



ODUMUNC 2026 Issue Brief United Nations Special Session on UN Reform



Ensuring the effectiveness of the Security Council in international peace and security

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Introduction

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) remains the principal organ responsible for maintaining international peace and security. Since its establishment in 1945, it has played a pivotal role in authorizing peacekeeping missions, imposing sanctions, and addressing conflicts.

Yet, global dissatisfaction with the effectiveness of the Security Council, its ability to solve international problems, is growing continuously. Interpretation of the UN Charter, particularly Chapters VI, VII, VIII, and XII, has exposed a persistent gap between what is expected of the Security Council and what is practically achievable. Global frustration has never been so great.

Ongoing, unresolved conflicts in Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gaza, Myanmar, across

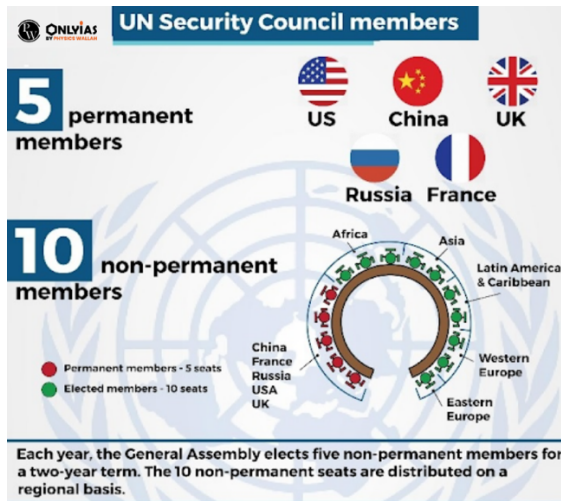
much of Northern Africa, Sudan and Ukraine reveal the Council's limited effectiveness. Unable to get what they want from the Security Council, decision-makers can turn to alternative mechanisms, including regional organizations and ad hoc fact-finding missions, unilateral action, bilateral relations, armed factions and mercenary groups (Le He 2025).



The increasing complexity of global conflict further undermines the UNSC's legitimacy. Contemporary threats extend beyond traditional interstate wars to include insurgencies, terrorism, interference of non-state actors, and widespread disregard for international norms.

In many instances, the Council failed to reach consensus. It was unable to act, largely due to entrenched rivalries and the structural dominance of the Permanent Five members (P5) through their veto power, which frequently paralyzes decision-making. While UNSC resolutions, peacekeeping missions, and partnerships, such as those with the African Union, have provided temporary relief, they often fall short of delivering sustainable solutions (Tadesse 2025; Mazurova 2024).

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The UN has not been passive. The evolving role of the UN in peace and security is reflected in initiatives such as the rollout and drawdown of MINUSMA in Mali, Resolution 2719 (2023) on financing AU peace operations, and reform efforts like the Action for Peacekeeping (A4P+) initiative. These efforts highlight both the potential and the operational challenges facing UN peacekeeping, including funding, technological adaptation, and the implementation of the Declaration of Shared Commitments.

Despite such measures, the Council's structural limitations and lack of impact fuel calls for reform, particularly from underrepresented regions such as Africa and Latin America, which argue that the UNSC no longer reflects contemporary geopolitical realities (UNSCR 2023; UN Peacekeeping).

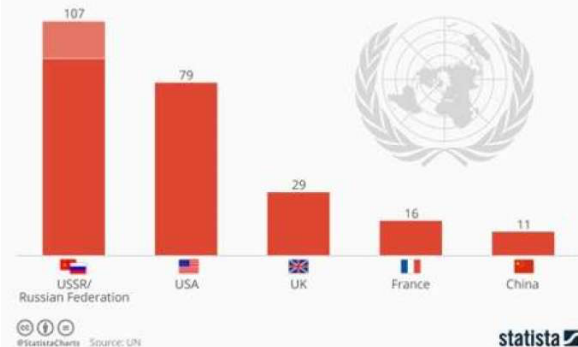
Proposals for reform to improve effectiveness range from abolishing or limiting the veto to expanding both permanent and non-permanent membership in order to improve equity and representation. However, such reforms face significant obstacles, including the rigidity of the UN Charter, the entrenched interests of powerful

states, and the risk of destabilizing fragile international relations.

This issue brief critically examines the effectiveness of the UNSC and explores innovative reform options, such as a dual veto system and equitable regional representation, that could strengthen its capacity to uphold international peace and security while respecting state sovereignty and institutional stability (Archibugi, Cellini, and Malgieri 2025, 6-8).

Who Vetoes the Most in the UN?

Number of UN Security Council resolutions vetoed by permanent members 1946-2017



Background

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) was established on 24 October 1945, following the end of World War II. As one of the six principal organs of the United Nations, it is entrusted with the primary responsibility of maintaining international peace and security. Under Chapter V, Article 23 of the UN Charter, the UNSC was originally composed of eleven members: five permanent members—China, France, the Soviet Union (now the Russian Federation), the United Kingdom, and the United States—and six non-permanent members elected by the General Assembly for two-year terms, with consideration given to contributions



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to international peace and security as well as equitable geographical distribution (UN Charter 1945).

In 1965, Security Council membership was expanded to fifteen, with ten non-permanent (rotating) members now elected on the basis of regional representation. The current allocation provides five seats for African and Asia-Pacific states (three for Africa and two for Asia-Pacific), two for Latin America and the Caribbean, two for Western Europe and other states, and one for Eastern Europe. This distribution is intended to ensure a fairer balance of representation across the UN membership.

The functions and powers of the UNSC are outlined in Chapters VI, VII, VIII, and XII of the Charter. However, the Council's effectiveness has long been undermined by the veto power of the permanent five (P5). Article 27 grants the P5 the authority to block substantive decisions, except for procedural votes. This dominance has often paralyzed the Council in responding to threats to peace, breaches of peace, and acts of aggression. Consequently, scholars and member states have increasingly advocated for reforms to address these structural gaps, which continue to hinder the UNSC's ability to safeguard international security and stability.

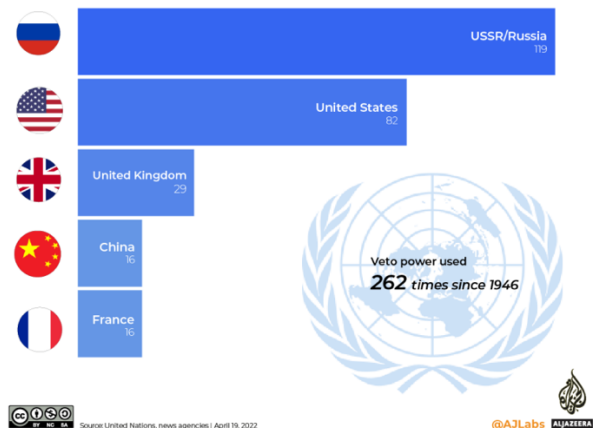
In recent times, a combination of global crises has further exposed the limitations of the United Nations Security Council. Russia's invasion of Ukraine, escalated from 2022 onward, and the protracted Israel-Gaza conflict that has expanded into the Israel-Iran confrontation in 2025, rooted in longstanding hostility, ideological rivalry, nuclear armament, and shifting political dynamics, pose threats not only to the Middle East but also to international stability (Ellis 2025). Similarly, persistent crises across Africa

and the Sahel, combined with the intensifying strategic competition between China, the Russian Federation and the United States have strained the Council's capacity to reach consensus on major conflicts.

UNITED NATIONS

Who vetoed the most at the UN?

The five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council have the right to veto or stop a resolution from being passed. Here's how many times each country has used their veto power since the first veto in 1946 to February 25, 2022:



As a result, the UNSC has increasingly relied on procedural alternatives such as fact-finding missions, press statements, and provisional rules of procedure rather than formal resolutions. At the same time, the more frequent use of vetoes or the threat of their use on core political issues and draft legislation, together with the reliance on mechanisms such as the Arria-formula meetings to voice positions outside formal consensus, has highlighted the Council's paralysis in the face of great power rivalry and alliance politics. These developments have intensified calls from the wider UN membership for meaningful reform to restore the Council's credibility and effectiveness (SCR 2020).

Security Council shortcomings are widely regarded as multidimensional, partially structural (the UN Charter), but worsened by the



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shifting geopolitical landscape. The rise of new regional powers, changes in alliances, and the spread of conflict into new regions challenge the Council's ability to respond effectively.

The growing influence of nonstate actors, including terrorist organizations, multinational corporations, and insurgent groups, has further complicated global security governance. These actors often operate outside the traditional state-centered framework, making it difficult for the Council to adopt and enforce cohesive resolutions.

The interaction of these factors underscores the urgent need for reform and adaptation within the Security Council to address contemporary security challenges more effectively. Recognizing these multidimensional failures is essential for developing strategies that strengthen international peacekeeping and conflict resolution, and in turn contribute to a more stable and secure international order (Stojkovski 2025, 32).

Critiques frequently highlight the contested legitimacy of the UNSC in operational practice. This concern stems primarily from the absence of a permanent UN military capability, which obliges the organization to depend on the voluntary troop contributions of member states for peacekeeping operations, as contained in Article 43. Furthermore, Article 18 demonstrates that the effectiveness of Security Council resolutions is not solely determined within the Council itself but is contingent upon the broader political will of the General Assembly, where securing a two-thirds majority on substantive and procedural matters remains a persistent challenge.

Legitimacy concerns are further compounded by the Council's decision-making procedures.

According to Article 27 of the Charter, substantive matters require at least nine affirmative votes, including the concurrence of all five permanent members (P5), thereby institutionalizing the veto. Procedural matters, by contrast, require only nine affirmative votes without P5 concurrence.

This structural imbalance grants disproportionate influence to the permanent members, often at the expense of broader international consensus. These dynamics underscore the structural limitations of the UN's collective security framework and raise questions regarding the Council's capacity to act as an effective guarantor of international peace and security (Joseph 2024)

Current Situation

These problems of effectiveness culminate in the inability of the UN Security Council to end conflicts. The Council can *intervene* in conflicts and against state's violating international laws and norms, in the UN sense of making decisions, taking action. But these interventions, ranging from fact-finding missions and requesting reports by the UN Secretary-General, to trade sanctions, arms embargos and even authorization of peacekeeping missions, rarely lead to the solution of these situations. Some peacekeeping missions have gone on for decades. The Middle East peacekeeping mission dates to 1948 and the Cyprus mission started in 1964.

There is growing recognition that Security Council, in its current design, cannot solve such conflicts. The main challenges confronting the UNSC include veto abuse, lack of



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representativeness, and procedural opacity, as well as lack of resources and above all, lack of agreement for action. These issues significantly influence the effectiveness of the UNSC's international peace and security agenda, especially in the context of ongoing conflicts and existential threats that jeopardize global stability.

Veto abuse, where permanent members of the Security Council utilize their veto power to protect their unique national interests by blocking resolutions that harm them or their allies, often hampers decisive action in conflict zones, thereby prolonging instability and suffering. The lack of representativeness stems from the limited composition of the Security Council, which does not adequately reflect the current geopolitical realities, leading to perceptions of bias and unfairness that undermine its legitimacy and authority. Procedural opacity further complicates decision-making processes, reducing transparency and accountability, which can erode trust among member states and the global community. The unwillingness of countries to contribute the funding, personnel or diplomatic muscle to make sanction or peacekeeping work is a related barrier.

These issues were highlighted during a UN meeting and press briefing on 20 November 2018, when General Assembly President María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés reiterated ongoing debates concerning Security Council reform and restructuring. She emphasized the persistent lack of consensus on the mechanisms for implementing such reforms, despite more than two decades of sustained efforts to achieve agreement (UN 2018).

These structural issues are intertwined with the broader international system's inherent anarchy,

characterized by the absence of a central authority to enforce peace and security universally. As a result, the UNSC's ability to respond effectively to conflicts and threats of annihilation is compromised, often leading to delayed or inadequate interventions. As Park notes, the strategic use of veto power by the Permanent Five (P5) members renders them not only influential but also complicit in perpetuating global insecurity.

Ideally, international anarchy should function to preserve order through shared responsibility, rather than be manipulated by the political interests of the P5 within the Council. Addressing these challenges requires comprehensive reforms aimed at enhancing the Council's representativeness, limiting the misuse of veto power, and increasing procedural transparency. Such reforms are essential to strengthen the UNSC's capacity to maintain international peace and security in an increasingly complex and interconnected world, ensuring that it can adapt to contemporary geopolitical dynamics and effectively manage ongoing and emerging threats (Park 2022).

The effectiveness of the UNSC in fostering peace varies depending on the context and the willingness of conflicting parties to cooperate. In some cases, the Council's interventions have led to significant reductions in violence and the establishment of ceasefires, as seen in certain peacekeeping operations in Africa and the Middle East. However, in other instances, geopolitical interests and veto powers within the Council have hindered decisive action, limiting the impact of its initiatives. To promote lasting stability, the UNSC has initiated various strategies, including diplomatic engagement, peace negotiations, and post-conflict reconstruction efforts. These approaches aim to



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address root causes of conflicts, such as political marginalization, economic disparities, and ethnic tensions. The success of these strategies depends on multiple factors, including international support, regional cooperation, and the commitment of local stakeholders.

Overall, while the UNSC has achieved notable successes in certain conflicts, such as in Timor Leste in the 1990s and West Africa in the early 2000s (Core d'Ivoire, Liberia and Sierra Leone), its effectiveness remains constrained by political dynamics and the complex nature of modern conflicts. Continuous efforts to reform the Security Council, enhance its authority, and foster greater cooperation among member states are essential for improving its capacity to maintain global peace and security (Ajisebiyawo and Usuanlele 2025, p. 16).

Democratic Republic of the Congo (DR Congo or DRC) Conflict: The death toll of Congolese is estimated to be around two million and rising. The conflict ongoing in DRC has a long history of recurring wars, external and regional interventions, and disregard for international humanitarian laws, which can be traced to post-colonial interest, social and political power struggles over vast, valuable natural resources. DRC is endowed with diamonds, gold, cobalt, and other minerals, which are found in the Mbuji-Mayi and Ituri regions in significant quantities. Since the 1990s, DRC has experienced hostilities from armed groups of internal and external nature, such as the 23 March Movement (M23), Aligned Armed Groups (ADF), Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), and Mai-Mai militias. The Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC) have resisted this insurgency and suffered multiple interventions from the UNSC in an attempt to

restore stability to the DRC and restrain the violent activities of rebel groups such as the M23 that are allegedly supported by the Rwanda government (UNSC 2025).

Several resolutions have been passed by the UNSC established UN peacekeeping in the DRC. The United Nations Mission in Congo (MONUC) started in 1999 through Resolution 1279 to facilitate the implementation of the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement and the protection of civilians. It was followed by the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in Congo (MONUSCO) under Resolution 1925 in 2010, which has remained in existence to date, with 13,500 military personnel, at its high.

An effort to come to an amicable agreement has proven fruitless. The UNSC, in 2022-2023, initiated the discussion on the gradual withdrawal of the MONUSCO from DRC. An extension was made for one year, which is to end on 20th December 2025, under Resolution 2765. The UNSC has been criticized for the gradual reduction of the military forces of the MONUSCO, which has been associated with the failures of the UNSC to sustain peace and prevent aggression (UN 2023b; Abdul 2025).

Israel–Gaza Conflict: Following the Hamas attack on Israel on 7 October 2023, the Israel-Hamas conflict has escalated, intensifying global polarization as major powers align with opposing sides, thereby fueling their geopolitical rivalry and competition.

The involvement of the UNSC has been characterized by political divisions between the permanent members on how best to protect their allies' interests, ensure disproportionate force is not used by Israel in its right to self-defense, and prevent a humanitarian crisis. Duman and



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Rakipoğlu say UNSC decision-making ability has been paralyzed by the US's veto and influence over priorities. The US alliance with intensified the debated over the abuse of veto powers by the P5 where it suits their internal foreign interest than the letters of the UN Charter (Duman and Rakipoğlu 2025). Left unclear is whether stronger resolutions by the Security Council, without a veto, would have any effect on the fighting. There also is the danger such a vote would lead the United States to quit the UN entirely.

China, the Russian Federation and some non-permanent members have maintained the position that the Palestinian civilian population should be protected from the hostilities of the Israel-Hamas conflict, while France and the United Kingdom side with Israel's right to self and collective defense, however, emphasizing restraint of force based on the principle of equal aggression (Khan, Jawad, and Imdad 2025, p. 2777).

Several ceasefire-related draft resolutions have been brought before the UN Security Council for a vote. The United States had exercised its veto power on Gaza-Israel five times, most recently on 4 June 2025, , blocking resolutions that called for an immediate and permanent humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza (Mounira Elsamra 2025). Again, ending the veto would permit stronger resolutions, but their effect on fighting can only be guessed.

China and the Russian Federation employed their veto power on 22 March 2024, opposing a ceasefire resolution on the grounds that it was ambiguous, failed to assign accountability to Israel, and lacked clear enforcement mechanisms. The UN General Assembly intervened by adopting a Gaza ceasefire resolution, a move motivated by the UNSC's

several failures to pass a similar resolution. This resolution was adopted by 149 member states in favor, with 12 against, 19 abstaining and 13 not participating (Aljazeera 2024).

Russia–Ukraine Conflict: The UNSC has been heavily involved in the Russia-Ukraine conflict since Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 and especially after the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. Its involvement has been shaped by sharp divisions among the permanent members, particularly Russia's veto power.

After the Russian aggression on Ukraine in 2022, the UNSC convened an emergency meeting to demand that Russia withdraw its forces from Ukrainian territory, which was vetoed by China and the Russian Federation, voted against by India, and abstained by the UAE. The lack of consensus by the UNSC on adopting a resolution caused the intervention of the UNGA under the uniting for peace procedure, and recognizing the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine.

The UNSC adopted a Resolution on 24 February 2025 (UN News 2023b). Resolution 2774 avoided Russia's veto by on offering a symbolic effort to reach a peaceful settlement. The Resolution addressed the mourning loss of life. It got 10 votes in favor and none against, while Denmark, France, Greece, Slovenia, and the United Kingdom abstained. Because of the veto, the Council cannot pass resolutions that target Russia or refer to it as the aggressor. Left unclear is whether stronger resolutions by the Security Council, without a veto, would have any effect on the fighting. There also is the danger that such a vote, targeting Russia, would lead the Russian Federation to quit the UN entirely.



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The contending issues of law on state's right to defense and determination have blurred any diplomatic efforts by the UNSC to reach an amicable solution (UN Press 2025). The resulting passivity, it is argued, serves only to embolden aggressors by signaling a lack of resistance to their actions. This legitimizes conquest and encourages further territorial expansion and fuels unprovoked conflict.

These developments have sparked calls for reform aimed at maintaining international peace while ensuring the structural integrity and balance of the UNSC are not compromised. Furthermore, the UNSC has frequently been unable to effectively prevent the outbreak of conflicts or to reinforce international security, whether directly or indirectly, in states such as Syria, Sudan, and Iran, as well as in contexts involving non-state actors and ethnic insurgencies. As a result, conflicts persist, humanitarian crises worsen, and the credibility of the UNSC as a guarantor of international peace and security is increasingly undermined (Ade-Ibijola 2015; Aurobinda Mahapatra 2016, 8).

The role of the UN on this issue

The United Nations, through the Security Council, tries to contribute to international peace and security by establishing mechanisms that strengthen conflict management and resolution. The UN framework emphasizes the non-violent settlement of disputes, reducing the need for direct deployment of UN peacekeeping missions. It has also fosters cooperation with alternative organizations such as the partnership between the UN and the European Union (on the

former Yugoslavia), and the UN and the African Union (on Somalia). In addition, the UNSC has advanced structural procedures for the withdrawal and termination of UN-led missions at the request of host countries, enabling them to assume sovereign responsibility for internal stability and security.

The Council is capable of learning. Its approach to conflict resolution has developed greatly since the 1990s, learning by doing, always evolving. Three conflict situations below illustrate the Council's evolving approach. Together, these highlight how the UN seeks to adapt its strategies to enhance the effectiveness of global peace and security efforts, despite persistent challenges. They show the Council getting somewhat more effective, but with much further progress needed

Drawdown of MINUSMA in Mali: Resolution 2690 on 30 June 2023 was an historic break with UN precedents. Previously the Council always stressed peacekeeping. Now the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), came to a turning point. The resolution followed a formal request from Mali's transitional government (the new military junta) in a letter to the President of the Security Council (S/2023/464), to end MINUSMA. The military government had lost patience with UN efforts, noting terrorism got worse throughout the time of UN operations.

In response, the Security Council terminated ended the mandate of its 15,000 troops and officials who supported humanitarian protection and stabilization efforts in Mali. The decision was not popular with everybody. UN officials, frighten of the humanitarian impact of withdrawal. They demanded continued engagement to prevent further deterioration of situation (UN News 2023a). Termination of



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MINUSMA transformed the UN's evolving peacekeeping polices. The Mali government turned instead to the Wagner Group, a Russian private, mercenary military company (Matthijssen 2025, 16-17).

These developments underscore the complexities of contemporary peacekeeping and highlight the need for the UN to adopt more sophisticated strategies in its arbitral role as custodian of international peace and security. Future approaches will require not only negotiations among state parties but also sustained engagement with a broader spectrum of actors, including international institutions and private security providers.

The UN-AU Funding Framework: UN Security Council Resolution 2719 addressed a long-standing challenge of peacekeeping in Somalia by supporting funding for African Union (AU) to lead peacekeeping there (UNSCR 2023).

Given the complexity of joint UN-AU operations, an effective funding mechanism became necessary to enable the delegation of responsibilities and ensure operational effectiveness. The framework established under Resolution 2719 mandates a joint strategic assessment, carried out through consultative planning and decision-making between the Chairperson of the AU Commission and the UN Secretary-General. Final authorization rests with the Security Council, which requires strict adherence to international law, humanitarian principles, and established norms of peace operations.

Approval of funding is complicated, determined on a mission-by-mission basis, reflecting factors such as geopolitical context, scale of deployment, proportional use of force, and the

need to protect civilians. Moreover, accountability remains central: AU-led missions must comply with UN standards on conduct and discipline, including the Human Rights Due Diligence Policy and established rules of engagement (Mazurova 2024).

Adopted on 21 December 2023, the resolution allows AU-led peace operations to receive up to 75 percent of their funding through UN-assessed contributions, leaving the remaining 25 percent to be covered by the AU and other partners. This marks a significant milestone in international peace and security governance. First, it represents a shift from the UN's centralized influence toward greater recognition of regional autonomy and leadership. Second, it acknowledges Africa's unique understanding of its own security environment.

With the UN serving as an oversight body, the new arrangement ensures greater financial accountability, reduces the risk of chronic underfunding, and lessens dependence on ad hoc external donors whose priorities may not align with UN objectives. Although the resolution was more than a decade in the making—delayed largely due to concerns from the United States and other Security Council members over human rights safeguards and financial oversight—it carries considerable potential to enhance international peace efforts (Chen 2024, p. 7).

However, critics have raised concerns about the implementation of Resolution 2719. They point to ongoing UN budget cuts to peacekeeping missions and the Security Council's lack of consensus on how to effectively apply the resolution's financing provisions. This and other unresolved issues suggest that despite the resolution's landmark significance, its practical application may continue to face delays,



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particularly in defining the strategic balance of responsibilities between the UN and AU in maintaining peace and stability (Tadesse 2025).



Major Country and Bloc Positions

African Union (AU): The African Union (AU) promotes sovereign equality among its 55 Member States. The AU takes very general positions on major international issues like governance, peacebuilding and development. AU resolutions tend to stress general principles relevant to all of its Member States. It occasionally gets involved in regional conflicts, but not consistently. Like the Arab League, the African Union leaves actual policy-making up to each of its Member States. On most issues, each state's parallel membership in the Non-Aligned Movement (below) can be a more reliable guide to their positions.

Arab League: Because of sharp differences among its 22 Member States, the Arab League tends to act cautiously, and typically permits its Members to pursue their own distinctive policies. On divisive and controversial issues, the Arab League is especially likely to leave policy-making up to each of its Member States. The biggest exception is any issue relevant to Palestine, on which it is more unified. As a result, Arab League states are likely to see any debate on almost any issue in terms of aspects relevant to their support for Palestine. On most other issues, each state's parallel membership in the Non-Aligned Movement (below) can be a more reliable guide to their positions.

China: While some countries are reducing their reliance on the UN, China is increasing its investment in the organization, making it the center of much of its foreign policy. For China, the great appeal is the UN Charter's emphasis on national sovereign equality, which China sees as supporting its authority at home, and facilitating working with other countries as legal equals.¹ China consistently supports goals established by the UN, and supports international institutions.² China also stresses the UN as a tool for increasing its influence over global values, a key element in its campaign to make the world more like China itself.

China's UN policy is not without concerns. It fears the UN will be used to create precedents for international action in the domestic affairs of Member States, precedents that could be used against China. As Chinese UN diplomats at the UN said in another context, 'China's continuing

¹ 'Xi says China always a trustworthy partner of UN', *Xinhua*, 1 September 2025, http://en.cppcc.gov.cn/2025-09/01/c_1120831.htm

² Wen Sheng, 'China leads global efforts to

realize UN sustainable development goals for 2030', *Global Times*, 27 June 2023, <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202306/1293251.shtml>



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and vehement insistence on respect for other nations' sovereignty is not only a cornerstone of its foreign policy but a foundational ethos for the government of a nation that has traditionally struggled to maintain control at its edges — from Xinjiang and Tibet in the far west to Hong Kong and Taiwan off its east coast.³

European Union: for the 27 Member States of the EU, universal values always matter most. EU Member States can be expected to stress an approach that serves the entire international community, with all countries working toward agreed goals and standards. It often is the most visionary of actors within the UN system. The European Union also is the most generous funder of global development projects, offering grants or subsidized, low-interest loans for major initiatives.

But even the European Union is not as generous as it used to be. Aid money is going down, as it switches funding to national security. And European aid is highly conditional, with careful oversight to ensure it is spent as planned, efficiently, without fraud. Many EU donor states also make their aid conditional on basic national goals, including strengthening democratic government, rule of law, respect for minorities and equal rights for women.

Non-Aligned Movement: The 120 Member States of the NAM, the UN's dominant voting bloc and primarily interested in approaches to any issue that serve their needs as developing economies, burdened with significant poverty and demands for faster economic development. The NAM generally support universal values,

such as EU efforts to create global standards on this, like most other issues.

Where the NAM departs from the EU and other advocates of action, is on funding. Although many of its members are not poor—its membership includes many wealthy oil exporters—the NAM routinely demands that any proposal for action come with generous funding, increases in foreign aid from wealthier Western countries.

While the NAM, as post-colonial states, welcome foreign funding, they resist the oversight and control that normally comes with it. Donor countries may offer assistance, but will make it conditional. Such oversight—whether intended to ensure progress toward program goals, to prevent fraud, or the direct investment back to the countries volunteering the money—is seen by NAM members as a threat to their national sovereignty. They welcome the money, in other words, but not the oversight. This sets up a confrontation, a diplomatic challenge, as sides struggle to advance their rival goals.

Russian Federation: Outside the Security Council, Russia can be an unpredictable actor in UN bodies. It's primary goal in all UN fora is insulating Russian freedom of action in Ukraine, to ensure other issues cannot become a wedge allowing discussion of the war or its effects. Russia usually can rely on support from socialist countries like Cuba, Nicaragua, Venezuela and sometimes Vietnam. South Africa and African countries depend on Russian military help also can be very sympathetic. On particular issues the Russian Federation can work with China, Iran and North Korea.⁴ Under the leadership of

³ Ted Anthony, 'China, at UN, warns against 'expansion of the battlefield' in the Ukraine war', *Associated Press*, 28 September 2024, <https://apnews.com/article/china-united-nations->

[general-assembly-51ea58a6cd821656382f06ad0b3b93bc](https://www.un.org/press/en/2022/220922genass-51ea58a6cd821656382f06ad0b3b93bc)

⁴ 'General Assembly Debates Russian Federation's Security Council Veto of European



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President Trump, the United States cooperates with Russia, albeit unpredictably.⁵

United States: In general, the United States wants to minimize the role of UN agencies in all international issues. Cutting UN budgets is a prominent American goal that will be applied to this issue.⁶ Expect American diplomats to work to reduce the cost and effect of any UN initiative. The ideal UN initiative, from their perspective, allows each Member States to do as it pleases.

The American approach is not without international support. Far-right governments in countries like Argentina, El Salvador, Hungary, Israel and sometimes the Russian Federation may be tempted to support the United States on specific issues.

The United States also has had new success working with authoritarian leaders in non-aligned countries, typically by making issues part of a larger deal, trade-off to other goals American leaders are more concerned with. A large real estate deal, for example, involving territory in a host country, might be facilitated by other commercial deals. In this case, deals with tobacco or medical companies might be used to win development of tourist centers or city re-development plans.

Reforming the United Nations Security Council: Accountability, Effectiveness, and Representation

Proposals For Action on UNSC Effectiveness

The reform Security Council effectiveness remains one of the most complex and politically charged issues confronting the United Nations. The central dilemma lies in balancing the Council's need to reflect the geopolitical realities of the Twenty-First Century with the imperative of maintaining its effectiveness. In other words, there is pressure to include more and more countries in Security Council decision-making, but also awareness this might not help effectiveness, by making agreement even harder.

Under Articles 108 and 109 of the UN Charter, any Charter formal reform requires an amendment, which demands a two-thirds vote of the General Assembly and, crucially, ratification by all five permanent members (P5), each wielding veto power. To date, the only successful reform occurred in 1965, when the number of non-permanent seats was increased from six to ten. Since then, attempts to restructure the UNSC, particularly regarding the

Amendments Seeking 'Just' Peace in Ukraine', *United Nations*, 6 March 2025,

<https://press.un.org/en/2025/ga12677.doc.htm>

⁵ James Landale and Patrick Jackson, 'US sides with Russia in UN resolutions on Ukraine', *BBC News*, 25 February 2025,

https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c7435pnle0g_o

⁶ Amy Mackinnon, 'Waltz vows to take Trump's chainsaw to the United Nations', *Politico*, 15 June 2025,

<https://www.politico.com/news/2025/07/15/mike-waltz-un-ambassador-hearing-00454617>



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P5's veto privileges, have consistently met with resistance, which many scholars argue has constrained the Council's effectiveness. This resistance is often rooted in states' economic and political interests and in the asymmetrical power dynamics that shape international law and institutions (Archibugi, Cellini, and Malgieri 2025, 6).

Measures short of Charter reform: The general Assembly cannot demand changes to the Charter. Those must be approved by the Security Council, where the P5 have vetoes. Hathaway, Mills, and Zimmerman suggest that reforms may be possible without resorting to Charter amendments. Procedural alternatives include adopting changes through either a General Conference of UN members or through domestic constitutional processes of ratification by two-thirds of the member states.

However, the difficulty of achieving formal reform has led to reinterpretations of the Charter's wording, effectively reconstructing its inherent meaning. Such alternative interpretations rely on normalization, state practice, and collective acceptance to gain legitimacy. Yet, these non-amendment approaches have been criticized for lacking binding legal authority or formal recognition.

For example, General Assembly resolutions adopted in situations where the UNSC has failed to act have been framed as instances of non-amendatory reform. Still, they have largely fallen short of producing tangible influence on international peace and security. This persistent gap raises a critical question: does the entrenched archaism of the UN structure risk reducing collective action to a hegemonic hierarchy, thereby undermining the legitimacy of the international order (Hathaway 2024).

State's Debates Regarding UNSC Veto Reform:

Reform: Most of the proposed solutions to reforming the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) revolve around either abolishing the veto power of the permanent members (P5) or expanding the Council to ensure fairer geopolitical representation, particularly for Africa, which remains underrepresented.

China aligned itself with the positions of several NAM states by supporting an expansion of the Council. But it is opposed to adding new permanent members, above all opposed to adding India or Japan as permanent member.

By contrast, the United Kingdom and the United States expressed conditional support for a modest enlargement of the UNSC, including new permanent members, provided that such reforms do not undermine the veto power of the P5 and that any new members demonstrate the capacity to contribute meaningfully to international peace and security.

The Russian Federation firmly resists any attempt to alter the veto structure, contending that the veto serves as a safeguard against biased or self-serving interventions by the UN. Similarly, Pakistan opposes structural reforms, which would almost certainly add its mortal rival India as a permanent member, arguing that the lack of consensus on critical international security issues reflects deeper, irreconcilable disputes among states, which cannot be resolved merely by expanding membership or curtailing P5 privileges (UN 2018).

Alternative reform proposals include conditioning the use of the veto so that at least two concurring Permanent Members would be required to block a resolution, thereby reducing unilateral obstruction by a single state. Another proposal is to empower the General Assembly to



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override a veto by a two-thirds majority vote in cases deemed vital to international peace and security.

Measures to enhance transparency and accountability have been suggested, such as requiring any P5 member casting a veto to provide a formal written explanation grounded in the UN Charter. France, in partnership with Mexico, has advocated for voluntary restraint on the use of the veto in cases involving genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, or crimes against humanity, as reflected in the French-Mexican Initiative (2015) and the ACT Group's Code of Conduct (Jennifer Trahan 2015).

A dual veto system would mix the absolute veto already in existence kept, and a partial veto. The partial veto allows for the flexibility necessitated by the UNSC to perform its responsibility in ensuring international peace and security more effectively within an adaptable framework in its decision-making mandates.

This would allow the UNSC to assess the extent and manner in which an absolute veto will or will not be necessary, and the UNSC resolutions and drafts will be adopted on precise terms and conditions that best justify the intervention of the UNSC in addressing conflicts without compromising the independence of state sovereignty, alliance interests, and the rule of non-intervention of the UN.

The partial veto would provide the flexibility needed for the UNSC to fulfill its responsibility of maintaining international peace and security within a more adaptable decision-making framework. Under this system, the Council could determine when an absolute veto is

necessary and when a partial veto would suffice, ensuring that resolutions and drafts are adopted under clear terms and conditions. This approach might enable the UNSC to address conflicts more effectively while safeguarding state sovereignty, alliance interests, and the UN principle of non-intervention.

Finally, some proposals call for replacing the veto with a weighted voting system, where voting power would be distributed based on criteria such as financial contributions to the UN budget, population size, or regional representation. This approach seeks to create a more inclusive and representative decision-making process, moving beyond the dominance of great powers' geopolitical interests (Le He 2025).

In conclusion, this study highlights the need for the UNSC to be reconstituted in a way that ensures equitable representation of UN member states, thereby promoting fairness and inclusivity. Such reform is crucial for maintaining a balance of power that strengthens the Council's effectiveness in safeguarding international peace and security.

However, defining what constitutes true equality in international relations is complex, as power dynamics, national interests, and institutional hierarchies often shape the agenda of reform. Pursuing reforms without careful consideration of their geopolitical consequences may risk exacerbating instability or damaging fragile international relations. Greater attention must be given to the practical feasibility of reforms and their capacity to address urgent global security challenges, rather than focusing solely on symbolic adjustments to institutional hierarchy.



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