

**THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL IN THE TWENTY FIRST  
CENTURY - A CRITICAL EVALUATION**

**Dr Ramesh Kumar Singh**

Assistant professor

Veer Kunwar Singh University, Ara Bihar

Posted at Maharaja Law College, Ara

[singhrameshkumar148@gmail.com](mailto:singhrameshkumar148@gmail.com)

---

**Abstract**

*The United Nations Security Council was established in 1945. Its structure, dominated by the five permanent members (P5), namely China, France, Russia, the United States, and the United Kingdom, has increasingly been criticized for not being able to adapt to the geopolitical and sociopolitical context of the twenty-first century. Because of the P5's veto power and antiquated representation, the Council is less successful at addressing contemporary challenges like cybersecurity breaches, climate change, and geopolitical conflicts. Instead, the system frequently puts national interests ahead of international peace. In order to objectively assess the UNSC's function in the modern period, this article looks at its problems, historical development, and pressing need for reform. It draws attention to the initiatives of advocacy organizations such as the G4, which are working to improve the Council's representation and inclusivity in order to better reflect the geopolitical realities of the modern world. The report emphasizes how urgently structural adjustments are required to guarantee that the UNSC continues to be a useful instrument for preserving world peace and security.*

**Keywords:** UNSC, Global Peace and Security, Veto Power, Reforms and Representation, Geopolitical Challenges.

---

**1. INTRODUCTION**

The establishment of the UNSC in 1945 marked an important change in the balance of world power. The UNSC has ten elected, or non-permanent, members with rotating seats, but their impact is still quite small. The P5 maintains control over the other nations, frequently relegating them to a supporting position and limiting other UN members' capacity to significantly alter the structure and operations of the Council. The end effect is a system where the influence of more powerful governments reduces the voices of the majority. Due to the changing global political landscape of the twenty-first century, this significantly impairs the UNSC's capacity to address contemporary concerns. In order to create a more effective and responsive Council that can meet the current threats to global peace and security, the structural defect must be fixed.



**Figure 1: UNSC**

The worldwide system's tectonic plates have seen significant changes as a result of the advancements of the twenty-first century. The political and economic landscape is always changing, and the issues that threaten global security are becoming more complex. The development of technology, organized crime, climate change, and other societal challenges force us to reevaluate the kind of dangers that can undermine global security in the twenty-first century. War is no longer the only threat we confront.

An internationally recognized body, the UNSC was created to maintain world peace and avert international crises. But because of "the lack of unanimity of the permanent members," which undermines its structure, the Security Council regularly "fails to exercise its primary responsibility," as the P5 prioritize their own interests over the pursuit of world peace. Carswell raises questions about how change might be implemented, and the best means to do so would conflict with UNSC articles about the proper structure. Although sufficient representation is emphasized as a means of addressing socio-political changes, other types of change that are required to address contemporary challenges are sometimes left out of the reform that is being considered. As many nations and academics only strive for increased representation, the capacity to suggest policies and solutions is frequently overlooked.

At the moment, the Council permits the P5 to pursue their own goals. Being a member of the UNSC benefits both permanent and non-permanent governments, as some elected states have better access to powerful nations, according to The permanent members also benefit, albeit primarily from their veto power, which they frequently use to advance agendas that would best serve their nations and friends. Both of these academics tend to focus on how nations gain from membership in the Council, but they

don't sufficiently address how these relationships and policies harm other nations; those directly impacted by vetoes or those in need of aid but unable to obtain it are voiceless.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

**Hardt, J. N. (2021)** given an intensive triple analysis, adding to the corpus of research currently accessible on the relationship between climate change and security. Since its inception in 2007, the UNSC continuing discussion about the choice about whether to include climate change on its plan has continued to create. The creator starts by analyzing the dominant perspectives on the relationship between climate change and security, highlighting the 2020 joint announcement issued by ten UNSC members. Second, Hardt identifies the normal presumptions among UNSC part states in 2020 by fundamentally examining the difficulties surrounding diverse definitions of climate-security. The creator makes the contention that a consensus may be not too far off by comparing their opposing viewpoints. Third, the study assesses whether adding climate change to the UNSC plan will cause an extreme change inside the association and redefine security to more readily mirror the existential dangers of the Anthropocene. While the experimental basis of this research is based on essential sources from the 2020 UNSC deliberations, the hypothetical framework is based on fundamental security studies. Earth System Sciences insights in the world's ongoing status are combined with secondary writing on climate and security to give more perspective.

**Tobey, W. H. (2018)** gave a unique explanation of Resolution 1540's beginnings and goals. The author's experience, first-hand recollections, and conversations with former government officials—such as Stephen Hadley, John Bolton, and Robert Joseph—formed the basis of the study. Tobey aimed to provide understanding of the resolution's drafting process, its intended use, and the diplomacy involved in its passing. The study also looked at how these factors affected the final Security Council wording. By doing this, Tobey sought to place Resolution 1540 in the larger framework of other counter-WMD-terrorism and non-proliferation instruments and programs.

**Adefisoye, T. O., & Adefisoye, I. D. (2019)** examined the efforts of UNSC, which, in October 2000, passed Resolution 1325 fully intent on addressing the adverse consequences of vicious conflicts and wars on ladies and girls. The resolution sought to reposition ladies and girls in dynamic roles in peace and security, urging the involvement of UN part states in its execution. In response, the Nigerian government, through the Bureaucratic Ministry of Ladies Affairs and Social Turn of events, figured out the first Public Activity Plan (Rest) in 2013. Notwithstanding, despite being introduced twelve years after the resolution, the first Rest neglected to accomplish its essential plan goals. This disappointment was credited to unfortunate coordination among stakeholders, inadequate inter-organization joint effort, the exclusion of brutal conflicts and extremism, logistical challenges, and an

absence of political will with respect to certain states and nearby governments to domesticate orientation related laws. These challenges hindered the success of the first Rest, leading to the introduction of the second Rest in May 2017. The study, thusly, investigated the challenges that hindered the execution of UNSCR 1325, especially in mobilizing ladies and girls to defeat customary barriers to their compelling cooperation in peacebuilding and security-related activities in Nigeria. Information for the study were gathered from both essential and secondary sources. The findings uncovered that socio-social factors, combined with biological issues within Nigeria's arrangement climate, had significantly impacted the execution of UNSCR 1325 on ladies, peace, and security. This undesirable pattern was supposed to persist unless deliberate efforts were made to address these challenges.

**Zähringer, N. (2024)** analyzed the role of the ICC and the UNSC in carrying out the Responsibility to Protect (RtoP) principle. This chapter discussed the current and past difficulties of coordinating international reactions to mass atrocities within the Responsibility to Protect framework; it was included in Africa's Engagement with the Responsibility to Protect in the 21st Century. Zähringer examined previous interactions between the UN Security Council and the International Criminal Court (ICC), looking into both potential conflicts and synergies caused by the two bodies' competing missions and agendas. In particular, she focused on the setting of Africa, where the implementation of RtoP has been most severely challenged, to highlight the changing discourse on the global responsibility to avoid and respond to humanitarian catastrophes. The author provided a critical analysis of previous RtoP interventions, drawing attention to both the UNSC's and the ICC's accomplishments and failures in their coordination. The work of Zähringer exposed the difficulties of coordinating the efforts of international political and legal organizations to safeguard marginalized communities and provided a critical analysis of the ways in which historical events have influenced contemporary practices. In addition, the study highlighted the shortcomings of the current system of global governance and provided suggestions for how RtoP could be made more effective through improved coordination, so that political institutions and legal instruments could work together to protect human rights around the world.

### **3. HISTORICAL EVOLUTION AND STRUCTURE OF THE UNSC**

#### **3.1.Overview of the UNSC's formation**

In 1945, in the result of the devastation caused by The Second Great War, the United Nations Security Council was established as a foundational part of the recently framed United Nations. The anticipation of future conflicts and the maintenance of global stability were its principal reasons for being. While

encompassing a more extensive scope of global interest, the framework of the United powers Security Council was designed to strike an overall influence among the victorious Partnered powers.

### 3.2. Permanent and non-permanent members

The United States of America, Russia, China, France, and the United Kingdom make up the five permanent members (P5) of the United Nations Security Council. The other ten members are elected for terms of two years each and are not permanent. The permanent members exert considerable influence due to their veto power, while the non-permanent members contribute regional perspectives and expertise.

**Non- Permanent Members:** The five-person permanent membership of the United Nations Security Council is complemented by the rotating roster of nonpermanent members who represent different regions. One possibility is that the nonpermanent members will be involved in the security briefing. For the first two decades, the Security Council was comprised of six countries: Poland, Egypt, Brazil, Mexico, and Brazil. Ten further nonpermanent members were admitted in 1965. The United Nations General Assembly elects these ten non-permanent members to two-year terms beginning on January 1st, with five new members being replaced annually. Because approval for a seat is contingent upon receiving at least two-thirds of the total votes cast for that seat, a tie may result if two candidates are almost evenly matched. After a record-breaking 154 rounds of voting in 1979, the Cuban and Colombian governments finally broke the impasse by withdrawing their candidates and accepting Mexico as a middle ground. The process took three months. A member who resigns from office cannot be re-elected by a simple majority vote.

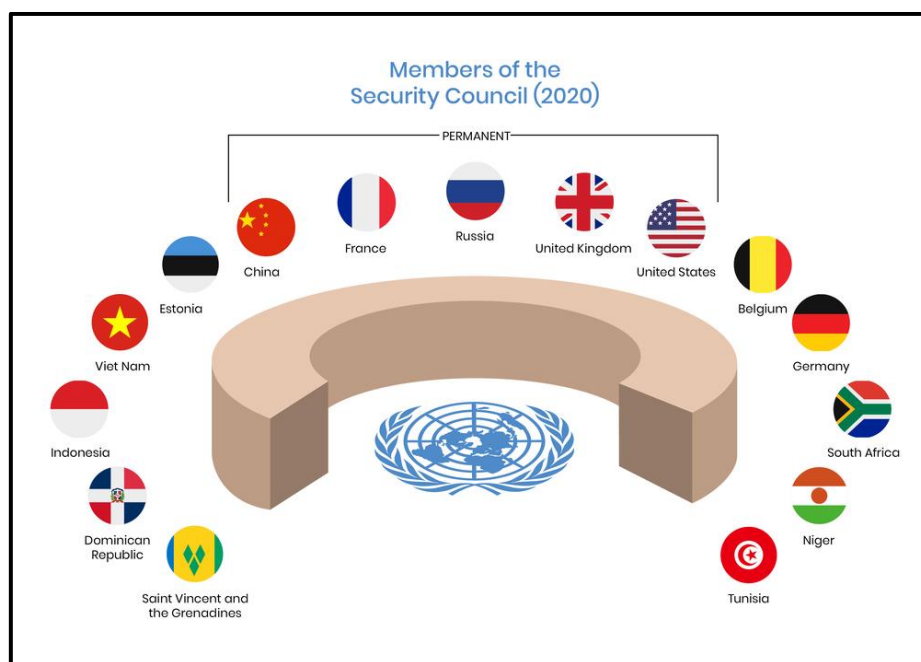


Figure 2: Non-Permanent member in UNSC

### **Veto power**

The United Nations Charter stipulates that in order for any substantive matter to be approved, at least nine out of ten voting members of the Security Council must be in favor. No matter how many votes are needed, a permanent component with a "veto" can stop a vote from passing. Although a veto is rarely exercised through abstention, all five permanent members of the UN must vote in order to modify the UN Charter. No one can attempt to avoid discussing procedural issues by claiming the veto honor. The permanent members are plainly impacted by a few of the non-binding decisions. Rather than impacting fundamental international security issues, the majority of vetoes have blocked secretary general nominees or partial admissions to membership.

The veto nations—the United States, the United Kingdom, China, France, and the Soviet Union—did everything in their power to stop the United Nations from coming into being, despite the fact that many smaller countries were against the veto power during the UN's early discussions. According to Francis O. Wilcox, an advisor to the US delegation at a 1945 meeting, the Big Five leaders at San Francisco made it glaringly clear that there was only one option: the Charter with the veto or none at all.

There were 269 vetoes used by the Security Council by 2012. During that time, the veto was used by 89 countries: France 18, China 9, the Soviet Union or Russia 128 (instead of 32 by the UK), and the US. During the initial ten years of the Security Council, the Soviet Union and Russia utilized two-thirds of the vetoes. Thirteen US resolutions were vetoed by Russia(7) and China (5). That amount was not met by the use of the veto by the United Kingdom and France. A decision to withdraw French forces from Syria and Lebanon, which were occupied by France, was vetoed by Soviet Commissar Andrei Vishinsky in February 1946. In peace and non-war related topics, permanent members were granted the power to use the veto. A number of years were squandered since the Soviet Union vetoed the dates that were supposed to go to Transjordan, Laos, Libya, Nepal, Portugal, South Vietnam, and Cambodia. In order to avoid a Security Council statement regarding the Suez Crisis of 1956, France and Britain used the veto. In 1970, the United States first rejected any action taken by the General Assembly against Southern Rhodesia. To protect its interests in Korea and Panama and to prevent anti-Israeli resolutions, the United States used its veto power 27 times between 1985 and 1990. As early as 1996, it blocked Boutros-Ghali's reappointment.

**Permanent members:** The five members of the Security Council who are designated as permanent members are able to veto any resolution that addresses substantive matters. This implies that a permanent member can veto the adoption of a resolution, but they cannot stop or end debate on such a resolution.



**Figure 3: Permanent Member of UNSC**

### **3.3.Functions and powers under the UN Charter**

According to the United Nations Charter, the United Nations Security Council has the power to approve peacekeeping missions, impose sanctions, and give its endorsement to the use of power in request to preserve or restore international peace and security. Furthermore, it plays a significant part in mediating disagreements and recommending solutions to the Overall Assembly.

### **Background and creation**

## **4. RELEVANCE AND EFFECTIVENESS IN THE 21ST CENTURY**

### **4.1.Role in maintaining international peace and security**

As the 21st century has progressed, the United Nations Security Council has continued to face urgent global concerns, such as the crises in Syria, Yemen, and Ukraine. It has been of great assistance in reducing the amount of violence and fostering stability through its role in the deployment of peacekeeping forces and its endorsement of resolutions.

### **4.2.Success stories and landmark resolutions**

The UNSC has helped resolve global crises and promote peace and security through major resolutions and initiatives. Peacekeeping missions have been authorized to stabilize conflict zones, protect people, and aid post-conflict reconstruction. In the Balkans, Africa, and the Middle East, UNSC peacekeeping efforts have prevented further escalation and promoted peace processes. In addition, the UNSC has used economic and military penalties on rogue states, non-state actors, and terrorist organizations to maintain global order. These actions target aggression, human rights abuses, and WMD proliferation. In 2000, UNSC Resolution 1325 focused on women in peace and security and is a landmark. This resolution advanced global human rights, gender equality, and women's empowerment in conflict resolution and peacebuilding objectives. Resolution 1325 established the foundation for policies and

activities to ensure women's full involvement in peace processes and the preservation of their rights in conflict circumstances by acknowledging their vital role in peace promotion. These achievements show the UNSC's centrality in creating global norms, addressing conflict's core causes, and promoting inclusive peace and security.

## **5. THE PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE OF SECURITY COUNCIL REFORM**

The UNSC is essential to world peace and security, as discussed. However, 21st-century emergent challenges raise questions about the Council's current design and structure. Critics point to its outmoded composition, poor representation, and the five permanent members' oppressive veto power. Diplomatic stalemates result from the UNSC's inability to dynamically reflect global power shifts and new moral authority. Russia's veto-backed invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 and the US' unapproved invasion of Iraq in 2003 have both frustrated the Council. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy expressed issues about the Council's ability to provide security in April 2022 after these occurrences, which violate the UN Charter and international law, went unresolved. Stalled and failed negotiations necessitate reform.

The 1963 reform transformed the UN Security Council. The UNSC's General Assembly membership increased as additional decolonized countries joined, starting with six non-permanent states. This spike signaled the need for more global decision-making engagement. Non-Aligned Movement, led by decolonized countries, campaigned for reform, prompting the 1963 General Assembly resolution. This resolution added ten non-permanent seats and competitive elections for geographical divisions. The revision allowed for more creative and imaginative chamber use and multilateral action without diverting power from the P5.

The 1963 reform improved the UNSC, but additional revisions are difficult. Diversity of member state interests and perspectives and P5 veto authority create complexity. Any permanent member can reject resolutions notwithstanding majority support from member nations, hindering reform attempts. The P5's consensus requirement hinders decision-making, hindering the UNSC's adoption of global changes and reform requests. However, major UNSC reforms demonstrate its ability to adapt to international community requirements.

UNSC reforms are championed by advocacy groups including the G4, Brazil, Germany, India, and Japan. These states propose permanent and non-permanent seat additions to reflect geopolitical realities and regional representation. The G4 wants equal representation in Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America to strengthen the UNSC. The G4 hopes to strengthen its proposals and steer discussions toward a more balanced and representative Council with support from some permanent members, such as the UK and France, and regional powers like the BRICS group.

# Synergy 2025: A Multidisciplinary Forum for Collaborative Research and Innovation

## January 2025

ISBN Number: 978-93-95305-78-5

Clearly, UN Security Council structural reform is needed. Despite disagreements and P5 unwillingness to give up veto authority, reform is gaining pace. Advocates like the G4 keep working to enhance diversity. The necessity for reform is acknowledged by ongoing talks and diplomatic attempts. Sustained negotiation, collaborative diplomacy, and national will can create a reformed Security Council that can address future multidimensional challenges.

### **6. CHALLENGES AND CRITICISMS FACING THE UNSC**

Geopolitical tensions, power dynamics, and structural flaws are the main causes of the UNSC many problems and critiques. The conflicting interests of superpowers can cause paralysis in a time of increased international tensions, and the P5 members' rivalry regularly prevent agreement on how to successfully handle crises. Concerns regarding the fairness and inclusion of the decision-making process are raised by the P5's veto power, which allows individual countries to thwart decisions even when they have the support of the majority. The geopolitical realities of the twenty-first century are also not reflected in the composition of the UNSC, as new powers like Brazil, South Africa, and India are calling for changes to better represent the changing global order, such as permanent membership and increased inclusivity.

### **7. CONCLUSION**

The UNSC is essential to maintaining international peace, but it confronts several difficulties in the twenty-first century because of its antiquated design, unequal representation, and the abuse of its permanent members' veto power. Because the P5 cannot agree, the UNSC has had difficulty responding to modern challenges like cyberwarfare, climate change, and political disputes, despite important achievements like peacekeeping missions and historic resolutions. Advocated by countries such as the G4, the urgent appeal for reform reflects a worldwide desire for more fair representation and greater inclusivity. In order for the UNSC to continue being a valid and efficient organization for preserving global peace and security, it must adapt to new power dynamics as the world order changes. Even if structural reforms are difficult, they are essential to improve the Council's legitimacy and capacity to handle the intricate problems that the world community will face in the future.

### **Future of the United Nations Security Council**

UNSC future depends on its capacity to adjust to new worldwide dangers like pandemics, wars brought on by climate change, and cybersecurity breaches. The UNSC must adapt its tactics to proactively handle these unconventional issues if it hopes to stay relevant. To ensure that multilateralism flourishes and member state collaboration is reinforced, the UNSC must find a balance between defending national interests and maintaining international peace. The UNSC's ability to strike this fine balance

# Synergy 2025: A Multidisciplinary Forum for Collaborative Research and Innovation

## January 2025

ISBN Number: 978-93-95305-78-5

and promote both respect for national sovereignty and a dedication to global stability will determine how effective it is.

### REFERENCES

1. Adefisoye, T. O., & Adefisoye, I. D. (2019). Nigeria and the implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. *Journal of Public Administration and Development Alternatives (JPADA)*, 4(1), 16-29.
2. Binder, M. and Heupel, M. (2020) 'Rising powers, UN Security Council reform, and the failure of rhetorical coercion', *Global Policy*, 11(S3), pp. 93–103.
3. Bryndum-Buchholz, A., Tittensor, D. P., Blanchard, J. L., Cheung, W. W., Coll, M., Galbraith, E. D., ... & Lotze, H. K. (2019). Twenty-first-century climate change impacts on marine animal biomass and ecosystem structure across ocean basins. *Global change biology*, 25(2), 459-472.
4. Carswell, J. (2013). *The United Nations Security Council: A Critical History*. Routledge.
5. Dayal, A., & Dunton, C. (2023). UNSC Reform: Historical Context and Contemporary Challenges. *Journal of Global Governance*, 8(2), 123-140.
6. Dunton, C. and Dayal, A. (2023) The U.N. Security Council was designed for deadlock can it change?, United States Institute of Peace. Available at:
7. Foray, J. L. (2021). The Republic at the Table, with Decolonisation on the Agenda: The United Nations Security Council and the Question of Indonesian Representation, 1946–1947. *Itinerario*, 45(1), 124-151.
8. Hardt, J. N. (2021). The United Nations Security Council at the forefront of (climate) change? Confusion, stalemate, ignorance. *Politics and Governance*, 9, 5-15.
9. Hurd, I. (2002) 'Legitimacy, power, and the symbolic life of the UN Security Council', *Global Governance: A Review of Multilateralism and International Organizations*, 8(1), pp. 35–51.
10. Mingst, K. A., Karns, M. P., & Lyon, A. J. (2022). *The United Nations in the 21st century*. Routledge.
11. Patrick S., Mbete S., Spektor M., Guihong Z., Novosseloff A., Heusgen C., et al (2023) UN Security Council Reform: What the World Thinks. Available at:

12. Reis, C. T. (2022). REFORM OF THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL.
13. Tobey, W. H. (2018). A History of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540. *Preventing the Proliferation of WMDs: Measuring the Success of UN Security Council Resolution 1540*, 13-32.
14. Weiss, T. G. (2009). What's Wrong with the United Nations and How to Fix It. Polity Press.
15. Zähringer, N. (2024). Implementing the Responsibility to Protect (RtoP): Coordinating Approaches Between the United Nations Security Council and the International Criminal Court. In *Africa's Engagement with the Responsibility to Protect in the 21st Century* (pp. 219-233). Singapore: Springer Nature Singapore.