have a special responsibility to maintain global security—alongside that responsibility, they require a special right—the veto power. This power also helps to maintain Security Council stability

Singh 23 - [Singh, Rishika. "US Veto of Gaza Ceasefire: Why Only Five Countries Have Veto Power in the UN Security Council." The Indian Express. December 17, 2023. <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/everyday-explainers/permanent-five-veto-power-uns-c-explained-9071707/>.] Elene.

[Rishika Singh is a sub-editor at the Explained Desk of The Indian Express. She enjoys writing on issues related to international relations, and in particular, likes to follow analyses of news from China. Rishika graduated from the Asian College of Journalism, Chennai, in 2022 and is also an alumna of Miranda House, University of Delhi.]

On Tuesday (December 12), the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) **adopted a resolution for an immediate ceasefire in the Israel-Hamas conflict in Gaza**. While not binding, these resolutions indicate the consensus among member nations.

The United States of America’s continued support for Israel has also been noted across other votes at the UN. It vetoed a resolution of the UN Security Council – a principal organ of the UN – that called for a ceasefire the previous week.

Why are veto powers given to specific countries within the UN, and why has that power been retained for more than 70 years?

What is the veto power in the UNSC?

The UN Security Council is a much more exclusive club, consisting of the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Russia and China. These are the ‘permanent five’ or P5 countries, called so because the UNSC also has 10 additional members who are elected for two years each based on UNGA elections. Also, UNSC resolutions are legally binding, unlike the UNGA’s.

Each of the P5 members has the power to veto a vote. It was agreed by the drafters of the UN Charter (which lays down its governing principles) that if any one of the five permanent members cast a negative vote in the 15-member UNSC, the resolution would fail. A member can choose to abstain though, allowing the resolution to be adopted if it obtains the minimum nine votes.

Why do only permanent members of the Security Council have veto power?

The UN says, “The creators of the United Nations Charter conceived that five countries... because of their key roles in the establishment of the United Nations, would continue to play important roles in the maintenance of international peace and security.”

After World War Two ended in 1945, the P5 were among the victors against Germany, Italy and Japan. Among them, the US, the UK and the USSR (later Russia would take its seat) were at the forefront of war efforts. When it came to forming an international organisation to maintain international peace, they were keen to accord certain exclusive rights to themselves.

“Using its intelligence data, the United States was able to develop its arguments on behalf of the veto well in advance and thus disable the opposition,” Schlesinger wrote. He added that Washington argued in terms of practicality, saying there simply was not going to be a viable UN unless the four or five most powerful nations received veto rights. **Unless these countries saw some kind of power that only they held, they would not be willing to participate in such a body.**

The documents further suggest that “in shaping a United Nations that we wanted, we were indulging not only in altruism but also in national self-interest,” he wrote.

Bosco adds in his article that “permanence and possession of the veto power create a critical status difference with the elected members, even those (e.g., Germany, India, and Japan) who are major powers in their own right.”

Stability

UNSC: The Veto Power keeps the Security Council stable – without it, the UN may have suffered the same fate as the League of Nations

Dallas 18– [Dallas, Emmanuela Florence 2018 “The Security Council’s Sine qua Non: The Veto Power.”

<https://polisci.rutgers.edu/publications/occasional-paper-series/346-occasional-paper-8-florence-emmanuela-emmy-dallas/file>.] Joel

[Emmanuela Dallas is an Executive and Research Associate at the Asia Society, where she’s worked for 10 years. She holds a Master’s Degree in Political Science and International Relations from Rutgers University. Her concentration has been in political risk and human rights analysis as well as in conflict prevention and atrocity crimes.]

On the flip side, there are also positives with regard to the P5 and their veto power. They have been a force in the international community at times promoting peace and security as per the UN Charter. In the UNSC's defense, Alex Bellamy and Sara Davies argue that:

- a) "without the veto, the UN would have suffered the same fate as the League of Nations" and thus the status of the P5 must be accepted
- b) "the veto held the organization united during the Cold War", and
- c) "the veto allows Security Council members to set aside those issues on which they cannot agree but to remain engaged on those others – the great majority of cases – where they can." (Bellamy etc....)

Hehir, provides the following counter arguments,

- a) that it was not the veto that stopped the P5 from attacking each but rather because of postWWII military weakness and economic uncertainty and
- b) that when the P5 cannot reach an agreement on a particular issue, the issue must then be dealt with outside the confines of the Council. Such was the case with Kosovo in 1999, Iraq in 2003, and Georgia in 2009 (Hehir, 2014).

He concluded that these conflicts did not prevent the P5 from getting involved in unilateral aggression. Right or wrong it still must be said that for whatever reasons used, the power of the UNSC veto can be argued to have been a positive force in the past and perhaps can continue to be in the future.

Global Politics: Stripping the P5 of their veto power could lead to increased instability and the potential for unchecked power dynamics in the international system.

Krastev 15 - [Krastev, Ivan. "Analytics." Valdai Club. July 10, 2015. <https://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/un-security-council-veto-option-does-more-good-than-bad/>.] Elene.

[Ivan Krastev is a permanent fellow at the Institute for Human Sciences, Vienna. A founding board member of the European Council on Foreign Relations, a member of the Board of Trustees of The International Crisis Group and a contributing opinion writer for the International New York Times.]

In his fascinating book "Governing the World" Columbia University historian Mark Mazower has powerfully demonstrated that international institutions have been only as effective as the Great Powers of the age have allowed them to be. So, **should we hope that the world be a better place if the Permanent Five are stripped of their veto power? My answer is "no". The world will not be a better place, it will be more unstable place and while we can legitimately ask the question if the current permanent members of the Security Council are indeed sill the great powers of our age, the question about their veto powers should be treated separately.**

In a paradoxical way the debate on the veto power of P5 resembles the discussion on the elimination of the nuclear weapons. Everybody is going to agree that the existence of the nuclear weapons and the status of some countries to be more equal than other in the international system is an awful thing but **many will argue that both nuclear weapons and the veto power of the P5 make the world a more governable place.**

The analysis of the recent uses of veto power in the UN Security Council will reveal some interesting trends. First, the use of veto has dramatically declined after the end of the Cold War. The Soviet Union was the first one to cast veto in February 1946. And in the days of the Cold war permanent members of the UN Security Council have used their veto right 240 times. In striking contrast in the first post-Cold war decade only nine draft resolutions were vetoed. In the recent years the veto was used more actively and Russia ended up being the one most ready to veto while France and Britain never used their veto right after 1989. **But what is more important, the "pocket veto" (the explicit or implicit threat of veto) was an important incentive for finding solutions in the face of some of the most difficult crises the world has been facing. So, we can see that when veto power is exercised, it comes at a high cost for the respective country while at the same time the treat of veto forces cooperation.**

In the post-Cold war period any time when a single member of the Security Council has decided to use its veto unilaterally this was not so much a demonstration of power but a manifestation of defeat when it comes to winning the support of international public opinion. This is true in the 13 cases when the US has unilaterally vetoed resolutions related to Israel and it is true in the case of the latest Russia's resolutions related to the Ukrainian crisis.

Those who argue that the rising power of the international public opinion is the strong argument against the preservation of the veto power are in fact wrong. It is exactly the fact that people around the world are better informed and ready to take position on the world crises that makes me believe that the veto option does more good than bad. In the interconnected world in which the most important actors are in fierce competition for the hearts and minds of the global public using UN Security veto could not be an easy decision. Publics could be indifferent in the cases of China using its veto power in order to punish any country that has dared to recognize Taiwan as was the case twice in the last 25 years. But when it comes to major conflicts involving a lot of human tragedy states can veto only at the cost of losing much of their soft power.

A kind of 'checks and balances' of our time, P5's veto option remains an instrument of last resort in the resistance against uncontested power.

Permanent membership with a veto power ensures P-5 member participation and prevents potential dissolution of the UN, also it reduces the risk of rash decisions that could escalate conflicts.

Yönt 22 - [Yönt, Şeymanur. "Reforming the United Nations Security Council: Accountability, Effectiveness, and Representation." <https://researchcentre.trtworld.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Reforming-the-United-Nations-Security-Council.pdf>.] Elene.

[Şeymanur Yönt is a Deputy Researcher at TRT World Research Centre. She holds a Master of Laws degree from the London School of Economics and Political Science. She has practiced as a lawyer for two years and worked as a publications and research intern at the American Society of International Law. Her research interests include public international law, international economic law, and development.]

First of all, in order to evaluate reform initiatives properly, the advantages and disadvantages of the veto should be determined. The veto has some disadvantages such as being anachronistic and undemocratic as well as preventing the UN from acting and not only being a tool for protecting vital interests but also for maintaining influence and protecting allies (Webb, 2014). On the other hand, even if usually overlooked, it has some advantages as well. **Veto rights ultimately serve to keep P-5 members within the organization.** Moreover, veto or the potential of a veto inhibits the UNSC from taking action on a number of issues related to international peace and security. **To be more specific, the veto prevents the UNSC from passing resolutions on issues considered controversial by any of the P-5 countries.** Fear of veto forces members to think more thoroughly before proposing a draft resolution to the UNSC. **Veto prevents the UNSC from passing resolutions to the point that is harmful to the maintenance of international peace and security.** In other words, the veto prevents countries from maintaining excessively peace and security (Webb, 2014, p. 473). **The potential of a veto of draft resolutions that recommend the use of force allows UNSC members to consider alternatives, such as condemning a stakeholder's actions, that are less likely to be vetoed.** Moreover, the veto ensures that countries with a higher enforcement capacity and whose involvement in a conflict would create greater hinderances to peace act in cooperation and do not confront each other because the veto potential effectively creates a deadlock when there is a serious conflict of interests or confrontation among the P-5 members. If there were no veto power and all permanent members did not have to have concurring votes, P-5 members would be more likely to act on controversial issues with the reassurance of the UNSC authorization. In this case, there would be a risk of direct confrontation between opposing p-5 members.

There is also the risk that **without the veto right, P-5 countries might simply abandon the UN when their interests seriously conflict with the UNSC's decisions.** Veto power allows P-5 members to block decisions deemed to be against their interests and therefore ensures that they remain within the UN. In other words, the right to veto reduces the risk of repetition of the history, in other words, dissolution of an international organization as was the case for the League of Nations. Because this was the case when several countries such as Japan left the League of Nations when their interests contradicted with the League of Nations' decisions. Moreover, **the removal of the veto right may pave the way for more easily militarily interfering with the conflicts without referring to alternatives.** In addition to that, surprisingly, somehow veto may be a tool for protecting UNSC's credibility. For example, suppose that **in a scenario where there is no right to veto, a resolution is passed even if one or more superpowers vote no. If these superpowers do not implement this decision taken by the UNSC, the credibility of the UNSC will be damaged.** On the other hand, if the UNSC decides to enforce the implementation of this decision, the UNSC and the objecting superpower would be in conflict. This would create a greater risk for international peace and security than not passing a resolution on the matter (Cox, 2009, p. 120).

Solvency

Note: Aff has fiat power; Solvency shouldn't be run as a stand-alone argument.

Structural changes remain unlikely due to the veto power held by the permanent members, which allows them to unilaterally block any actions.

Dayal & Dunton 23 - [Dayal, Anjali & Dunton, Caroline. "The U.N. Security Council Was Designed for Deadlock — Can It Change?" United States Institute of Peace. March 1, 2023. <https://www.usip.org/publications/2023/03/un-security-council-was-designed-deadlock-can-it-change>.] Elene.

[Anjali Dayal is a senior scholar in residence at the U.S. Institute of Peace and an associate professor of international politics at Fordham University. Caroline Dunton is a research associate at the Centre for International Policy Studies at the University of Ottawa.]

The year since Russia's invasion has only strengthened an already-widespread consensus on how broken the UNSC is, with subsequent calls for change gathering real momentum. Still, real structural reform remains a distant prospect: no matter how much they publicly acknowledge its unjust rules, permanent members are unlikely to undermine their own advantages in the council.

The UNSC is the international body charged with maintaining international peace and security. Under international law, it is the sole global body that can authorize force, but **each of its permanent five members — the United States, the United Kingdom, Russia, China and France (known as the P5) — wields a veto that allows it to unilaterally thwart any action.**

It was explicitly built to be unfair, giving the victors of the World War II an outsized role in international peace and security, marginalizing whole regions and continents — particularly former colonies that gained independence after 1945 — and it was explicitly structured to be easily deadlocked, with any of the P5 able to unilaterally grind its work to a halt.

Even as their own divergent agendas prevent action on key cases, the P5 have more in common than not on many issues of international peace and security — **when their own primary interests and political processes aren't at stake, they can agree on even complex issues of international peace and security, and take action to address pressing issues.** For much of the post-Cold War period, and even amid substantial disagreement on Ukraine and Syria between 2013 and 2016, for example, the P5 agreed to all proposed new peacekeeping force authorizations. And work continues now despite Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Some scholars have argued the UNSC is a place where powerful states can work together to check other states' military ambitions, each member investing the chamber and its decisions with importance so every other powerful state will also invest the chamber with importance, and a place where powerful states can offer their own populations and the international community information about their plans and intentions, making the body a vital part of diplomatic and foreign policy projects even when it can't stop P5 members from breaking the U.N. Charter.

The bulk of the UNSC's work is on wars and crises where no permanent member has a primary national interest in the outcome of the conflict. **Here, the P5 have an incentive to keep the focus of international decision-making within UNSC chambers.** The status and rank that a permanent seat on the UNSC provides can incentivize the P5 to continue to work with one another on some issues even when their foreign policy goals and interests are wildly divergent. This willingness is a space for diplomatic action by other concerned states.

Both the form and the content of the UNSC's work have evolved over time through informal practices and concerted effort from the U.N.'s other member states. We should therefore anticipate that these members will be at the forefront of finding creative procedural and substantive ways to confront P5 gridlock.

A full-scale revision of the U.N. Charter is distant, and gridlock is likely to continue at the UNSC, particularly when a member of the P5 is committed to either breaking the terms of the U.N. Charter, or protecting another country doing so. **No widespread consensus among other states can change how easily a P5 member can turn the UNSC away from action.**

Status Quo Good

UNSEC Good: The only alternative to Permanent Membership is no security council, as the major powers would refuse to participate—and that would be worse

Bosco 12– [Bosco, David. 2023. “In Defense of the Veto Power – Foreign Policy.” Archive.ph. August 3. <https://archive.ph/IHYEo#selection-1245.0-1253.1>.] Joel

[David Bosco is a professor at Indiana University’s Hamilton Lugar School of Global and International Studies. He is the author of *The Poseidon Project: The Struggle to Govern the World’s Oceans*.]

That said, there are a few things worth noting about the veto power and its use. First, contrary to the conventional wisdom, Russia and China are not the most profligate in their use of the veto. Since the 1970s, that distinction has belonged to the United States (usually on draft resolutions containing criticism of Israel). Second, overall use of the veto has declined markedly since the end of the Cold War. The threat of the veto has important shadow effects on Council deliberations, of course, but the historical trajectory is toward greater consensus on the Council and against the casual use of the veto.

Perhaps **the most fundamental point about the veto is that you could not have a Security Council without it. Major powers will simply not grant an international body binding legal authority on matters of peace and security unless they are certain that it will not prejudice their interests. So the alternative to the Security Council veto is really no Security Council**, or at least not in a recognizable form. **As maddening as the likely Russian *nyet* will be, that’s a tradeoff that few would be willing to make. As frustrating as it is, the Security Council is still an enormously useful body, not least because it institutionalizes the practice of great-power security consultations.**

If jettisoning the veto power is both impractical and ill-advised, there is an alternative for those convinced that the world must put an end to the Syria violence, through forceful means if necessary: pretending that the veto power doesn’t exist. There’s ample precedent for that route just in the last couple decades, from Kosovo to Iraq. Brilliant and inventive international lawyers have periodically tried to argue that the “responsibility to protect” has somehow—through the mysterious workings of customary international law—rendered the veto power inapplicable in cases of mass atrocities. Whether taking that route is advisable in the case of Syria really depends less on the legal viability of that argument and more on the likely political effects. How would Russia react? How might reinforcing that precedent come back to bite those employing it? Is there a feasible intervention plan? Is anyone actually willing to commit forces?

Reform: The General Assembly has already taken steps to fill in the gaps in governance where the Security Council can't

Barber 23– [Barber, Rebecca. 2023. “The U.N. General Assembly’s Veto Initiative Turns One. Is It Working?” Just Security. April 26. <https://www.justsecurity.org/86140/the-u-n-general-assemblys-veto-initiative-turns-one-is-it-working/>.] Joel

[Rebecca Barber is an honorary senior research fellow with the TC Beirne School of Law, University of Queensland. Her PhD thesis focused on the role of UN General Assembly in the prevention of, and response to, atrocity crimes. She has published widely on the powers and procedures of the UN General Assembly, international peace and security law, international human rights and humanitarian law and the responsibility to protect, among other areas.]

One year ago today, **the United Nations General Assembly passed Resolution 76/262, committing that every time a veto is cast in the United Nations Security Council, the General Assembly will meet within 10 days and “hold a debate on the situation as to which the veto was cast.”** The initiative was born out of growing frustration over States persistently using vetos in the Security Council, including to block action aimed at halting or averting the commission of atrocity crimes, and addressing their humanitarian consequences. In 2021 and early 2022, that frustration was brought to a head by, among other things, the Security Council’s inability to respond to Russia’s aggression in Ukraine, and blockages that continue to impede the provision of humanitarian assistance in Syria.

Delegates who spoke in support of Resolution 76/262 **said they hoped it would accomplish two goals.**

First, the Resolution’s supporters hoped the initiative would make the Security Council more accountable to the General Assembly. Liechtenstein’s representative, introducing the Resolution, said that “all Member States have ... agreed that the Council acts on their behalf,” and that “therefore, membership, as a whole, should be given a voice when the Council is unable to act.”

Second, it was hoped the initiative would prompt the General Assembly itself to engage more robustly in matters of international peace and security when the Security Council failed. Qatar’s representative, for example, described the Resolution as “promot[ing] the Assembly’s role in accordance with its mandate, which gives it powers and authority in matters related to the maintenance of peace and security,” and hoped the Resolution would strengthen the U.N. system “in cases where it cannot stand idly by and should respond effectively.”

This article reflects on the success of the veto initiative, in its first year, measured against the second – and more substantive – of these objectives. It finds that the initiative has prompted more robust and meaningful General Assembly engagement in one of the three occasions in which it has thus far been used.

Has the Veto Initiative Strengthened the General Assembly’s Engagement in Matters of International Peace and Security?

The veto initiative has thus far prompted the General Assembly to convene special sessions in relation to three vetoed resolutions: one on the Democratic Republic of North Korea, vetoed by Russia and China; and one on each of Syria and Ukraine, both vetoed by Russia. The vetoed Resolution on North Korea would have tightened Security Council sanctions; the Resolution on Syria would have extended the provision of cross-border humanitarian aid from Turkey to Syria until January 2022, with an automatic extension until mid-2023; and the Resolution on Ukraine would have condemned the “so-called referenda” that preceded Russia’s proclaimed annexation of parts of Ukraine.

The Security Council's Veto of Resolutions on North Korea and Syria

In the special sessions following the vetoed Resolutions on North Korea and Syria, States used the opportunity to call on Russia and China to reconsider their use of the veto, and to lament the use of the veto in general, and to emphasize the responsibilities of the Security Council. The representative of Fiji, for example, speaking on behalf of the Pacific Islands Forum, described the right of veto as “outdated and obstructionist”; Ireland’s representative called for the Security Council to “hear and heed” the voices of the General Assembly’s delegates; and Denmark’s representative called for broader commitment to the French/Mexico veto initiative (according to which States voluntarily commit not to exercise their right of veto to block action on mass atrocities). In neither of these sessions, however, did a State propose anything that the General Assembly should actually do. Neither the North Korea nor Syria special sessions resulted in a General Assembly resolution.

In both these situations, there were things the General Assembly could have done. In relation to North Korea, it could – among other things – have passed a resolution recommending to States that they unilaterally strengthen sanctions on Pyongyang. The General Assembly has recommended to States that they impose sanctions in other contexts in the past, for example in relation to Israel in the 1980s, South Africa (1960s-1980s) and – going back further – Southern Rhodesia and the Portuguese Territories in the 1960s-1970s. Regarding Syria, the General Assembly could have passed a Resolution affirming the principle recognized by the International Court of Justice in its *Nicaragua* Advisory Opinion (para. 242), that exclusively humanitarian assistance is not an unlawful intervention in a State’s internal affairs. The General Assembly is empowered by the U.N. Charter to contribute to the progressive development and codification of international law, and it has previously passed resolutions affirming principles of international law – see, for example, early Resolutions on the crime of genocide and on the Nuremberg principles. The General Assembly could have also reaffirmed (in terms similar to its Resolution of December 2021) that humanitarian needs in northern Syria could not be met from within Syria, and emphasized the imperative for humanitarian assistance to be provided through all available access routes. It could have further bolstered the legal case for States and U.N. agencies to provide cross-border humanitarian assistance without Security Council authorization, by describing the situation as one of “necessity” – recognized in international law as a circumstance “precluding the wrongfulness” of the breach of an international legal obligation (see discussion here).

The Security Council's Veto of a Resolution on Ukraine

The General Assembly’s special session following the vetoed Resolution on Ukraine was of a wholly different character than those following the vetoed Resolutions on North Korea and Syria. This time, the debate focused squarely on the General Assembly itself. The representative of Malta, for example, emphasized the General Assembly’s “duty to react to violations of international law,” and Latvia’s representative spoke similarly of the General Assembly’s “responsibility to uphold the principles of the United Nations Charter.” On Oct. 12 2022, the General Assembly passed a Resolution declaring the so-called referenda in parts of Ukraine to be invalid, and calling on States not to recognize any alteration of the status of those regions. The following month – still in the same session – the General Assembly passed another Resolution, this time asserting that Russia should make reparation for injury caused by its “internationally wrongful acts,” recognizing the need for an “international mechanism for reparation” and recommending that States create an “international register of damage.”

To summarize: a review of the General Assembly’s special sessions – and resulting action – following the Security Council veto on Ukraine, as compared to those on North Korea and Syria, reveals that these sessions have been used in very different ways. The sessions on North Korea and Syria were used to

critique the veto in general, and the veto-wielding States in particular. The session on Ukraine, conversely, was used to pass robust resolutions, affirming important principles of international law and making concrete recommendations to States. In other words, **if the General Assembly's veto initiative is assessed against whether it has prompted more robust General Assembly engagement in matters of international peace and security when the Security Council has failed, the finding** – admittedly based on a limited sample of just three occasions on which the new arrangement has been used thus far – **would seem to be that it has succeeded on one occasion out of three.**

What Makes the General Assembly's Response to North Korea and Syria Different from its Approach to Ukraine?

There is a critical factor underpinning the difference between the General Assembly's response to the vetoes on North Korea and Syria, and that of Ukraine. In February 2022, six months prior to the vetoed Resolution on Ukraine, the Security Council passed a procedural Resolution (not subject to the veto), stating that the “lack of unanimity of its permanent members ... [had] prevented it from exercising its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security,” and calling for an emergency special session of the General Assembly. In using this language (“lack of unanimity, and failure to exercise responsibility for international peace and security”) the Council was implicitly invoking the General Assembly's 1950 Uniting for Peace (U4P) Resolution. **That Resolution established that if the Security Council were unable to exercise its responsibility for international peace and security due to lack of unanimity among its permanent members** – the United States, United Kingdom, France, China, and Russia – **then the Council could call for an emergency special session of the General Assembly, and the General Assembly would then consider the matter and make recommendations** (see here for a list of the situations in relation to which the U4P Resolution has been invoked previously).

Following the Security Council's procedural Resolution, the General Assembly convened an emergency special session on Feb. 28, 2022. That session was still ongoing (albeit adjourned) when Russia vetoed the draft Resolution on Ukraine in the Council several months later, on Sept. 30. The General Assembly then “resumed” its emergency special session the following month, on Oct. 10. The Assembly described the session as “mandated” after the Council failed to adopt a resolution on Russia's so-called referenda in Ukraine – in other words, mandated by the requirement in Resolution 76/262 that the General Assembly convene in special session within 10 days of a veto in the Council – however, it also noted that the session was “*part of* [the General Assembly's] ongoing emergency special session on Ukraine.” Thus, while re-opened pursuant to Resolution 76/262, the session took place in the broader context of a referral from the Council pursuant to the U4P procedure.

The reason this is important is that it suggests that thus far (admittedly, drawing from only three post-veto special sessions), **the veto initiative special sessions** and the U4P procedure special session **have been used in very different ways. The former have been used to critique the veto, while the latter has been seemingly underpinned by an understanding that the Security Council has temporarily passed its responsibility to the General Assembly, and that the task for the General Assembly is to consider what it can usefully do.**

The distinction between the character of the special sessions convened pursuant to the veto initiative, and that of the special session convened within the broader context of the U4P procedure, is somewhat surprising given that most legal scholars now accept that the U4P Resolution is not legally required for the General Assembly to act on matters of international peace and security (see here, p.15). What this

suggests is that despite this appreciation of the General Assembly's competence to act with or without a Security Council referral, the U4P process still serves a political purpose.

There is, thus, something of a disconnect. States have accepted that the General Assembly is competent to act on matters of international peace and security irrespective of any referral from the Security Council, and that it sometimes must do so, and have developed a procedure – the veto initiative – to help ensure it does. But seemingly States have not yet caught up to the idea that the veto initiative special sessions can and should be used in just the same way as the General Assembly's emergency special sessions, despite not having been called for by the Security Council.

The Veto Threat

In assessing the effectiveness of the veto initiative in prompting more robust responses by the General Assembly to Security Council failure, one further point bears noting, and that is what happens when a veto is threatened – or just assumed – but not cast.

Earlier this month, more than 100 civilians were killed in airstrikes by Myanmar's military junta. The U.K. circulated a draft Security Council press statement condemning the attack and calling for accountability. Security Council statements are not "decisions" of the Council, and – unlike resolutions – are not legally binding on States, however they still require the agreement of all Security Council members. Presumably the U.K. would have liked to see a Security Council resolution condemning the attack, but opted for a statement instead, knowing that a resolution would never pass – and then in the end even a statement proved too much. Had the U.K. circulated a draft resolution, forcing vetos by Russia and China, the General Assembly would have been required – pursuant to Resolution 76/262 – to meet and debate the situation. Without a resolution being put to a vote, there can be no veto, and thus the veto initiative can provide no assistance. Thus, **States who are interested in prompting the General Assembly to more robustly engage in situations in relation to which the Security Council is blocked must play their part by putting resolutions forward to vote, even knowing they will fail. And then when a veto is cast and the General Assembly convenes in special session, States should ensure those sessions are used to consider what the General Assembly can most usefully do, not just to lament the existence of the veto.**

Neg Blocks

AT: China-Russia

Argument: *Abolishing permanent membership would reduce the power of the China-Russia bloc*

Data on voting behavior don't support the concept of a China-Russia bloc in the UNSC

Fung & Lam 22 – [“Mixed Report Card: China’s Influence at the United Nations | Lowy Institute.” 2022. Lowyinstitute.org. <https://www.loyyinstitute.org/publications/mixed-report-card-china-s-influence-united-nations>] Joel.

[Dr Courtney J. Fung is a Nonresident Fellow at the Lowy Institute, an associate professor in the Department of Security Studies & Criminology at Macquarie University, and an associate at the Fairbank Center for Chinese Studies, Harvard University.

Shing-hon Lam is a PhD candidate in the Department of Political Science at the University of California, Los Angeles, where he specialises in International Relations. He earned his Master’s in International Relations from the University of Chicago and BSocSc in Politics and Public Administration from the University of Hong Kong.]

As expected, **China votes dissimilarly to the United States, the United Kingdom, and France, and votes closer to Russia.** It is important to note, however, that **the data does not support the popular claims of a China–Russia voting bloc as there is a consistent distance in voting between the two countries.** Though the China–Russia voting gap has somewhat narrowed since 2015, it is still not as small as the UK–France voting gap. **Instead, China votes closer to the “Group of 77 plus China” members consisting of Global South countries that strive to maximise their negotiating capacity in the United Nations.** The dark grey lines in Figure 6 show the average ideal points by countries’ income level. Except for high income countries, countries in different income brackets share similar and consistent ideal points over the two decades. Since 2015, China’s positions have moved closer to these non-high income common ideal points. In contrast, the dark grey lines representing the mean ideal points of low income to middle-high income countries are consistent over the period. These states are therefore not voting more closely to China. Rather, **China is making a greater effort to position its voting more closely to that of low income to middle-high income countries, by supporting others’ policy positions.** Such movement is possible for China as UN General Assembly votes are less costly in that they only infrequently involve considerations of vital national interests. But it does not suggest Beijing is wielding greater influence or shaping the voting patterns of other countries.

AT: Gridlock

Argument: *Permanent membership leads to gridlock and makes the Security Council ineffective*

→ **The security council can't solve every problem—but it does let countries effectively work together on some issues**

Women & Girls: The Security Council unanimously voted to condemn the Taliban's discrimination against women & girls in Afghanistan

Fassihi 4/23—[The New York Times. 2024. "U.N. Security Council Unanimously Condemns Taliban's Treatment of Women." <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/04/27/world/asia/un-security-council-condemns-taliban.html?searchResultPosition=12>.] Joel.

[Farnaz Fassihi is a reporter for The New York Times based in New York. Previously she was a senior writer and war correspondent for the Wall Street Journal for 17 years based in the Middle East. Fassihi has covered wars and uprisings across the Middle East, including in Iran, Afghanistan, Iraq, Israel, Gaza, the West Bank, Egypt, Turkey, Lebanon, and Syria. Fassihi has been honored with more than a dozen national journalism awards including Overseas Press Club's Hal Boyle Award, Robert F. Kennedy Award and Society of Professional Journalists Award for best international reporting.]

In a rare show of unity, **the United Nations Security Council adopted a resolution on Thursday condemning the Taliban's discrimination against women and girls in Afghanistan and called for the country's leadership to swiftly reverse policies banning education, employment and equal public participation of women and girls.**

The resolution, co-sponsored by over 90 countries, received 15 yes votes and was unanimously adopted in Russia's last days in its monthlong role as the rotating president of the Council.

"The world will not stand by silently as the women of Afghanistan are erased from society," said Lana Nusseibeh, the U.A.E.'s U.N. ambassador, who led the drafting of the resolution with Japan's representative. She said **the Council was sending an "unequivocal message of condemnation" to the Taliban for their treatment of women and girls.**

The resolution, which called for the "full, equal, meaningful and safe participation of women and girls in Afghanistan," also addressed the Taliban administration's edict on April 4 prohibiting the United Nations from employing Afghan women. That stance — "unprecedented in the history of the United Nations," the resolution said — "undermines human rights and humanitarian principles."

The 15-member Security Council has been sharply divided since Russia invaded Ukraine, unable to find a consensus position on many of the world's most pressing problems. While the Council was able to finally come together over the Taliban's treatment of women, the negotiations over the resolution's final wording were complex and lengthy, according to diplomats involved in the talks.

The resolution, legally binding under international law, does not specify what consequences the Taliban administration in Afghanistan will face if they violate its demands. But generally the Security Council can impose sanctions on countries or governments that do not comply with its resolutions.

"The Taliban has reneged on its promises to the international community and to Afghan women and girls by implementing oppressive measures against them, including barring them from working with the U.N. and N.G.O.s and from attending universities and secondary schools," said Linda Thomas-Greenfield, the U.S. ambassador to the U.N., in a written statement after the vote. "These draconian edicts only prevent Afghanistan from achieving stability, economic prosperity and future growth."

Haitian Gangs: The Security Council unanimously voted to condemn the Taliban's discrimination against women & girls in Afghanistan

Robles & Fassihi 10/23—[The New York Times. 2024. "U.N. Approves Kenya-Led Security Mission to Help Haiti Stamp out Gangs." <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/10/02/world/americas/un-kenya-mission-haiti.html?searchResultPosition=9>.] Joel.

[Frances Robles is an investigative reporter for The New York Times, with a 30-year career writing about national news and Latin America, covering breaking news and natural disasters. She graduated from New York University and was a John S. Knight fellow at Stanford University.

Farnaz Fassihi is a reporter for The New York Times based in New York. Previously she was a senior writer and war correspondent for the Wall Street Journal for 17 years based in the Middle East. Fassihi has covered wars and uprisings across the Middle East, including in Iran, Afghanistan, Iraq, Israel, Gaza, the West Bank, Egypt, Turkey, Lebanon, and Syria. Fassihi has been honored with more than a dozen national journalism awards including Overseas Press Club's Hal Boyle Award, Robert F. Kennedy Award and Society of Professional Journalists Award for best international reporting.]

The United Nations Security Council on Monday approved a yearlong multinational security mission for Haiti, led by Kenya, aimed at cracking down on rampant gang violence that has unraveled life for many on the Caribbean nation.

The 15-member Council voted to authorize a mission that would guard critical infrastructure such as airports, ports, schools, hospitals and key traffic intersections, and carry out "targeted operations" along with the Haitian National Police. Kenya has pledged at least 1,000 security personnel, and several other nations are expected to offer other resources.

Nearly 3,000 people were killed in Haiti from October last year until June, as gangs took over large patches of the country, particularly Port-au-Prince, the capital, according to the United Nations. Many neighborhoods have cleared out as people have fled widespread murders, kidnappings and extortion. Gangs aligned with political parties have strengthened their grip on the country since the 2021 assassination of President Jovenel Moïse. No municipal, legislative or parliamentary elections have been held in years, creating a power vacuum. One goal of the Kenyan-led mission is to create the conditions for a safe election.

The Council voted 13 in favor of the resolution, with Russia and China abstaining.

Haiti's foreign minister, Jean Victor Génés, called the resolution a "glimmer of hope" for people who have been suffering too long. "This is more than a simple vote," he said. "This is, in fact, an expression of solidarity with a population in distress."

The resolution's passing signified an increasingly rare moment when the Council was able to act. **Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, divisions among the body's five permanent members, each with veto power, have impeded the Council from passing resolutions and taking actions.**

Russia and China's abstentions suggested that neither country endorsed the resolution but they were not going to block it. Diplomats said that negotiations had been tense with the two countries for several weeks, with the text being rewritten multiple times, but that, ultimately, a consensus was reached.

Russia's U.N. ambassador, Vasily A. Nebenzya, said that although Russia did not have any objections "in principle," the resolution was "rushed" and "shortsighted."

Debate Track: Evidence Packet (Abolish P5 Status) - Briefs

Resolved: The United Nations should abolish permanent membership on its Security Council.

Disagreements are a normal part of the Security Council's functioning – despite what commentators say, the P5 always manage to patch over their differences

Gowan 20–[Gowan, Richard. 2020. “Tensions at the U.N. Security Council - War on the Rocks.” War on the Rocks. August 31. <https://warontherocks.com/2020/08/tensions-at-the-u-n-security-council/>.] Joel.

[Richard was previously a Consulting Analyst with ICG in 2016 and 2017. He has worked with the European Council on Foreign Relations, New York University Center on International Cooperation and the Foreign Policy Centre (London). He has taught at the School of International and Public Affairs at Columbia University and Stanford in New York.]

More fundamentally, this debacle raises longer-term doubts about the council's value as a venue for endorsing compromises among the big powers in an increasingly fragmented international system. The Iran deal's negotiators believed that by embedding the agreement in a U.N. resolution they could better guarantee its implementation. If the council cannot resolve its differences over snapback one way or another, its status as guarantor of such complex agreements will suffer.

Nonetheless, it is probably wise to see the snapback dispute as just one of the recurrent diplomatic breakdowns that have punctuated U.N. diplomacy on issues from the Balkans to Iraq and Syria since the end of the Cold War. **Each time council members hit an impasse, commentators hurry to say that the United Nations has reached a decisive or disastrous turning point. Yet time after time, council members — and above all the permanent five (China, France, Russia, the United States, and the United Kingdom) — manage to patch over their differences after a cooling-off period.**

The Security Council may suffer a split over snapback, but it is unlikely to be terminal.

AT: Palestine

Argument: *The Veto Power has allowed the US to block cease-fire resolutions on Palestine-Israel*

A resolution calling for humanitarian pause in fighting was successfully passed by UNSEC

Fassihi 11/23—[The New York Times. 2024. “U.N. Security Council Calls for Dayslong Humanitarian Pauses in Gaza.” <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/11/15/world/middleeast/united-nations-security-council-israel-gaza.html?searchResultPosition=9>] Joel.

[Farnaz Fassihi is a reporter for The New York Times based in New York. Previously she was a senior writer and war correspondent for the Wall Street Journal for 17 years based in the Middle East. Fassihi has covered wars and uprisings across the Middle East, including in Iran, Afghanistan, Iraq, Israel, Gaza, the West Bank, Egypt, Turkey, Lebanon, and Syria. Fassihi has been honored with more than a dozen national journalism awards including Overseas Press Club's Hal Boyle Award, Robert F. Kennedy Award and Society of Professional Journalists Award for best international reporting.]

The United Nations Security Council adopted a resolution on Wednesday calling for immediate and urgent dayslong humanitarian pauses in the Israel-Hamas war to allow desperately needed aid to reach civilians in Gaza.

The resolution put forth by Malta passed after weeks of division and inaction over the Israel-Gaza war. It stopped short of calling for a cease-fire, and it did not spell out the number of days for a humanitarian pause, instead **calling for “a sufficient number of days” for “the full, rapid, safe, and unhindered humanitarian access.”**

The resolution is legally binding and called for all parties to comply with international laws of conflict that demand that civilians, especially children, be protected. It also called for the immediate and unconditional release of hostages held by Hamas.

The resolution passed with twelve votes, with the remaining three members — the United States, Britain and Russia — abstaining.

Four previous resolutions had failed. Diplomats said that Malta’s resolution was a compromise intended to achieve consensus on language focused tightly on humanitarian issues with an emphasis on the plight of children.

Before Wednesday’s vote, Russia asked for an amendment to the resolution that would demand a cease-fire. The majority of Security Council member states, voted for a resolution calling for an immediate cease-fire on Oct 26. The proposal was not adopted because it did not get the required nine votes. The U.S. was the lone member that voted against a cease-fire.

Linda Thomas-Greenfield, the U.S. ambassador to the U.N., said that the passing of the resolution on Wednesday showed that the Council could still work together. She said the United States could not vote for a resolution that did not condemn Hamas’s Oct. 7 attack on Israel and state that countries have the right to defend themselves. But she said the United States supported many of the resolution’s provisions such as the release of hostages and humanitarian pauses.

AT: R2P

Argument: *The UN Security Council has a Right to Protect humanity against atrocities happening around the world – the Veto power prevents it from doing this job*

The Right to Protect is seen as some as a smokescreen behind which to hide unjust military intervention

D’Alessandra & Whidden 23–[“Whither Atrocity Prevention at the UN? Look beyond R2P and the Security Council • Stimson Center.” Stimson Center. November 6. <https://www.stimson.org/2023/whither-atrocity-prevention-at-the-un-look-beyond-r2p-and-the-security-council/>.] Joel

[Gwendolyn Whidden is a DPhil candidate in International Relations at the University of Oxford, where she received an MPhil in International Relations in 2022. Her doctoral research examines under what conditions the UN Security Council intervenes in situations of mass atrocity.

Federica D’Alessandra is the Deputy Director of the Institute for Ethics, Law, and Armed Conflict (ELAC), and Director of the Oxford Programme on International Peace and Security at the Blavatnik School of Government. She is also a member of the Steering Committee of the School’s Alfred Landecker Programme, an Academic Affiliate of the Oxford Bonavero Institute of Human Rights, and on the Steering Committee of the Oxford Network of Peace Studies.]

To be sure, **norm contestation around R2P since 2011 has been acute, and many scholars, policymakers, and practitioners remain skeptical or critical of the norm on a variety of grounds. Some continue to express reservations about the political and legal complexities of implementing its third pillar in particular — i.e., taking action through the Security Council in the face of a state’s failure to protect its own population from atrocity crimes, especially although not exclusively where this requires coercive measures — while others, particularly in the Global South, criticize bias and double-standards in the norm’s application and/or are suspicious of its use as a “smokescreen” for Western interventionism.** In short, precisely as a result of its vague content and contested status, depending on where the critic is situated and the function they do or do not want the norm to serve, R2P has done either “too little” or “too much”: by failing to mobilize interventions when necessary; by failing to provide equal protection to all populations at risk around the world; by allowing states to use humanitarian intervention as a pretext to interfere in other states’ domestic affairs; or by leading to diplomatic fallout when states do take action in line with the norm’s prescriptions.

AT: War Solvency

Argument: *Abolishing permanent membership would stop the P5 from monopolizing the Security Council, thus expanding representation and helping to solve more conflicts*

“Veto power hides behind military power”—the structures that make war a profitable business won’t be changed by abolishing permanent membership

Mbombo 22— [Mbombo, Jean-Marie Kasonga. 2022. “A Rework of the P5 as a Cornerstone for Peace through Multilateralism - Georgetown Journal of International Affairs.” Georgetown Journal of International Affairs. December 19. <https://gjia.georgetown.edu/2022/12/19/a-rework-of-the-p5-as-a-cornerstone-for-peace-through-multilateralism/>.] Joel

[Dr. Jean-Marie Kasonga Mbombo is a graduate of Trinity College Dublin and a senior lecturer and researcher at the Centre for Peace and Strategic Studies. His research interests include liberal peacebuilding, the United Nations, conflict management in the Great Lakes region of Africa, and restorative justice. Dr. Mbombo is also the founder and CEO of Peace People Network, an organization whose vision is to give peace a human face.]

Given that **veto power hides behind military power**, expanding the membership of the UNSC is like dealing with symptoms while ignoring the cause of the disease. **As long as the sale of weapons of war remains a lucrative business among Western nations with veto power, violent conflicts will still affect poor nations.** The reason behind the rejection of any structural change in the UNSC is nothing more than a tacit resolve on the part of the P5 to preserve their privileges while maintaining the status quo that benefits powerful nations the most. No Council member has raised the question as to whether or not Russia should be expelled from the organization in line with Article 6 of the Charter, given that a veto-wielding Russia will reject the agenda. Arguably, the ongoing Russian war against Ukraine is not just another breach of the UN Charter by a permanent member of the UNSC but an indication that **the veto power does not guarantee peace in the world. It was simply an incentive to keep the P5 together.** It seems that the bone of contention is the misuse of veto power rather than the creation of additional seats in the Council chamber. Therefore, a rework of the role of the P5 is worthwhile.

Impacts

Human Rights

The Security Council has set standards for the countries of the world to protect human rights – this is uniquely possible through the Security Council

Cronin & Hurd 08– [Cronin, Bruce and Hurd, Ian. 2008. “The UN Security Council and the Politics of International Authority” Routledge. <http://ndl.ethernet.edu.et/bitstream/123456789/50092/1/5.pdf>] Joel

[Bruce Cronin is Associate Professor of Political Science and Director of the Master’s Program in International Relations at the City College of New York, USA. He is the author of *Institutions for the Common Good: International Protection Regimes in International Society and Community Under Anarchy: Transnational Identity and the Evolution of Cooperation*.

Ian Hurd is Assistant Professor of Political Science at Northwestern University, USA. He is the author of *After Anarchy: Legitimacy and Power in the UN Security Council*.]

Therefore, the authors addressed the broader relationship between action and authority. Based on the discussions in the preceding chapters, we generally conclude that the increased role of the Council has indeed also meant an increase in its authority, although there may not be unanimous agreement on this point. We based this conclusion on several factors.

First, **the Council has** not only expanded the scope of its involvement into new areas of international politics without first obtaining formal approval from the membership. It has also imposed greater **obligations on the member states to adopt new domestic policies on terrorism** (Chapters 5 and 7), **arrest and extradite international war crimes suspects** (Chapters 4 and 6), **ban the practice of ethnic cleansing** (Chapter 4), **restrict economic activities with states involved in gross human rights abuses** (Chapter 7), **cooperate with UN peacekeepers and non-governmental organizations involved in providing humanitarian assistance to their citizens** (Chapter 8), and **permit international supervision of domestic conflicts** (Chapter 4). **Although some of these actions raised controversy when they were adopted, few states directly challenged the right of the Council to undertake them, and those that did remained in the minority.** Moreover, as demonstrated in the previous chapters, **these obligations have remained intact even after the issues that gave rise to them were resolved. The ability to create new obligations for others to follow is a clear indication of a relationship between a superior and a subordinate, an essential element of authority.**

More specifically, in each of the preceding cases, **the obligations created by the Council were aimed at inducing the member states to adopt policies that many may not have otherwise done on their own.** As Ian Johnstone pointed out in Chapter 5, in passing resolution 1373, the Council required states to adopt measures drawn from the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism, despite the fact that the treaty was not yet in force and that only 43 of the 192 member states had even signed (much less ratified) the agreement.¹ Similarly, **in creating the international criminal tribunals for the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, East Timor, and Sierra Leone, the Council required all states to cooperate with the court even though there was no agreement or treaty to this effect. The requirements included arresting and extraditing suspects to The Hague, regardless of whether a particular state’s domestic laws permitted the government to do so.** Perhaps the most intrusive obligation imposed by the Council was its demand that all parties to the internal conflict within Bosnia take a number of specific measures to protect the population of selected cities and provide unlimited freedom of movement to an external military force (UNPROFOR). **It is not the act of issuing these mandatory declarations that offers evidence of increased authority, but, rather, the fact the most member states accepted the right of the Council to do so.**

Nonproliferation

The Security Council is responsible for maintaining global nonproliferation systems

Lakshman 24— [Lakshman, Dharun. 2023. "What Is the Role Un Security Council in Nonproliferation Regime – a Clear Picture." Ssrn.com, October. doi:<https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4664657>.] Joel

[Dharun Lakshman is a Law Student at JGLS in Jindai, and a graduate of the Jindal School of Government and Public Policy]

The UN Security Council (UNSC) is an essential part of the global structure in charge of upholding global stability and safety. The UNSC is charged with the broad duty of sustaining the non-proliferation framework on a global scale, notably with regard to weapons of mass destruction. A complex network of international conventions, conventions, and agreements make up the non-proliferation system, which aims to control peaceful nuclear operations, encourage nuclear disarmament, and stop the global deployment of weapons of mass destruction. The "Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons" (NPT), which went into effect in 1970, sits at the heart of this system. This agreement has significantly influenced the non-proliferation situation on a worldwide scale. We will examine the UNSC's engagement or the important role that it plays in the non-proliferation system in this thorough examination, covering a range of topics such as nuclear disarmament, regulation, protection, resolving conflicts, and its function in addressing proliferation risks.

Peace

The UNSEC helps to maintain peace around the world

Sonnback 20 – [Sonnback, Anette. 2020. “How Successful Has the UN Been in Maintaining International Peace and Security?” E-International Relations. November 8. <https://www.e-ir.info/2020/11/08/how-successful-has-the-un-been-in-maintaining-international-peace-and-security/>. Joel

[Anette Sonnback is co-founder and director of *A Path for Europe*. Her areas of interests include EU Foreign Affairs and Security, EU Neighbourhood policy and Enlargement, Governance and Democracy.]

Beyond internal tensions, the UN has an active presence in the world through peace operations, which has become central for the UNSC and its approach to maintaining peace. The mandates range from protecting civilians to supporting state-building efforts, a list that has become more extensive in its attempt to improve the strategy towards sustainable peace. There is no mention of peace operations in the UN Charter, and the concept of peacekeeping has adapted in line with shifting nature of war and understanding of security, leading up to today’s multidimensional peace operations (Williams & Bellamy 2013: 415). **Traditionally, the presence of UN forces was to be approved by all parties in the host country, they were to be impartial, lightly armed, with the main goal to maintain a truce.** The peace has indeed been kept between states such as Israel-Syria or Iraq-Kuwait, indicating the success of UN deployment for preventing interstate conflict (Mingst and Karns 2011: 130). With the increase of intrastate wars in the 1990s however, conflicts had become more complex, requiring a more complex response. Peacekeepers were deployed in situations where there was no peace to keep, and they encountered atrocities that put both them and civilians in danger, demanding greater military response (Bellamy & Hunt 2015: 1277, Doyle & Sambanis 2008: 2). **Their mandate therefore expanded and started bordering on enforcement,** as was the case of Bosnia in the 1990s. One problem was the discrepancy between the expectations of the operations and the actual capabilities in form of manpower or resources, showing a political unwillingness to transform the operations to more robust ones (Thakur 2006: 62, Autesserre 2019). Bosnia was a clear example of the failure that can ensue when undertaking *ad hoc* responses to a situation that does not match the original mandate, as it might lead to the inability to perform the envisioned tasks entrusted upon peacekeepers as they are prevented by nation state reluctance (Crossette 1999). This shows the importance of broad member state support of missions in today’s complex conflict situations and the need for nations to be willing to adapt to challenges that might arise.

Norms

The Security Council helps to set norms and expectations for international behavior

Sonnback 20 – [Sonnback, Anette. 2020. “How Successful Has the UN Been in Maintaining International Peace and Security?” E-International Relations. November 8. <https://www.e-ir.info/2020/11/08/how-successful-has-the-un-been-in-maintaining-international-peace-and-security/>.] Joel

[Anette Sonnback is co-founder and director of A Path for Europe. Her areas of interests include EU Foreign Affairs and Security, EU Neighbourhood policy and Enlargement, Governance and Democracy.]

Beyond nuclear disarmament, there is also the shared understanding of illegitimate and legitimate uses of force. The UNSC holds strong authority in this realm, which again points to the normative power of the UN in its role for maintaining international peace and security (Mingst and Karns 2011: 100). **Even though tensions can run high between states in the Security Council, this shared understanding has enhanced the risks that an aggressor might face when “breaking” these norms, as the response from the international community can take the form of international condemnation, coordinated sanctions or even humanitarian intervention.** This last point particularly derives from the enhanced focus on human rights and human security within the UN, as well as the shifting nature of war after the Cold War (Bellamy 2013: 488). The principles of sovereignty and non-interference came into question with the atrocities committed during intrastate conflicts such as in Rwanda and Bosnia. **The “responsibility to protect” principle (R2P) was thereby born during the 2005 World Summit, which came to mean that all states have a responsibility to protect civilians from genocide, ethnic cleansing, war crimes or crimes against humanity (UN 2020b). In cases where a state couldn’t or wouldn’t fulfil this function, humanitarian intervention by the international community would be legitimate.** This is in line with the human security agenda that was promoted by the UN in the 1990s, as the security of individuals was to be prioritized over the protection of the state (Hampson 2013: 279). While it contradicts the thesis of realism with its focus on self-interested states, there have been debates on this new role for the UN and how successful it has actually been to use force to support human security objectives (Hampson 2013: 286). One main criticism is about the questions of interpretation. Who dictates when this responsibility is to be invoked? There have also been instances where unlawful intervention has been done in the name of R2P, such as in the case of Russia’s intervention in Georgia where they claimed to protect Russian citizens (Allison 2009: 178). However, the jointly accepted humanitarian intervention in Libya 2011 based on the R2P norm is an important example that illustrates how normative shifts driven by the UN can bring nations together to protect peace and security in the world. Both China and Russia agreed to humanitarian intervention, despite their traditional opposition to it, which stopped Qaddafi from proceeding with possible crimes against humanity (Bellamy 2013: 500). Beyond operational successes, the fact that the international community has agreed to legitimize action to protect human beings as such rather than states, and that there is a general understanding that states should not stand idly by while atrocities are committed, remain two key achievements for the UN in the realm of peace and security.

Organized Crime

The Security Council works to fight international organized crime

Borlini 21 – [Borlini, Leonardo. 2021. “The UN Security Council Faces Organized Crime.” *Journal of International Criminal Justice* 20 (4). Oxford University Press: 943–79. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1093/jicj/mqab076>.] Joel

[Leonardo Borlini is Associate Professor of International Law, Legal Department/Centre for Applied Research on International Markets, Banking, Finance and Regulation, University Bocconi.]

This article analyses **the United Nations (UN) Security Council’s (SC or Council) use of its powers under the UN Charter in the face of organized crime** by drawing on an empirical analysis of the Council’s resolutions as adopted over the past 20 years. It argues that **the UN executive organ, and its subsidiary bodies, have played an underexamined role in the fight against this challenge to international peace.** It has done so by adopting an approach to law enforcement that draws increasingly on domestic criminal justice discourse and techniques, including: investigations on crimes; sanctions and responsive regulation. Specifically, the article focuses on the Council’s experimentation with UN’s direct involvement in fact-finding related to organized crime, and on the evolution in the use of sanctions as a preventive and control mechanism, i.e., to prospectively manage risks to international peace and security generated by organized criminal activities and illicit markets. This article offers a detailed illustration of the Council’s engagement with organized crime and elucidates, including in quantitative terms, the different strategies that the UN executive body uses in dealing with organized crime. It then discusses the notion of ‘threat to peace’ in Article 39 of the UN Charter as the main legal vehicle for the extension of Council’s action to organized crime and illicit markets. Against this backdrop, the article examines the involvement of the UN subsidiary bodies in fact-finding and monitoring, as well as the integration of regulatory elements and private enforcement techniques into contemporary sanctions practice. **The article concludes by arguing that the Security Council’s complex response to organized crime demonstrates that the collective security system has evolved markedly.** From a systemic perspective, the Council may now be seen as exercising functions of law enforcement and regulation far from the kind of functions it was originally intended to exercise.