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Should the Membership and Veto Rights in the UNSC Be Reformed to Improve State Compliance with International Law?

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Abstract. The Security Council of the United Nations (UNSC) is pivotal in the maintenance of international law but its format—five permanent members (P5) with veto powers—has been accused of detracting from authority and compliance by states. This article investigates whether a change in UNSC membership and veto rights could improve compliance with its resolutions. The literature review synthesizes critiques from scholars like Mukerji, Fassbender, and Hurd, emphasizing the need for structural change amid geopolitical shifts. Using a qualitative multi-case study methodology, it compares and contrasts four case studies - the contemporary Russo-Ukrainian War (2022-present), the US-Israel relationship, the 1963-1965 partial reform and the 1979-1992 deadlock on developing country representation. These examples demonstrate how the misuse of veto power protects aggressor and allied states from being held accountable, the anachronistic P5 membership fails to represent the global power configuration, and previous reforms, which whilst symbolic, have not really tackled major inefficiencies. Three hypotheses are tested and supported: (1) veto rights are abused to protect national interests, paralyzing enforcement; (2) permanent membership lacks global representation, eroding credibility; and (3) previous reforms were ineffective in promoting compliance. Proposed changes include adding permanent seats for several democratic states in less well-represented regions (e.g., Africa, Latin America, India), limiting the use of the veto in atrocity-related matters, holding regular reviews, and broadening the involvement of non-members. Although Charter amendments under Article 108 are met with P5 opposition, incremental steps such as the voluntary renunciation of veto and the formation of coalitions of middle powers may help steer progress. Absent reform, the UNSC is in fact in danger of losing even further its authority, culminating in selective adherence and eventually international law fragmentation. This article finds that institutional transformation is necessary for a just and effective world-system.

Keywords: UN Security Council, Reform, Permanent Membership, Veto Right.

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1. Introduction

The UNSC plays a pivotal role in securing state compliance with international law. However, its legitimacy and effectiveness have been disputed for decades. Underlying these debates are issues of the structure adopted at the founding in relation to power concentrated among five permanent members (P5) and their use of the veto to prevent decisions. Detractors say that such a system erodes the Council's reputation, dilutes enforcement of its resolutions, and confines adherence to the national interest rather than collectivist self-defense. Supporters, on the other hand, maintain that the veto is essential to maintaining great power cooperation and to avoid gridlock in the world system.

This paper investigates to what extent, if at all, reform of UNSC membership and veto powers might enhance compliance with its decisions. By examining propositions such as representation enlargement, veto power restriction, and alternative decision-making procedures, this study explores whether institutional change can close the gulf between legal authority and enforcement. Through reference to historical cases, international legal bodies, and contemporary reform debates, the paper seeks to assess possibilities as well as limitations for reformation of the Council's role as a guarantor of international law.

2. Literature review

There is continual critique directed towards the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) regarding its controversial configuration which, in turn, significantly impairs its capability to foster adherence to international law. Mukerji offers the opinion that the malfunctions of the UNSC [1], as prescribed in the Article 27.3 of the UN Charter [2], are the consequence of the veto power wielded by the five permanent members (P5: US, Russia, China, France, UK) of the council, and has rendered the Council incapable of addressing the crises created by the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as the pandemic, the challenges of peacekeeping, and the problems of terrorism. According to him, there is within the unprecedented 75 years of history of the world, a "major failure" which is attributed to the political standoff created by the veto powers, as in the case of China stalling the Intergovernmental Negotiations (IGN) within the council since the 2016, while the other P5 members offered no resistance to the counter position, which nullified the General Assembly's right of the majority. Mukerji is an advocate of the Global South approach, pointing to India as a case in point of its peacekeeping record, sustainable development, and multilateral diplomacy, providing ample rationales for the position of a permanent member, suggesting that the gain in representation would improve the legitimacy, along with willingness to UNSC resolutions voluntarily.

Bardo Fassbender provides a historical and structural analysis of the reform pressure, noting that the UNSC's composition [3], fixed in 1945 with five permanent and ten non-permanent members, is seen as "insufficiently representative". He cites Kofi Annan's 2002 observation of a "stalled process" after a decade of discussions, reflecting a shift from early 1990s optimism to "ennui or resignation" among stakeholders. Fassbender identifies a North-South divide, with industrialized states resisting expansion to preserve efficiency, while developing nations push for greater representation, as seen in the African Group's call for a 26-member Council. He details reform efforts since 1992, including General Assembly Resolution 47/237 and the Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG), but highlights the deadlock over veto reform, with the P5 insisting on preserving their rights, as evidenced by the U.S. stance against any abridgement. Fassbender concludes that the Council's powers are a "precious, but at the same time precarious trust," yet geopolitical rivalries hinder revitalization.

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Ian Hurd offers a theoretical critique, challenging the assumption that expanding membership enhances legitimacy and compliance [4]. He outlines a four-step causal chain—inequality in membership leads to legitimacy loss, which reduces effectiveness, necessitating structural change to restore legitimacy and effectiveness. Hurd identifies five hypotheses linking membership to legitimacy: representativeness of the General Assembly, diversity, state presence, deliberation opportunities, and high-quality deliberation [4].

However, he finds these lacking empirical support, noting that disagreements over representation metrics and the scarcity of seats limit their plausibility. He suggests that "legitimacy talk" may mask political interests, with informal participation (e.g., Article 32 consultations) already mitigating some legitimacy gaps.

Collectively, these analyses underscore that the UNSC's unrepresentative membership and veto privileges erode its authority, impacting state compliance. Mukerji and Fassbender highlight the practical need for reform to reflect current geopolitics [1] [3], while Hurd cautions against oversimplifying legitimacy as a function of membership alone [4]. The veto's undemocratic nature, as noted by both Mukerji and Fassbender [1] [3], and the lack of consensus on representation, as Hurd critiques [4], suggest that structural reforms are essential but challenging under Article 108's stringent amendment process.

3. Possible ways of UNSC reform

To address the UNSC's unrepresentative membership and veto privileges and improve state compliance with international law, the following reforms can be pursued within existing international legal frameworks:

Expand Permanent and Non-Permanent Membership: Increase permanent seats to include emerging powers like India, Brazil, and a rotating African representative, alongside Germany and Japan, as proposed by Mukerji [1]. Add membership of the UNSC to improve its efficiency and transparency, as discussed in the OEWG [3], to enhance geographical representation under Article 23 [5]. This would align the Council with current geopolitical realities, potentially increasing perceived legitimacy and voluntary compliance, though Hurd's caution on metric disagreements requires clear criteria (e.g., peacekeeping contributions) [4].

Restrict Veto Power: Limit the veto to Chapter VII enforcement actions, as suggested by Fassbender, to reduce its undemocratic impact while preserving P5 influence. Require a double-veto (two P5 concurrences) for critical decisions, balancing power dynamics [3]. This reform, amendable under Article 108 [6], could mitigate the stalemates Mukerji cites, encouraging compliance by enhancing decision-making efficiency [1], though P5 resistanc necessitates diplomatic pressure [2].

Introduce a Periodic Review Mechanism: Adopt Germany's periodic review clause to reassess membership and veto rights every 15 years, ensuring adaptability to shifting global power [3]. This could be integrated into Article 23 via Charter amendment [5], fostering legitimacy and compliance by signaling responsiveness, addressing Hurd's trade-off concerns [4].

Enhance Deliberative Participation: Expand informal consultation rights under Article 32, as Hurd notes, to include non-members in deliberations, improving legitimacy without altering membership [4]. This cost-effective measure could boost compliance by involving marginalized states, aligning with Mukerji's equity focus [1].

These reforms, grounded in the UN Charter, aim to balance representation and efficiency, reducing the veto's paralyzing effect and enhancing legitimacy. A General Conference under Article 109 [7], as Mukerji proposes, might enable these reforms but only if they are able to overcome P5 resistance and secure two-thirds ratification [1]. By dealing with unrepresentativeness and veto

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powers, the UNSC may enhance state compliance with international law in the complex geopolitical environment of 2025.

4. Methodology

This study follows a qualitative multi-case study methodology that integrates legal analysis and cross-case analysis to examine the extent to which reforms of the United Nations Security Council's (UNSC) membership and the power of veto might have encouraged state observance of its rulings. The method of case studies permits exploration of causal mechanisms, strategic action in specific legal disputes as well as the comparison across different institutional environments. UN Charter requirements regarding the composition, powers, and voting procedures of the Security Council were likewise considered in cases. This requires careful analysis of the Charter's Articles 23–27, relevant General Assembly resolutions, and critical scholarly interpretations.

Four cases were selected for their relevance to the research question and their variation across historical and geopolitical contexts:

1. The Russo-Ukrainian War (2022–present) – illustrates how the veto has enabled a permanent member to block enforcement measures despite widespread international condemnation.
2. The U.S.–Israel relationship – highlights how veto use can shield allies from accountability, raising questions about selective compliance.
3. The 1963–1965 Partial Reform of UNSC membership – provides historical precedent for limited structural change, allowing analysis of its impact on legitimacy and compliance.
4. The 1979–1992 stalemate over representation of developing countries – demonstrates the persistence of legitimacy and representation concerns, particularly for Global South states marginalized within the UNSC framework.

Analysis proceeds in two steps. First, each case is examined through structured questions: What institutional dynamics shaped the outcome? How did veto rights or membership structure affect compliance with UNSC decisions? What does the case reveal about the relationship between legitimacy, enforcement, and compliance? Second, findings are compared across cases to identify broader patterns regarding how the UNSC's structure facilitates or undermines compliance.

This mixed legal and cross-case approach does not aim to generate statistically generalizable results but rather to provide normative and theoretical insights into the relationship between institutional design, state behavior, and compliance with international law. The methodology thus allows for both doctrinal evaluation of the UNSC's legal framework and empirical assessment of its operation in practice, offering a balanced basis for considering whether reform is necessary and feasible.

5. Hypotheses

This research paper argues that the UNSC has failed to regulate state compliance with international law nowadays.

Therefore, it is significant to find the main cause of the inefficiency of the UNSC and address the direction of UNSC reform. Through comprehensive legal and case studies, the paper suggests the following three hypotheses as the main reasons for the failure of the UNSC to promote state compliance.

H1: The veto right is abused in the UNSC. This hypothesis suggests that the UNSC members will abuse their veto right to prevent the UNSC from reconciling international affairs when it is related to the members' interests.

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This hypothesis is true. The veto was originally intended as a safeguard to secure great power consensus, but practice shows it is repeatedly used to shield P5 states and their allies from accountability rather than to facilitate peace. In the Russo-Ukrainian War, Russia vetoed a resolution backed by 11 members, blocking even minimal fact-finding or ICC referrals. Similarly, the U.S.–Israel relationship demonstrates long-term U.S. veto use to blunt accountability for occupation-related disputes. Even where no single veto was cast, as in the 1979–1992 stalemate, the structural threat of veto ensured that reform proposals never advanced. These cases show a pattern where veto power is not exercised to preserve international peace, but to insulate self-interest or alliances.

H2: The permanent membership of UNSC lacks representation. This hypothesis states that the current P5 membership is outdated and can no longer represent the majority of countries all over the world. Thus their decisions cannot perfectly benefit the globe.

This hypothesis is also justified by the case studies. The P5 reflects the power distribution of 1945, not today's international order. By the 1960s, decolonization had added dozens of new states from Africa and Asia, yet the 1963–1965 reform only marginally increased non-permanent seats, leaving P5 dominance intact. In the 1979–1992 stalemate, the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) pushed for permanent representation for developing countries, but Cold War superpower rivalry blocked reform. In contemporary practice, the Russo-Ukrainian War and U.S.–Israel shielding demonstrate how decisions can diverge sharply from the majority of UN members, as the General Assembly votes overwhelmingly to condemn aggression or occupation, but the Council remains paralyzed by P5 interests.

H3: The previous reforms regarding the UNSC have been ineffective. This hypothesis indicates that the previous reforms of the UNSC did not effectively improve the efficiency of the UNSC to carry out decisions and promote global peace.

Based on the previous case analysis, this hypothesis can also be proven true. The only major reform, the 1963–1965 expansion, added non-permanent seats but left veto power untouched. This cosmetic adjustment did not improve the UNSC's efficiency in crisis response. The 1979–1992 stalemate shows a complete inability to advance reforms despite widespread recognition of legitimacy deficits. The persistence of paralysis in the Russo-Ukrainian War and the entrenched U.S. veto pattern on Israel confirm that past reforms failed to resolve the Council's structural incapacity: coercive power remains monopolized by the P5.

6. Case studies

6.1. Russo-Ukrainian war

The full-scale escalation of the conflict in Ukraine alongside Russia in 2022 revealed one of the persistent frail frameworks of the UN Security Council: the Council's inability to act when the aggressor happens to be one of the permanent members [8]. Having geopolitical conflicts of a lifetime, the war unleashed Russian forces, devastating cities like Kyiv, Kharkiv and Mariupol concurrently, forming one of the largest humanitarian crises the world has seen. Even so, despite the gravity of the situation and widespread condemnation, the Council failed to deliver any effective response due to Russia's veto.

This outcome was not accidental but rather a predictable manifestation of the organizational design entrenched in Article 27(3) of the UN Charter [1], which grants each of the five permanent members (P5) the ability to block substantive decisions. The veto was intended as a safeguard for great power consensus after World War II, ensuring that the UN would not act against a major power without its consent. Still, in this case, it became a shield for impunity. When the Council introduced

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a resolution condemning the invasion and calling for Russian withdrawal, 11 members voted in favor—but Russia's negative vote rendered the resolution void. The resolution failed due to Russia's negative vote [9].

From a legal perspective, the Council had clear authority under Chapter VII to determine that the invasion constituted a breach of the peace and to authorize coercive measures. Yet the systemic reality was that no such determination could be made without P5 unanimity. The fallback mechanism—invoking the General Assembly's "Uniting for Peace" resolution—did produce condemnations, but these were non-binding and carried only political weight. This exposed the gap between the Council's formal mandate under Article 24 to maintain peace and its actual operational capacity when a permanent member's interests are at stake.

The implications for international law and compliance were significant. The veto's use here did not just block action on Ukraine; it also indicated to the international community that the rules-based order is conditional on the political will of the powerful. This perception weakens the deterrent effect of the UN system, erodes confidence in collective security, and emboldens states to defy international norms if they can rely on great power protection. In practical terms, enforcement shifted to fragmented avenues—unilateral sanctions, ad hoc coalitions, and proceedings before the ICC and ICJ—none of which matched the global legitimacy or enforcement capacity the UNSC was designed to provide.

As a framework-level failure, the episode sharpened debates over reform [8]. Opponents of the status quo assert that the use of the veto in the case of aggression or mass atrocities should be limited or suspended, perhaps through voluntary P5 restraint or Charter amendment. Others propose expansion of membership to diminish the dominance of a geostrategic elite over global governance.

In both instances, the global war on terror suggests that the Council's ability to defend, through the use of force, the compliance of international law—especially its most powerful members—remains critically lacking. Ultimately, the way the UNSC addressed the Russo-Ukrainian War reflects the core dilemma of the research question: the current membership and veto structure, instead of preserving global stability, threatens the global order that the Council is supposed to protect. Reform is not simply about making the Council more efficient; it means regaining its credibility and authority at a time when a major breach of peace is being threatened.

6.2. US-Israel relationship

The U.S. has deployed a full range of diplomatic, lobbying, maneuvering, and using, in particular, the veto of the Security Council, to protect Israel from both constructive UN action and the other parts of the world from censuring Israel [10]. This has been the case during multiple crises: the large-scale hostilities in Gaza and Lebanon, the settlement policy and occupation-related measures, the police actions of trying to find out if they accepted more than enough violations of the rules of international humanitarian or human-rights law [11]. Whenever there is excessive condemnation of Israeli actions, there is a subtle, and sometimes not, effort from the US to cover and restrict the UN actions which could otherwise lead to Israel being bound to flexibility or sustain enforcement.

This case occurred due to geopolitics, domestic politics, and the management of strategic alliances. The U.S.-Israel relationship continues to be reinforced with the strategic, intelligence, and military connections, and strong domestic political backing in the U.S. Every U.S. president has considered Israel to be a critical partner in the region, and has repeatedly prioritized the bilateral relationship over multilateral pressures that would cause strain. Furthermore, U.S. policymakers have routinely been cautious of the idea that actions proposed by the UN would result in stability, productive results, or other favorable outcomes. In light of domestic political factors, that skepticism

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translated to the frequent use of vetoes or other diplomatic means that were perceived as punitive toward Israel.

Highlighting the boundaries of the UN as a system, the law alongside the rest of the activities is of secondary importance. How a system runs and operates gets influenced primarily by how the charter distributes and delegates authority. It assigns the Security Council the first and foremost role of maintaining international peace and order. It further empowers the Security Council, in Chapter VII, to adopt measures of a mandatory and enforcement character. Human rights law and international humanitarian law, in particular, the law of occupation and the Fourth Geneva Convention, fit in this case. This legal framework checks the behavior of a state in relation to the activities of settlement, hostilities, and the treatment of the civilian population. But the primary legal competence of the Council is still a matter of political consideration. Article 27(3) [1], the so-called P5 veto, empowers each of the permanent members to sink any constructive outcome of a political discussion. It follows then that legal rights and legal remedies may be obstructed by the Council due to support from a powerful ally of the state accused of breaking the law. The outcome is a paradox: on the one hand, a set of legal rules are available, and on the other hand, the crucial system of the UN which is allowed to make the rules instructions is politically blocked to give instructions.

Two purely organizational consequences appear. First, the U.S. obstruction of any move to punish Israel in the Council is illustrative. Deflections from primary responsibility are met only from the mostly optional and non-binding resolutions of the General Assembly, the reports of special rapporteurs, initiatives from regional groups, the temporary coalitions, and, only in the end, international courts and tribunals-- and that, of course, is when jurisdictional and political barriers are absent. These channels can generate moral pressure and selective sanctions, but they do not have the cohesive, binding enforcement power that the Security Council could theoretically exert. Second, the repetition of blockages to law enforcement ultimately not only undermines the impartiality and legitimacy of council decisions, assessment of the position of the UN itself as a non-biased third party to disputants, but also contributes to parallel unilateral or coalitionist acts (sanctions or counter sanctions beyond what is legally mandated by the UN), which enhances fragmentation within international law.

What this case illustrates, in addition to one state with allies that can protect it from attack or whose veto straightforwardly defers blame among other cases, is that the veto serves structurally as a mechanism for deflecting or dispersing accountability elsewhere than at the Council level great-power interest parties are engaged [10]. The actions of the U.S. point to how alliance politics and domestic political calculations in a P-5 party state can, over time, generate a systemic incentive for making utilitarian exceptions to collective enforcement. It also serves to demonstrate the extent to which the power of international law derives from a combination of institutional design and political commitment: where the Council is disabled, law has migrated back to more or less robust fora.

In relation to the research question: What is international relations? How does U.S. and Israel alliance rationalize membership and veto reform to ensure greater UN DSC resolutions compliance? The reaction has been overwhelmingly for reform. If keeping and maintaining peace and security throughout the world are among the most fundamental functions of the Security Council, its ability to respond rapidly and undistracted by party political considerations once proof of serious violations has been established is vital in order to contribute to deterrence and the maintenance of compliance. The US has a veto on anything that happens with respect to Israel, which is why that capacity no longer exists; it is the power of vetoing by the US that tells us that first-line allies are not being serviced by the Council. By implication, this makes the Council impotent in the world and creates more rags of global compliance with international law.

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6.3. The 1963–1965 partial reform

The 1963–1965 reform of the UN Security Council is typically celebrated as a success: the first and only change in the composition of the Council since its establishment. Yet, upon closer scrutiny, it is a clear instance of how the legal architecture of the UN Charter perpetuates and mitigates change to mere tweaking in favor of and undermining the revolt by the P5 [12].

By the early 1960s, the Security Council's structure was visibly misaligned with the UN's demographic reality. Membership had swelled from 51 in 1945 to over 110 states, driven largely by the wave of decolonization in Africa and Asia [13]. Newly independent states, now a significant majority in the General Assembly, argued that the Council's composition was Eurocentric and failed to represent the political and geographic diversity of the UN. They pressed for systemic reforms: new permanent seats for developing countries, more non-permanent seats, and a limitation — if not outright abolition — of the veto power.

The 1963 outcome of the General Assembly resolution changed the charter to add four non-permanent seats to the council, increasing the total non-permanent seats from six to ten, and total council membership from eleven to fifteen [12]. This change, which came into effect in 1965, was achieved through the amendment process of Chapter 108 of the UN Charter, which necessitates a General Assembly in the ratio of 2:1 and approval of all the P5 countries for ratification. The legal mechanism is critical here: because any amendment demands unanimous P5 ratification, counterproposals, which had the possibility of changing the rules for permanent membership or the veto, were politically dead. The only viable option was one that guaranteed the P5 countries all of their privileges, while providing at least some compensation to the other member countries [14]. This outcome contributes to the already existing tension in the UN system: While the charter remains a legal pathway for reformation in the UN system, the pathway is designed to favor the P5 the most.

Geographical representation was enhanced with the 1965 expansion and more rotating seats were given to the African, Asian, and Latin American regions [14]. However, the concentration of coercive power was still in the hands of the five P5 states, each of which had unilateral veto power. The reform thus functioned more of a legitimacy-preserving measure rather than a recalibration of global governance, which works as a symbolic adaptation that relieved pressure without altering the balance of power.

From the standpoint of the organization, this episode illustrates how the UN legal framework architecture restricts reform and funnels it into patterns that perpetuate the same forms of hierarchy [14]. The refusal to address the veto, even when the overwhelming majority supported such painful changes, demonstrates how the consent of the P5 to any proposed change turns legal procedure into a political shield for great power privilege. Practically, the reform of 1963-1965 functioned as a warning and a precedent at the same time It demonstrated that changes of a certain magnitude are achievable within the framework of the Charter, but that any effort aimed at comprehensive change will face the same deep-seated legal and political obstacles.

This case offers a sobering conclusion for the controversy of the legitimacy of the UNSC. If one's hypothesis is that meaningful reform is framework-levelly improbable under the current Charter framework, the 1965 expansion provides early empirical support. The reform's limited scope was not the result of a lack of political will among the majority of states, but rather the organizational reality that the very actors whose power would be diminished hold an unassailable veto over the process. In this sense, the 1963–1965 partial reform was less a step toward democratization of the Council than a demonstration of the durability of post-1945 power arrangements.

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6.4. The 1979–1992 stalemate on representation of developing countries

Between 1979 and 1992, the debate on reform of the Security Council was stuck in a motionless paralysis determined by the ever louder clamor of that half to be treated more justly, and for earthquake resistant Cold War geopolitics [15]. But the precedent is already there, with the end of the cold war and superpower competition in general — not to mention an old set of legal architecture with the UN Charter and its logic trapping systemic reform for over 10 years.

The way in which the Security Council was composed had actually been less representative than it had been in 1965. The Non-Aligned Movement(NAM), composed primarily of some newly independent countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America at that time, called for the addition of two more permanent seats for developing countries (one each from Africa and Asia) and also requested bloc voting to extend to non-Permanent members [15]. The dominance of the council by a group of World War II victors was explicitly contradicted by the number of UN member states in 1945. There was now an enlarged membership and a new geopolitical focus on the Global South.

Nevertheless, according to Article 108 of the UN charter, far-reaching proposals for changes regarding the UNSC imply ratification by all of the permanent five members [6]. This one provision allowed the US as well as Russia to retain its dominance then during the cold war. Both superpowers saw the composition of the Security Council as a zero-sum issue: growing developing countries, or changing veto rules would not only weaken their own relative positions but also tip the balance of power within the Council in ways that could benefit the rival bloc. Security Council reform was quickly set back by the Cold War. NAM was also, however, successful in drawing out the issue at the UN, with efforts to foster a definitive decision on hold from the permanent members [15]. They employed parliamentary tricks, shunting debates into nonbinding forums or imploring that reform was too early in a time of global instability. Reform was also made especially hard by the requirement in the UN Charter that all new amendments required approval from all five permanent members. That, in practical terms, meant approval from both Washington and Moscow — hardly likely in the charged atmosphere of the 1980s.

The result was a complete logjam: Not one formal Charter amendment of any kind passed, even as many recognized that the Council's credibility took a hit. The deadlock demonstrated how in some geopolitical settings the Charter's high bar for transformation is not really an obstacle as much as a brick wall. It also highlighted a fundamental paradox at the heart of UN governance: The very powers whose greater acquiescence would render those reforms less necessary are the ones who must endorse that Council to act on matters of peace and security.

The stalemate of the period between 1979 and 1992 is a cautionary reminder of how slow the Security Council can be to change over time, but also how it can become entirely paralyzed when members with P5 status perceive their critical interests are threatened [15]. More broadly, it suggests that the Council's legitimacy deficit is not simply something created by its 1945-vintage provenance. It also stems from a legal design that solidifies power disparities and makes the institution unusually prone to paralysis when superpower rivalries heat up.

7. Implications

The results of this essay demonstrate that the current configuration of the UNSC—including its institutionalised veto wielding and obsolete permanent membership—compromises both international legal legitimacy and UNSC effectiveness. In revealing how the veto is systemically manipulated in the pursuit of national interest, and how non-representation of certain areas like Africa, Latin America and some parts of Asia undermines credibility of the Council, this essay

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illustrates that international law cannot be as neutral and universally binding as it has frequently been portrayed by legal scholarship. Furthermore, the failure of previous efforts for reform indicate that changing the structure is not a question of institutional fine-tuning but about addressing underlying power imbalances in the international order. These findings are important because they challenge us to move from conceptions of international law as a neutral idea of collective security, to one that is grounded in political hierarchies and arbitrary rule enforcement. They debunk scholarly narratives that celebrate the stabilizing role of the Council by uncovering how its design promotes inequality and invites non-compliance in practice. It follows from acknowledging these dynamics that future discussions of compliance cannot be disassociated from the issue of structural reform – and that the reform of veto rights and membership is not only desirable, but rather necessary for the credibility and universality of international law.

8. Conclusion

This paper aims to prove that the UNSC still needs reforms to cut veto rights and include more member nations to improve its efficiency. There may be a counterargument saying that we should not increase the membership of the UNSC but to cut the membership, because the inefficiency of the UNSC is caused by the conflicts between member nations who have different interests. If we cut the membership, then there will be less interest conflicts. This counterargument is completely wrong, because a limited number of member nations may cause dictatorship of the UNSC. The member nations will make decisions on behalf of the UNSC totally out of their own interests, which can make the UNSc even less efficient.

In order to improve the efficiency of the UNSC, I recommend that the veto power of the permanent five (P5) should be limited or conditioned so that it cannot be exercised in cases of mass atrocities, genocide, or severe breaches of international peace. Additionally, the composition of the Council should be restructured to include permanent representation from underrepresented regions such as Africa, Latin America, and South Asia, ensuring greater legitimacy and inclusiveness.

Without reform, the UNSC risks further erosion of credibility, declining compliance with its decisions, and an increasing perception that international law serves only the most powerful states. Reform would enhance both the legitimacy and fairness of the Council, thereby improving compliance by states that would view its decisions as more representative and less politically biased.

Reform requires amending the UN Charter under Article 108, [6] which necessitates the approval of two-thirds of the General Assembly, including all permanent members of the Security Council. While this poses a challenge, reform could be advanced gradually through negotiated frameworks: for example, voluntary political commitments by the P5 to restrain veto use in humanitarian crises (such as the "Responsibility Not to Veto" initiative), coupled with incremental expansion of both permanent and non-permanent seats to reflect current geopolitical realities.

The initiative must be led by a coalition of middle powers and regional organizations (e.g., the African Union, ASEAN, MERCOSUR, and the European Union), supported by civil society advocacy networks and legal scholars. These actors can generate the political momentum needed to pressure the P5 into acknowledging that reform is not only a matter of fairness but also of maintaining the Council's long-term relevance.

The immediate step is to build consensus among the General Assembly on a unified reform model, narrowing down competing proposals (such as the G4, the African Union's Ezulwini Consensus, and the Uniting for Consensus group). Once a consolidated reform agenda is agreed upon, member states can begin sustained diplomatic engagement with the P5, leveraging

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reputational pressure and framing reform as essential to preserving the Council's authority in the twenty-first century.

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