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“The Dilemmas Of Humanity: Borders, Justice and Ethics; Building the Future Of The World”

STUDY GUIDE



ADHOC

**Reforming the United Nations Security Council:
Evaluating the Inclusion of New Permanent Members
and the Veto Power**

COMMITTEE INTRODUCTION

The Special Committee on the Charter of the United Nations and on the Strengthening of the Role of the Organization was established in 1974 by the UN General Assembly. Its primary role is to examine and propose improvements to the functioning of the UN, focusing on interpreting the UN Charter and enhancing the organization's effectiveness. The committee aims to strengthen the UN's role in promoting international peace, security, and efficient global governance, addressing modern challenges through potential reforms.

SECURITY COUNCIL: RESPONSIBILITIES

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is the UN's central body responsible for maintaining international peace and security. The UNSC is unique because it has the authority to make decisions that member states must follow, including military interventions, sanctions, and peacekeeping missions. This gives the UNSC considerable power in addressing global conflicts and ensuring the enforcement of international laws.

#1 PREVENTING CONFLICT

The UNSC uses diplomacy and mediation to prevent disputes from escalating into full-scale conflicts. This often involves calling for ceasefires, deploying observers, or facilitating dialogue between conflicting parties.

EXAMPLE: In 2013, the UNSC played a key role in mediating a ceasefire during the civil war in Mali, ultimately leading to the establishment of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). The mission worked to stabilize the country and facilitate peace talks between rebel forces and the government.

#2 RESTORING PEACE

When conflicts do occur, the UNSC is responsible for reestablishing peace, either through diplomatic means or by sending peacekeeping forces.

EXAMPLE: In response to the conflict in Sierra Leone (1991–2002), the UNSC authorized the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL). This mission helped disarm rebels and played a key role in restoring order and stability to the country after years of civil war

#3 IMPOSING SANCTIONS

When a country or organization acts in violation of international law or threatens global peace, the UNSC can impose sanctions, which may include trade restrictions, asset freezes, and arms embargoes.

EXAMPLE: In 2017, the UNSC imposed comprehensive sanctions on North Korea in response to its nuclear tests. These sanctions included restrictions on coal exports and oil imports to pressure North Korea into abandoning its nuclear weapons program

#4 ADDRESSING THREATS TO PEACE

The UNSC is at the forefront of addressing global threats such as terrorism, nuclear proliferation, and interstate aggression.

EXAMPLE: Following the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, the UNSC passed Resolution 1373, which called for international cooperation to combat terrorism and established the Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC). This resolution marked one of the strongest global responses to terrorism under the UNSC's mandate.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

SECURITY COUNCIL



United States and Soviet Union (now Russia): Emerged as the two superpowers after WWII, leading to their central role in global governance and diplomacy.

United Kingdom and France: Retained significant influence despite the decline of their colonial empires, contributing to post-war recovery and stabilization in Europe.

China: Initially represented by the Republic of China (Taiwan), but since 1971, the seat has been occupied by the People's Republic of China. This shift occurred due to China's growing influence and recognition in global affairs.

The decision to grant the P5 veto power came during negotiations in the 1945 Yalta Conference, where the major Allied leaders—Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin—agreed that lasting peace would require the inclusion of the most powerful states in the decision-making process.



The P5 countries were granted permanent membership in the UNSC due to their geopolitical dominance in the immediate aftermath of World War II. The intent was to ensure that these powerful nations would have a stake in maintaining international peace and security. However, over time, the global landscape has evolved. Countries like India, Brazil, and Japan have gained significant economic and political influence, leading to increasing calls for reform in UNSC membership to reflect contemporary global realities.



SECURITY COUNCIL COMPOSITION

The UNSC is made up of 15 members.

Permanent Members (P5): The United States, United Kingdom, France, Russia, and China. These five countries hold permanent seats on the UNSC and were granted this status following the conclusion of World War II. The rationale for their inclusion was their role as the major Allied powers during the war, which shaped the postwar order. The P5 were also the first countries to possess nuclear weapons, which further solidified their influence in global security matters.

Non-permanent Members: Ten members elected for two-year terms by the UN General Assembly, based on regional representation. The current configuration ensures that the non-permanent members reflect a diversity of global interests.

The UNSC operates on a system of weighted voting. Each member has one vote, but substantive decisions, such as those involving military action or sanctions, require at least 9 out of 15 votes to pass, as well as the approval of all five permanent members. This means any P5 member can veto a resolution, giving them significant control over UNSC decisions.

THE VETO POWER

The Veto Power is a core feature of the UNSC's structure, enabling any of the P5 members to block substantive resolutions. This has led to both effective peacekeeping and frustrating inaction, depending on the situation.

EXAMPLE: Veto in the Syrian Conflict. Since the start of the Syrian Civil War in 2011, Russia has used its veto power over a dozen times to block resolutions aimed at sanctioning the Assad government or authorizing military intervention. This has prevented the international community from taking decisive action on the conflict.

The P5's veto power has, at times, paralyzed the UNSC, especially when the interests of these powerful countries diverge from the broader international consensus.

The lack of representation for regions like Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East has led to criticism that the UNSC does not accurately represent the modern world. In recent years, there have been persistent calls to expand the UNSC's permanent membership to include countries from underrepresented regions. The G4 nations (India, Brazil, Japan, and Germany) have been at the forefront of these efforts.

ATTEMPTS AT REFORM

Reforming the UNSC has proven to be one of the most intractable challenges in international governance. Despite broad consensus on the need for reform, the actual implementation has been stymied by disagreements over how to proceed. There have been several significant efforts to reform the UNSC over the past few decades:

1965: Expansion of Non-Permanent Members

The first major reform occurred in 1965 when the number of non-permanent members on the UNSC increased from 6 to 10. This was done to reflect the growing membership of the UN, which had expanded rapidly due to the decolonization process. However, this reform did not address the issue of permanent membership or the veto power of the P5.



1993: Open Ended Working Group on Security Council Reform

In 1993, the UN General Assembly created the Open-Ended Working Group on Security Council Reform to explore ways to reform the Council. The group focused on expanding membership, adjusting the veto system, and improving the Council's working methods. However, the working group has struggled to produce consensus due to conflicting national and regional interests. For example, the G4 (India, Japan, Brazil, and Germany) supported expanding permanent membership, while the Uniting for Consensus group (including countries like Italy, South Korea, and Pakistan) opposed new permanent seats, favoring an expansion of non-permanent seats instead.

2005: The G4 Proposal

In 2005, the G4 nations proposed adding six new permanent members (two from Africa, two from Asia, one from Latin America, and one from Western Europe) but without veto power. This was an attempt to appease those who were concerned about an increase in veto-wielding states while still expanding permanent membership. The African Union, however, opposed this proposal, insisting that any new permanent members should have veto power.



ARGUMENTS IN FAVOR OF EXPANDING PERMANENT MEMBERSHIP

#1 GEOPOLITICAL REPRESENTATION

Many regions, particularly Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East, are significantly underrepresented on the UNSC, especially in its permanent membership. Despite contributing to global peacekeeping, development, and security, these regions lack a voice in the Council's most critical decisions.

AFRICA

Despite the fact that the majority of UNSC peacekeeping missions take place in Africa, the continent does not have a single permanent member on the Council. This has led to frustration that African issues are often discussed without sufficient input from African nations. In cases like the conflicts in Sudan, Somalia, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, African nations have expressed concern that decisions about interventions were made without sufficient African leadership. Many argue that having a permanent African member could improve the UNSC's responsiveness to these issues.

LATIN AMERICA

Latin American countries, despite being home to nearly 650 million people and playing an important role in international trade and diplomacy, are similarly excluded from permanent membership. Countries like Brazil argue that Latin America's perspectives on issues like environmental protection, human rights, and sustainable development need stronger representation at the global level.

MIDDLE EAST

The Middle East has been a major focus of UNSC actions, particularly regarding issues of war, terrorism, and political instability. Yet, it lacks any permanent representation in the UNSC, despite its strategic importance and the frequency of UNSC involvement in the region. Countries like Saudi Arabia or Egypt are often considered as potential permanent members.

#2 GREATER LEGITIMACY

Many proponents of reform argue that expanding permanent membership would make the UNSC more inclusive and reflective of the modern global order, thereby enhancing its legitimacy. Currently, the Council is seen by many as a remnant of a bygone era, representing the global power structure of 1945 rather than the current international system.

BALANCE OF POWER

Currently, the P5 members, particularly Russia and the United States, often dominate UNSC decision-making, sometimes leading to paralysis. Expanding the Council to include emerging powers could help balance the influence of these nations, preventing them from using the UNSC as a tool to pursue their own interests.

INCLUSIVENESS AND GLOBAL TRUST

Expanding the Council to include countries from underrepresented regions would increase the diversity of perspectives and improve the legitimacy of its decisions. Many countries in the Global South feel that the Council does not represent their interests, which leads to distrust in its resolutions. Adding permanent members from Africa, Latin America, and Asia would ensure a broader range of voices in decision-making.

EXAMPLE: In 2003, the UNSC's decision not to authorize the invasion of Iraq, despite strong opposition from the international community, was widely seen as a failure of the Council to act in line with global opinion. Critics argued that a more representative UNSC might have had a greater capacity to mediate and reflect the interests of the international community.

#3 GLOBAL POWER SHIFTS

Since the creation of the UNSC, global power dynamics have shifted dramatically. Several countries have emerged as major economic and political players, yet they remain excluded from the UNSC's permanent membership.

INDIA

With over 1.4 billion people, India is the world's most populous democracy and a nuclear power. It is also one of the largest contributors to UN peacekeeping missions. India's growing economic influence (as the world's fifth-largest economy) and its strategic geopolitical role in South Asia have led it to argue that it should have a permanent seat on the UNSC.

India's role in regional stability, especially in relation to Pakistan, Afghanistan, and China, is critical. Indian leaders, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, have repeatedly pushed for reform, arguing that India's absence from the permanent membership undermines the Council's legitimacy.

BRAZIL

Brazil is the largest country in Latin America and has one of the world's largest economies. It has been a vocal advocate for reform, pointing to its contributions to UN peacekeeping and its leadership in regional diplomacy. Brazil has also played an important role in mediating conflicts and addressing global issues like climate change, making it a strong candidate for permanent membership.

GERMANY & JAPAN

Both countries are significant economic powers and major contributors to the UN's budget. Despite being key players in global trade and international diplomacy, they lack permanent representation on the Council. Germany is a leader within the European Union, and Japan, as the third-largest economy globally, plays a crucial role in East Asian security. These countries argue that their economic and political influence warrants a permanent seat on the UNSC.

POTENTIAL CANDIDATES FOR PERMANENT SEATS

AFRICAN REPRESENTATION

Africa, despite being one of the most conflict-prone regions and frequently the focus of UNSC resolutions, has no permanent representation on the Council. Several countries are frequently mentioned as candidates for a permanent seat:

SOUTH AFRICA: As one of Africa's largest economies and a regional leader, South Africa is often cited as the most suitable candidate. It has played a key role in peacekeeping and conflict resolution on the continent.

NIGERIA: Nigeria is Africa's most populous country and a major regional power in West Africa. It has contributed significantly to peacekeeping missions and has advocated for African representation on the Security Council.

EGYPT: As one of the most influential countries in the Arab world and Africa, Egypt is a strong candidate for permanent membership. It has been a key player in regional security, particularly in relation to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

OTHER CANDIDATES

MIDDLE EASTERN REPRESENTATION: Saudi Arabia, given its economic influence and leadership role in the Middle East, has been discussed as a potential candidate for permanent membership. Alternatively, Egypt has also been mentioned due to its strategic geopolitical importance in the region.

SOUTHEAST ASIA: Indonesia, as the largest country in Southeast Asia and a prominent member of ASEAN, has emerged as a potential candidate for permanent membership. Indonesia's size, population, and diplomatic efforts in regional peace processes give it a strong case for inclusion.

G4 NATIONS

The G4 nations have been the most vocal advocates for UNSC reform. They argue that their economic, political, and regional influence makes them prime candidates for permanent membership. Each G4 country represents a different region and a different aspect of global governance.

INDIA: A nuclear power with a rapidly growing economy, India has a significant role in international peacekeeping and regional stability. Its bid for permanent membership is supported by countries like the United States, the United Kingdom, and France.

JAPAN: Japan's contributions to the UN, including being one of its largest financial donors, and its active role in global diplomacy make it a strong candidate. However, its bid for permanent membership faces opposition from China due to historical tensions.

GERMANY: As the leading economy in Europe and a strong proponent of multilateralism, Germany has long called for a permanent seat. Its candidacy is supported by much of the European Union.

BRAZIL: Brazil has positioned itself as the leader of Latin America and has actively participated in peacekeeping and diplomatic initiatives in the region. Its candidacy would ensure representation for Latin America on the UNSC.



CASE STUDIES

THE SYRIAN CIVIL WAR

2011 – ONGOING

The Syrian Civil War, which began in 2011, quickly escalated into one of the most severe humanitarian crises of the 21st century. What started as protests against President Bashar al-Assad's regime soon devolved into a full-scale civil war, drawing in multiple international actors, including Russia, the United States, Turkey, and Iran. The war has led to the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people and displaced millions.

Russia, a key ally of the Assad regime, has used its veto power in the UNSC to block more than a dozen resolutions aimed at imposing sanctions on Syria, referring the situation to the International Criminal Court (ICC), or calling for ceasefires. China has also used its veto in support of Russia on several occasions.

KEY VETOES:

- October 2011: Russia and China vetoed a draft resolution that threatened sanctions against the Assad regime if it did not cease military actions against civilian protesters.
- February 2012: Russia and China vetoed another resolution aimed at supporting the Arab League's plan for a democratic transition in Syria. This resolution was widely supported by the international community, but the veto blocked further action.
- December 2019: Russia and China vetoed a resolution aimed at extending cross-border aid deliveries to Syrians in rebel-held areas, further limiting humanitarian assistance.

IMPACT OF VETO POWER:

Russia's consistent use of the veto has effectively shielded the Assad regime from international sanctions and accountability, allowing the conflict to continue with limited outside interference. As a result, the UNSC has been unable to take meaningful action to resolve the conflict or hold the Assad government accountable for alleged war crimes, including the use of chemical weapons.

The inability of the UNSC to act due to the veto has led to prolonged suffering for the Syrian population. Humanitarian corridors and ceasefire agreements have been delayed or blocked, reducing the international community's ability to deliver aid to those in need.

The vetoes have exposed the UNSC's limitations when its permanent members have conflicting interests, leading to a diplomatic stalemate that has allowed the conflict to continue for over a decade.

CASE STUDIES

THE KOSOVO CRISIS
1998 – 1999

In 1998, tensions in the Serbian province of Kosovo escalated into conflict between Serbian forces and the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA). The conflict resulted in widespread ethnic cleansing, with Serbian forces committing atrocities against Kosovo's ethnic Albanian population. In response, NATO, led by the United States, sought to intervene to prevent further violence.

Russia, a traditional ally of Serbia, strongly opposed any UNSC resolution that would authorize military intervention in Kosovo. Russia's veto threat prevented the UNSC from passing a resolution authorizing the use of force to halt the ethnic cleansing.

NON-APPROVED INTERVENTION:

March 1999: NATO began a bombing campaign against Serbian targets in Kosovo without explicit UNSC authorization, as Russia had made it clear that it would veto any resolution supporting military intervention. NATO justified the intervention on humanitarian grounds, arguing that it was necessary to prevent genocide.

IMPACT OF VETO POWER:

The veto threat in the Kosovo crisis once again demonstrated the UNSC's inability to act when permanent members are in disagreement. NATO's decision to intervene without UNSC authorization set a precedent for humanitarian interventions outside the framework of the UNSC.

Russia's veto threat paralyzed the UNSC, forcing NATO to act independently. This raised questions about the relevance of the UNSC in preventing humanitarian crises when its permanent members are divided.

The Kosovo intervention is often cited as an early example of the "Responsibility to Protect" (R2P) doctrine, which justifies intervention in cases of genocide or mass atrocities. However, the lack of UNSC authorization remained controversial.

CASE STUDIES

ISRAELI PALESTINIAN CONFLICT ONGOING

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been a focal issue at the UNSC for decades. Multiple resolutions have been proposed to address the conflict, including measures calling for an end to settlement activities, ceasefires, or sanctions against Israel for violations of international law. The United States, a key ally of Israel, has repeatedly used its veto power to block resolutions seen as critical of Israeli actions.

The U.S. has used its veto power more than 40 times to block resolutions related to Israel and Palestine, significantly shaping the UNSC's ability to address the conflict:

- December 2017: The U.S. vetoed a resolution that condemned its decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and move its embassy there, despite overwhelming support for the resolution from the international community.
- Multiple Vetoes: The U.S. has blocked numerous resolutions calling for a halt to Israeli settlement expansion in the West Bank or calling for international protection for Palestinian civilians.

IMPACT OF VETO POWER:

The U.S.'s frequent use of the veto to protect Israel has led to widespread frustration, particularly among Arab nations and countries in the Global South. This has paralyzed the UNSC's ability to mediate peace or hold parties accountable for violations of international law.

The UNSC's perceived bias due to repeated U.S. vetoes has damaged its credibility in the eyes of many countries. This has hindered the international community's ability to foster meaningful peace talks between Israelis and Palestinians.

The veto power has contributed to the ongoing stalemate in resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as the UNSC is unable to pass resolutions that could lead to a fair and lasting peace.