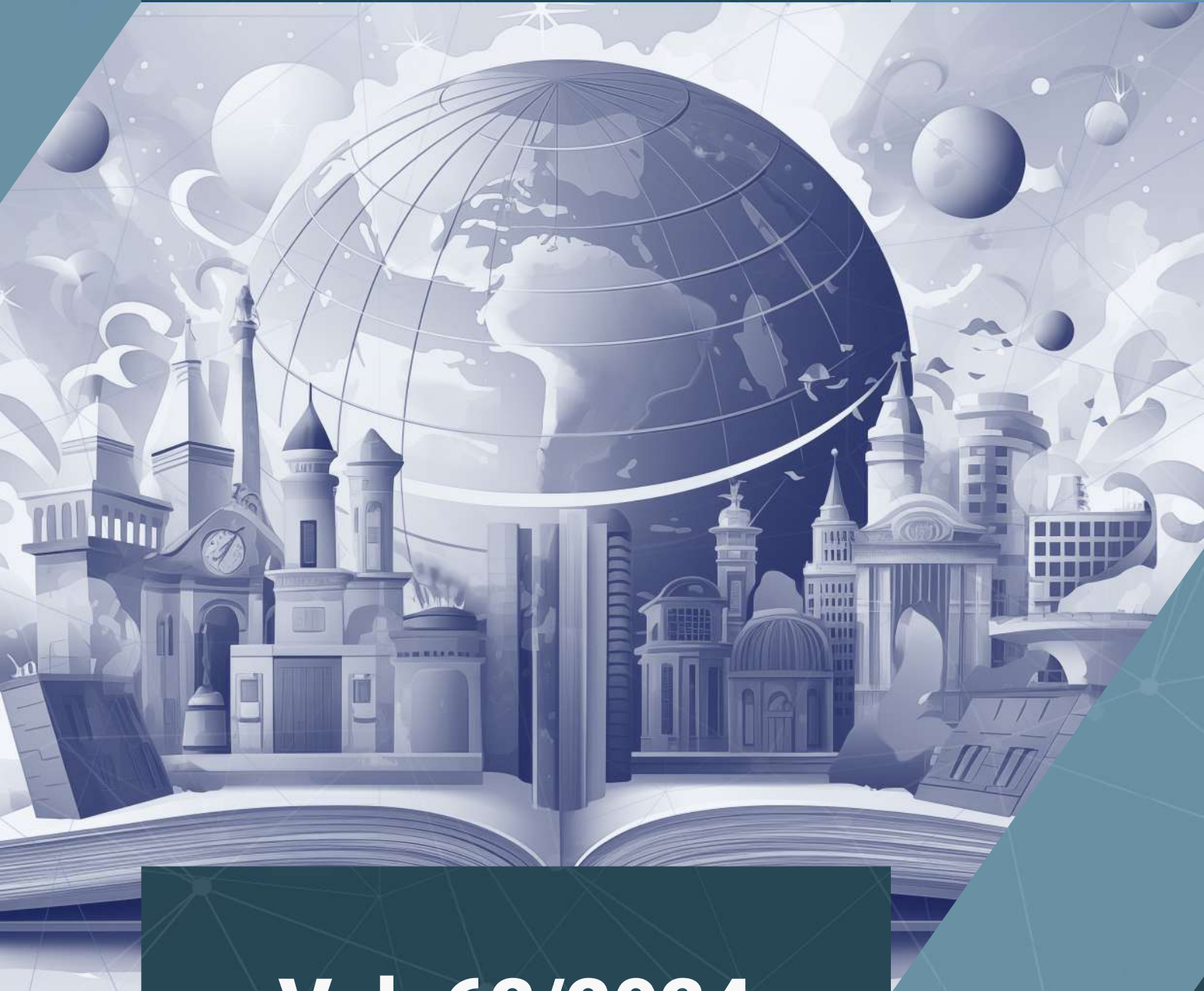




TECHNIUM
SOCIAL SCIENCES JOURNAL



Vol. 62/2024
A New Decade for Social Changes

PLUS
COMMUNICATION P



International
Communication & PR

The Emergence of a New Superpower Rivalry and the Vulnerabilities of the United Nations Security Council

Min Seok Choi¹, Sungwon Chang²

¹Harrow School, United Kingdom, ²Sogang University, Republic of Korea

minchoi0109@gmail.com, plame162@gmail.com

Abstract. Throughout the past decade, the People's Republic of China has experienced rapid economic and military growth, increasing its influence in Asia. With the abandonment of its 'biding time' approach in its foreign policy, China has transformed into a competitive challenger against the American hegemony, engendering a new geopolitical rivalry. This newly emerging rivalry threatens the United Nations' effectiveness as it exposes numerous structural flaws of the United Nations. A binary atmosphere is slowly encroaching the United Nations Security Council, causing the council to be further polarised. Certain vulnerabilities of the Security Council often cause the council to be effectively paralysed, forcing the UN to be unable to respond to global conflicts. This paper evaluated three different proposed structural flaws of the council through case studies and data analyses and offered recommendations accordingly. The United Nations must amend the structure of the Security Council in order to continue to effectively maintain international peace and avoid repeating the failure of its predecessor, the League of Nations

Keywords. New Superpower, United Nations Security Council

1. Introduction

The United Nations was established in October 1945 by the victors of the Second World War, in order to prevent another catastrophic war. A similar organisation, the League of Nations, was founded in January 1920, after the Great War, better known as the First World War. However, the League failed due to its structural problems, including lack of superpowers and being overly dependent on Great Britain and France. The United Nations was established with the aim to do better in keeping global peace than its predecessor.

Although the UN did face numerous challenges during the Cold War era between the USA and the USSR, the peace was contained, preventing the UN from failing. With the Soviet Union collapsing in 1991, the Cold War ended in victory for Uncle Sam, the United States. Although it was initially viewed that the unipolar conditions in international politics would make the USA an untouchable supreme power, with an enduring age of international peace, the economic growth of the People's Republic of China was much faster than expected, making them the biggest contender to challenge American supremacy. With new rivalry between the USA and China having emerged, and the original rivalry between the USA and the Russian Federation remaining, the geopolitical tension in the international society is greater than ever. The United Nations was established after the utter failure of the League of Nations, which was

mainly due to its ineffectiveness. Despite the UN's successes in the past decades, the rivalry is quickly encroaching on the United Nations Security Council, exposing its fundamental structural flaws.

The Security Council has become less effective because of its structural design that is susceptible to superpower rivalry. This paper seeks to identify the structural flaws of the Security Council that makes it vulnerable to the rivalries amongst major powers and to evaluate its flaws through case studies and a detailed data analysis. Moreover, the paper will compare the previous Security Council reform proposals that have been suggested, and consider these proposals to offer a recommendation.

2. Literature Review

With the outbreak of World War II, it was evident that the League of Nations had failed to uphold Woodrow Wilson's dream of lasting peace. World War II was indeed another disaster for the international society, and the allies, the winners of the war, sought to establish a stronger international organisation that would promote global peace and not repeat the mistakes of the League. In 1945, the United Nations was formed, and the Security Council consisted of 5 permanent members: the United States of America, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, France, and Republic of China (UN Charter, Article 23(1)).

Since the start of the new century, new powers have been emerging rapidly due to economic growth, and the American hegemony has been declining (Burke White, 2015). Power seemed to be spreading across different nations more evenly, which was viewed by Burke White to bring a transition in the international political system into a 'multihub' system (*ibid*) (Wolfers, 1962). Despite Burke White's rather optimistic view back in 2015, China's economic growth was unexpectedly steeper compared to the other emerging powers (Mearsheimer, 2021). Catalysed by its enormous population, China has grown into the second richest nation in the world (World Bank, 2023), and it is now threatening American supremacy. Mearsheimer believes that a new Cold War between Washington and Beijing is inevitable, hinting towards a possibility of a war between the two rivals (Mearsheimer, 2021).

Since 2013, when Xi Jinping replaced Deng Xiaoping from power, China has grown rapidly and now sits as the second biggest economy with the third strongest military (GDP, 2023) (Global Fire Power, 2024), making it the biggest rival of the USA. The major driving factor in China's emergence was the shift to its foreign policy. Before this shift, the Chinese sought to avoid confrontation and conflict with the western world through its passive foreign policy called the 'binding time' (Zhao, 2023). However, this passive foreign policy experienced a dramatic change through the nation's new leader. Witnessing the decline of American hegemony, the CCP, the Chinese Communist Party, was no longer willing to bend to Washington's demands, but to promote Beijing's interests (*ibid*). The CCP's abandonment of its old policy is clearly shown through Beijing's recent aggressive actions, such as their increased military exercises in both the South and East China Sea (Benvenuti, Chung, Khoo, and Tan, 2022).

China's new foreign policy has gradually increased the geo-political tension between two states: the USA and China, creating a new rivalry. Moreover, both nations have made more

allies to pressure their enemies. For example, the USA has created the Quad- a strategic security dialogue between the USA, Japan, Australia, and India- and strengthened the triangle alliance between Korea and Japan, while China improved its relations with the South Asian states. With the fragmentation of the globe into two different spheres of influences, the tension between two states has increased rapidly, and the rivalry is at its peak.

With the new rivalry between the USA and China reaching its climax, the rivalry between the USA and the Russian Federation also remains persistent, causing the international society to be tenser than ever. This is not an exception for the United Nations Security Council, and its structural flaws are slowly being exposed through the rivalry between super powers.

There can be no doubt that the new rivalry is causing the members of the UN to be divided into different spheres of influence. This can be observed clearly through the fragmentation of the permanent members of the Security Council, also known as the P5. The USA, France, and the United Kingdom are forming one group of P3, while they are being opposed by China and Russia (von Einsiedel, Malone, Ugarte, 2015). Von Einsiedel, Malone, and Ugarte underlined that this division is highlighted through the contrast between the attitudes of China and Russia during the previous decades, where they used to passively support the proposals of the P3 (*ibid*). Although this division has always been present in the security council due to differing political ideologies, it is clear that the geopolitical tensions between the two groups are becoming more dramatic with the emergence of the new rivalry. The encroachment of the rivalry into the UN is naturally causing veto powers of the P5 to be overused, which is a problem as it decreases the decisiveness of the Security Council. For instance, 7 vetoes were used in the Security Council in 2023, all coming from the three main states in the rivalry: USA, Russia, and China (UN news, 2024). A further problem of this structure is that veto power may be abused by the permanent members in order to immune themselves from their violations against the UN charter (Dayal, Dunton, 2023). For example, the Security Council failed to prevent a conflict in Ukraine and Israel. Hathaway and Patrick stated that this absolute power of the P5 makes the security council ineffective when responding to conflicts involving the P5 (Hathaway and Patrick, 2015).

There are also other structural issues of the Security Council. For example, there are lacking opportunities for the non-permanent members, or the E10, to contribute to the Security Council, especially during the time of great rivalry. Although the E10 members can make some contributions while they are the president of the council (Dayal, Dunton, 2023), the extreme power difference between the P5 and the E10 make it almost impossible for the E10 nations to directly influence the decision making of the council (von Einsiedel, Malone, Ugarte, 2015). This is especially the case during this period of great rivalry, as little space is available for the non-permanent members to express their own interests in the current binary political system of the council, where nations are simply opposing to oppose their rivals. In addition, the *Oxjournal* expressed their problematic views towards the unfair distribution of the non-permanent seats of the Security Council. For instance, the two largest continents, Asia and Africa, only share 5 seats among themselves, whereas European nations, which have a smaller population compared to the two continents, are allocated 3 seats. (Cajigal, Iqbal, James, Junaid, and dos Santos, 2023)

Moreover, there are skeptical views whether the permanent states deserve their positions in the security council. They gained their positions through the victory of World War II, which

was almost 80 years ago. The *Foreign Policy* expressed their strong views that the permanent members should be reselected by considering the current population distribution and economy. (Ryder, Baisch, Eguegu, 2020) As the *Oxjournal* stated that “addressing the structural flaw is essential in creating a more responsive and effective council that can keep up with the contemporary challenges to international peace and security” (Cajigal, Iqbal, James, Junaid, and dos Santos, 2023), this paper plans to identify how the structure of the United Nations Security Council is vulnerable to the newly emerging rivalry between the superpowers.

3. Hypotheses

The United Nations is in a state of emergency as the tension between the superpowers is intensifying. The structural flaws of the United Nations Security Council often forces the council to be paralyzed and unable to respond to global conflicts. Firstly, the extensive power of the permanent members enables them to prioritise their self interests over the good of the international community, and moreover enables them to abuse their veto power in order to avoid the consequences against their own malfeasance. Secondly, the grand geopolitical struggle between the rivals creates a binary atmosphere in the council, leading to political fragmentation and lack of cooperation. Thirdly, the non-permanent members lack the opportunity to express their opinions as their thoughts are often undermined by the superpowers.

4. Methodology

This paper will explain each of the hypotheses using a detailed case study and evaluate the hypotheses in order to determine the structural vulnerabilities of the United Nations Security Council. For the first hypothesis: “the extensive power of the permanent members allows them to act on self-interest over the collective will of the member states”, the paper will examine the case study of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. This is because the aggression of Russia, the Security Council’s own permanent member, is a clear example that demonstrates a superpower abusing its veto power in order to avoid sanctions against its actions. Russia’s veto forced the Security Council into a deadlock, making it unable to make an effective response.

The second hypothesis: “grand political tensions between the rivals leads to political fragmentation and lack of cooperation” will discuss how the rivalry is creating a binary nature in the Security Council, causing countries to object proposals, not because it is against their interests, but in order to oppose their rivals. The Security Council’s early response to the Coronavirus pandemic demonstrates this well, where China and Russia objected to America’s proposal considering minor issues such as the name of the virus and the location of the Security Council meeting. China and Russia used their veto, not because there was something at stake but to oppose their rival: the United States of America.

Moreover, a data analysis of the increase in numbers of vetoes in the 21st century is used to prove this hypothesis. The trend shows that more vetoes were used each year as the rivalry between the superpowers intensified. In other words, as the tension between the superpowers increased, less resolutions were passed by the Security Council, paralysing the council and making it less effective.

The final hypothesis is about the “structural problems regarding the non-permanent members”. This hypothesis will look at the fundamental structural flaws of the Security Council, such as the extensive power difference between the E10 and the P5 and the unequal distribution of the non-permanent seats between the continents. These problems can be

observed through the case study of the ongoing Syrian Civil War, where the Security Council failed to respond because the opinion of the majority of the non-permanent members were overshadowed by the objection of the permanent members. Moreover, it could be argued that the UN acted less effectively as there was no Middle Eastern country in the Security Council.

In addition the paper will suggest a recommendation for the structural amendments of the Security Council. Through additional case studies, the paper will compare the previous proposals that have been suggested, and by considering all of these proposals, the paper will devise its own proposal to make the council more effective.

5. The Extensive Power of the Permanent Members allows them to Act on Self Interest over the Collective Will of the Member States

Every decision made by the Security Council must be backed by an “affirmative vote of nine members including the concurring votes of the permanent members” (UN Charter, Article 27). This means that if any of the permanent members object to a certain proposal, it will not be adopted as a resolution. This is also known as the veto power of the permanent members, the absolute power that allows them to annul certain resolutions that are against their interest.

There are numerous concerns that the structure of the council enables the permanent members to be granted too much power. For example, many argue that the extensive power difference between the P5 and the E10 makes it almost impossible for the E10 to make valuable contributions towards the decision making of the council (von Einsiedel, Malone, and Ugarte, 2015). This is especially the case during this period of great rivalry, as the binary nature of the council, which was created by the political fragmentation of the members into two groups, prevents the non-permanent members from expressing their own interests. Moreover, the veto power may be overused, which would result in deadlocks, making the council less effective (Hathaway, Patrick, 2015). However, the biggest concern regarding the permanent members’ veto power is that the P5 may abuse their power, or take advantage of their power, in order to prioritise their self interest over the general good of the international society. For example, a permanent member could invade another nation, which is a deliberate violation of the UN charter, and avoid the consequences, such as moral condemnation and economic sanctions, by abusing their veto power in the Security Council. If the permanent member vetoes, the Security Council would be deadlocked and would not react in any way towards the aggressor, even if their actions were a clear violation of the UN Charter.

5.1. Case Study: Russian Invasion of Ukraine

A good example of a permanent member that avoided sanctions despite its aggression is Russia. The world was shocked when Vladimir Putin invaded its neighbour, Ukraine, on February 24th, 2022. Although the UN acted immediately against Russia’s aggression, its actions were limited due to Russia’s veto power.

On the 25th, the second day of the invasion, the Security Council Resolution S/2022/155 was proposed in the council chamber, with the support of 81 member states of the United Nations. The proposed resolution condemned Russia’s aggression, which violated Article 2 of the UN Charter (Security Council Report, 2022). Although 81 member states, including 11 Security Council members, agreed that Russia’s act was against the UN charter and that Russia

should therefore face consequences, Russia vetoed this proposal, and this proposal was never adopted as a resolution (*ibid*).

Following the unsuccessful attempt to condemn Russia in the Security Council, the General Assembly held its emergency session in October in an attempt to pass a General Assembly Resolution, acting accordingly to the Uniting for Peace Resolution, which states that the General Assembly should make relevant recommendations to the members when the Security Council fails due to the lacking unanimity between the permanent members (A/RES/377 (V)). With 143 nations in favour and only 5 against it, the General Assembly Resolution ES-11/4, which condemned Russia and demanded that Russia should “immediately, completely, and unconditionally withdraw from Ukraine” (A/RES/ES-11/4, 2022), was adopted.

However, the General Assembly Resolution did not threaten Russia to stop its aggression. This is because the General Assembly can only “make recommendations to the members of the United Nations Security Council”, instead of making active decisions, such as imposing economic sanctions (UN Charter, Article 10). Although there were several attempts in the Security Council to announce a formal statement of condemnation, Russia’s veto power prevented the council from making effective decisions that would force Russia to back down.

As shown through the case study, a permanent member can abuse its power to avoid any actions being taken against their aggression. The United Nations failed to protect its own member nation, Ukraine, due to the deadlock in the Security Council. With tensions rising due to the rivalry between the superpowers, there are prospects for a direct conflict between the two rivals, which would lead to a catastrophic conflict. However, the serious structural flaw of the Security Council disables it from effectively responding to a future conflict between superpowers. Moreover, this structural flaw might encourage aggression throughout the globe, just like how the weakness and ineffectiveness of the League of Nations allowed the fascists, such as Hitler and Mussolini, to be aggressive and belligerent in terms of their foreign policies. Without the amendment of these structural flaws, the United Nations would continue to fail to achieve its primary aim “to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace” (UN Charter, Article 1).

6. Grand Geopolitical Tension between the Rivals leads to Political Fragmentation and Lack of Cooperation

The United Nations Security Council consists of 5 permanent members with contrasting ideologies. The USA, the UK, and France are often considered as the P3, the democratic sides, who are opposed by the eastern authoritative states, Russia and China. There has always been tension and disagreements between the two groups due to their diverging political ideologies and beliefs. In fact, the rivalries between superpowers are intensifying the geopolitical tension within the Security Council, making the distinctions between the two groups more evident. For example, the recent repeated objections of Russia and China in the Security Council is contrasted to their attitudes in the previous decade, where they used to passively support the proposals of the P3, allowing resolutions to be passed through (von Einsiedel, Malone, Ugarte, 2015).

The rivalry is accelerating the fragmentation of the member states into two different spheres of influence, intensifying the tension between the superpowers by making the politics of the council more binary. In order for the United Nations to take action by passing a Security Council resolution, it needs an “affirmative vote of nine members including the concurring votes of the permanent members” (UN Charter, Article 27(3)). The cooperation between nations is crucial to pass a resolution, especially due to the difficult standards which require that none of the P5 objects. However, the binary nature of the Security Council is causing the rivals to oppose certain resolutions, not because it particularly harms their interest, but simply to oppose their rivals, which demonstrates the affective polarisation of the council (Duffy, McCrae, and Hall, 2019). The security council’s meetings therefore often result in a deadlock, failing to respond to global conflicts (von Einsiedel, Malone, Ugarte, 2015).

6.1. Case Study: The Covid-19 Pandemic and the Early Response of the United Nations Security Council

With the escalation of tension between the superpowers, there have been an increased number of occasions where the Security Council has been paralysed due to the divergent political ideologies between the members. In 2020, the new Wuhan born Coronavirus struck the world. The unprecedented pandemic forced countries to lock down, leading to numerous social problems, including economic recession and individuals panicking in fear and anxiety (Hosseinzadeh, Zareipour, Baljani, and Moradali, 2022). In order to mitigate this unprecedented crisis, the UN Security Council sought to devise a solution. The USA urged the other 14 members of the council that the Security Council should pass a resolution to blame the pandemic on the Chinese, especially by naming the virus as the “Wuhan Virus”. However, China vetoed this proposal, preventing the security council from taking any action about the pandemic (Lynch, 2020). The disagreement between nations caused a deadlock, making the council unable to respond to the international chaos caused by the pandemic.

More disagreements were seen during the pandemic regarding the location of the Security Council meeting. The Americans asserted that the meetings should be resumed online as the pandemic is a “serious public emergency that renders a physical meeting of the Security Council impractical” (Lynch, 2020). However, despite the difficult circumstances, Russia objected to the proposal, arguing that the nations “shouldn’t be afraid to gather in the UNSC chamber” (*ibid*).

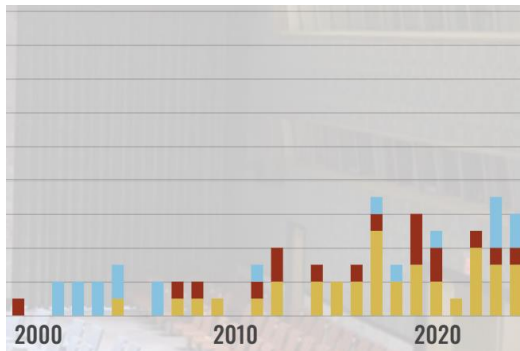
This is a clear example of the rivals disagreeing about minor issues: the name of a virus and the location of the security council meetings. Nothing important was at stake in this meeting, so it could be argued that the rivals did not have a specific reason for them to object to these proposals by sacrificing the efficacy of the council. The permanent members objected to this resolution for their political interests, opposing their opponents, rather than for the interest of the international society. This is a clear example of the complicated political ideologies of the superpowers causing the council to fail to conduct its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international security (United Nations Charter, Article 24).

6.2. Data Analysis: Increase in Number of Vetoes in the 21st Century

The ineffectiveness of the Security Council due to the fragmentation of member states can be further observed through a detailed data analysis of the number of vetoes used in the Security Council each year in the 21st century, which shows a clear correlation between the number of vetoes used and the tension between the superpowers. The use of veto may be

interpreted as a failed resolution, which prevents the Security Council from acting effectively on certain global conflicts.

(Table from UN News, 2024)



Throughout the history of the Security Council, a total of 321 vetoes were used; 92 from the USA, 158 from Russia, 21 from China, 32 from the UK, and 18 from France (UN News, 2024).

Looking at the trend of the table, the number of vetoes are gradually increasing each year. It is crucial to note that the number of vetoes has increased rapidly since the late 2010s, when China started to challenge American hegemony by abandoning its ‘biding time’ policy, marking a start to a new rivalry. Moreover, it is interesting to note

that all of the vetoes used in the 21st century were made by the 3 rival states: the USA, China, and Russia. Moreover, 17 out of 21 Chinese vetoes were used during the Xi Jinping era (*ibid*).

The data analysis provides a clear evidence that China’s new aggressive foreign policies are increasing the geopolitical tension between the permanent members of the Security Council. The table explicitly displays that more vetoes were used as the tension between the rivals increased; in other words, the Security Council was less effective as the rivalry intensified. It is evident that the rivalry is fragmenting the nations into two groups, limiting the number of resolutions being passed through. The binary nature in the council chamber is making the Security Council less effective by forcing them to frequently end up in deadlocks.

7. The Lacking Voice of the Non-Permanent Members in the Council Chamber

Among the 5 permanent members, the Security Council consists of 10 additional non-permanent members, who are elected by the General Assembly and each have a term of 2 years (UN Charter, Article 23(1-2)). Unlike the permanent members, the non-permanent members possess a limited power in the Security Council as they do not have the right to veto certain resolutions. Although the E10 members can make some contributions while they are the president of the council (Dayal, Dunton, 2023), the extensive power difference between the P5 and the E10 limits the actions that the E10 states can take in the council.

In summary, it is a fact that the non-permanent members have limited opportunities to express their opinion and directly influence the council’s decisions. This is especially the case during the present period of great rivalry between the superpowers, where the binary atmosphere of the council limits the space for the non-permanent members to express their own interests.

This is shown through the constant complaints from the non-permanent states regarding how they lack a voice. For example, Syed Akbaruddin, the United Nations Ambassador of India, urged for a Security Council reform, stating that “the council remains dominated by a few states, and voices of the majority of the world’s population are not adequately represented” (Press Trust of India, 2019). Similarly, the Peru Ambassador, Gustavo Meza-Cudara, criticised that there is a “clear imbalance in the council’s decision making process. Non-permanent members are frequently marginalised and our contributions often overlooked.” (WFUNA, 2018). Moreover, the Egyptian Ambassador, Maged Abdelaziz, stated

that “the voice of developing countries are barely heard” in a “largely unrepresentative, undemocratic, and non-transparent” council (UN Press, 2009), while the Dutch Ambassador, Karel van Oosterom, said that the non-permanent members “often find ourselves sidelined in discussions, with decisions being made by a select few” (van Oosterom, 2020). These quotes show that numerous non-permanent states believe that their lacking power and voice in the council chamber causes their views to often be overlooked by the permanent members.

Additionally, there has been constant criticism about the unequal distribution of the non-permanent seats between the continents. For example, while Asia and Africa, the two largest continents in the world, share only 5 seats together, Europe, which relatively has a smaller population than these two continents, are allocated 3 seats (Cajigal, Iqbal, James, Junaid, and dos Santos, 2023).

7.1. Case Study: Syrian Civil War

These structural flaws of the Security Council regarding the non-permanent members were clearly demonstrated through the Syrian Civil War, where the legitimacy of the UN Security Council was questioned due to its ineffectiveness. In March 2011, the tension between Bashar al-Assad’s government and the pro-democracy demonstrators exploded, leading to a deadly civil war (BBC, 2023).

Although the non-permanent members continuously attempted to take action against Assad’s regime by proposing numerous resolutions over the decade, Russia and China used a total of 28 vetoes to object the proposals, forcing the situation to result in a deadlock (Nadin, 2017) (UN News, 2024). This is a clear example where the veto of the P5 forced the E10’s voices to be overlooked in the council. This demonstrates how it is impossible for the non-permanent members to make a meaningful contribution towards the council as they do not have enough power to directly influence the decision making of the Security Council.

The UN Security Council’s failure in Syria is also partially due to one of its fundamental structural flaws: the unequal distribution of non-permanent seats between continents. Between the periods of 2012 to 2021, when the conflict in Syria was at its peak, there was not a single Middle Eastern state in the Security Council. There can be no doubt that if a Middle Eastern state, who would have been able to act as a mediator, the Security Council might have been able to devise an effective solution for this conflict.

Although it has been a decade since the war started, these structural flaws regarding the imbalance of power distribution between the E10 and the P5 have forced the Security Council into a deadlock. The council failed to make any significant actions and the conflict is still ongoing in Syria and there have been over 306,887 civilian casualties (UN Human Rights Office, 2022). The lacking influence of the non-permanent members forced the UN Security Council to fail to uphold its primary goal: to take actions for the “adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations which might lead to a breach of the peace” (UN Charter, Article 1(1)). With the Syrian failure, it is impossible for the council to avoid doubts about its legitimacy.

It is important that the power difference between the P5 and the E10 become more balanced. The permanent members earned their positions through their victory in World War II, which was almost 80 years ago. Some of the members are no longer the strongest powers in the world. It is also true that some of the biggest economies, such as Germany and Japan, who have a bigger economy than permanent members such as France, UK, and Russia, are not permanent members due to their defeat in World War II (GDP, 2023). It is unfair that the

permanent members, who have gained their seat through an obsolete standard, have an absolute power to annul resolutions, even though they are no longer the strongest power in the world.

8. How can the Security Council be Reformed?

With the structural flaws of the council identified, it is crucial for the United Nations to take necessary measures to amend the structure of the Security Council. Throughout the decades, there have been numerous proposals and suggestions to make the council more effective. Although none of these proposals were actually adopted, this section seeks to utilise these proposals as a case study to offer a recommendation for the reform of the Security Council.

8.1. Case Study: G4 Proposal

The G4 model, which was proposed by India, Japan, Germany, and Brazil in 2005, is one of the most prominent proposals. In this model, India stressed the need for a “genuine reform”, rejecting any attempts at making merely superficial changes to the Security Council (Martini, 2009). In the perspective of India, a ‘genuine reform’ can only be conducted by enlarging the Security Council, which would include an addition of 6 permanent and 4 non-permanent members (*ibid*). The proposal states that 6 new permanent members of the Security Council should be elected as follows: 2 seats for African, 2 seats for Asian, 1 seat for Latin American and the Caribbean states, and 1 seat for Western Europe (A/59/L.64 2005). The proposal also suggested that the 4 continents-Asia, Africa, Eastern Europe, and Latin America and the Caribbeans should each be granted 1 additional non-permanent seat (*ibid*).

The G4 proposal also states that amendments are necessary for the Articles 27, 108, and 109 of the UN Charter (Elisabetta Martini 2009). The amendment would suspend the veto power of new permanent members for 15 years, while the nations would discuss whether the new members should also have this privilege to annul a resolution (*ibid*).

In summary, the G4 proposal emphasises the need for increasing the size of the council and limiting the veto power of the new permanent members. Such measures would allow a variety of opinions from different states to flourish and redistribute the seats more evenly. However, this augmentation does have a risk of degrading the efficiency of the council as there would be much more conflicting ideas between the states. Moreover, the proposal fails to address the fundamental structural flaw of the council: the extensive power of the permanent members. The proposal not only states that the original P5 nations would continue to be able to possess their veto power, but also fails to specify the extent of the power that the new permanent members would be granted. Furthermore, it must be acknowledged that this proposal was biased to the G4 members, India, Japan, Germany, and Brazil, questioning the integrity of this proposal (Martini 2009).

8.2. Case Study: Africa Union’s proposal

Despite being the largest continent on the Earth, Africa has been continuously underrepresented in the Security Council chamber (A/60/L.41). The African states have continuously expressed their irritation that their views were frequently neglected in the council. In order to overcome this underrepresentation, in 2005, the African Union proposed a resolution regarding the increase in number of members and redistribution of authority in the Security Council (*ibid*).

According to the proposal, the council would be expanded into a 26 seat chamber, with Africa being granted 2 permanent seats alongside with 2 additional non-permanent seats. Furthermore, the remaining 7 seats would each be distributed to Asia (2 permanent seats and 2

non-permanent seats), Latin America and the Carribeans (1 permanent seat and 1 non-permanent seat), Western Europe (1 permanent seat and 1 non-permanent seat), and Eastern Europe (1 non-permanent seat) accordingly (*ibid*).

Although this resolution would redistribute the power of the council to a more diverse group of nations, allowing a range of opinions to be shared, the increased number of members are likely to cause more disagreements between the nations, which could potentially delay the process of negotiation, thus making the Security Council less effective. Moreover, the African Union proposal states that the new permanent members would also be provided the privilege to express a veto. While it is true that the new permanent members may be able to decentralise and redistribute the current imbalanced power dynamic, there is a risk that these increased veto users would deteriorate both the council's effectiveness and its efficiency further polarise the council. In addition, this change would cause rejection of P5 like the G4 proposal was rejected. In summary, the drawbacks of the proposal overwhelm the merit of the proposal.

8.3. Case Study: L.69 proposal

L.69 Group of Developing Countries (L.69) is a group of developing countries that are committed to reform the Security Council so that it is comprehensive and durable (The Print, 2022). The ministers of L.69 underline that the reform of the Security Council is urgent in order to reflect the current geopolitical context (Government of India Ministry of External Affairs, 2023). The proposal by the L.69 Group contains similarities to the African Union's proposal as the L.69 Group has endorsed the AU's proposal. In the proposal, the L.69 believed that the representation of Latin America, Africa, or small island states is extremely limited (ECOSOC Chamber, 2023) and that expanding the involvement of developing countries is crucial to respond effectively to the diverse and complex challenges the society faces (Statecraft, 2023). Accordingly, this model indeed reflects on the L.69's value that developing countries participate in reforming the Security Council and struggle to represent their interests.

The L.69 asserts that veto power must be abolished in order to prevent deadlocks. However, it fails to provide a specific method for this, and further states that if they fail to abolish veto, the new permanent members should also be granted this power. In the worst case, the number of veto users would increase, leading to a further decreased efficiency.

The proposal asserts for the expansion of the council size from a 15 seat chamber into a 27 seat chamber. The proposal also specifies the additional seat distribution as the following: Asia to gain 2 permanent seats and 1 non-permanent seat, Afric to gain 2 permanent seats and 2 non-permanent seats, Eastern Europe to gain 1 non-permanent seat, Latin America and the Carribeans to gain 1 permanent seat and 1 non-permanent seat, and Western Europe to gain 1 permanent seat (ECOSOC Chamber, 2023). Additionally, the proposal also suggests an addition of 1 non-permanent rotating seat for small island developing states (*ibid*).

As mentioned earlier while discussing the G4 proposal and the African Union proposal, the expansion of the council has both positive and negative impacts on the council. Although the augmentation of seats would enable the council to represent more interests of countries, there is a potential risk that the efficiency and the decisiveness of the council would be aggravated. However, unlike the previous examples, the L. 69 proposal insists on abolishing the veto (ECOSOC Chamber,2023). Despite the proposal's ambitious goal, the proposal still lacks to elucidate on how they will abolish the veto power. Moreover, the L.69 states that if they fail to abolish this privilege, they believe that it would be logical for the new permanent members to also be granted this power. Despite their positive purpose to make the council more

effective, this could potentially increase the number of veto users, in fact, decreasing the effectiveness of the council.

9. Recommendations for the Structural Amendments of the Security Council

The following reform models were not adopted due to the reluctance of the P5, who have repeatedly expressed their concern that their influence would gradually decrease (Rolf et al., 2021). This is reflected through Rolf et al.'s reflection in their paper, "the only thing that the P5 seems to agree on is that the right of veto must not be extended to any new permanent member" (*ibid*). Therefore, after reviewing the proposals that have already been proposed, this paper seeks to provide an alternative, more temperate, recommendation to overcome the structural flaws of the council.

To overcome the deficit of representation, the Security Council should be enlarged into a council with 25 members, including 10 permanent members. In addition, the paper also recommends a seat redistribution, in which the specific numbers are shown in the table below. The recommendation was calculated by a similar expression rate, which was derived by dividing the number of countries per continent from the number of seats per continent. It must be noted that the smallest expression rate and the largest expression rate do not differ by more than two times.

Permanent member	Africa	Asia	Eastern Europe	Latin America and the Carribeans	Western Europe
G4 model	0 → 2	1 → 3	1 → 1	0 → 1	2 → 3
AU proposal	0 → 2	1 → 3	1 → 1	0 → 1	2 → 3
L.69 proposal	0 → 2	1 → 3	1 → 1	0 → 1	2 → 3
This paper	0 → 1	1 → 3	1 → 2	0 → 1	2 → 2

Non-permanent member	Africa	Asia	Eastern Europe	Latin America and the Carribeans	Western Europe
G4 model	3 → 4	2 → 3	1 → 2	2 → 3	2 → 2

AU proposal	3 → 5	2 → 3	1 → 1	2 → 3	2 → 3
L.69 proposal	3 → 5	2 → 3	1 → 2	2 → 3	2 → 3
This paper	3 → 4	2 → 3	1 → 1	2 → 3	2 → 3

The following distribution will improve the diversity of the council by allocating seats to each continent, that each continent has a minimum of 1 seat. In this incremental, the permanent members should be elected each decade, based on their criterion of GDP and Growth rate of an economy. Moreover, there would be conditions for maintenance of this seat, which would include the nation's political stability, their determination for peace, and the size of their economy. This condition would ensure that these nations can make valuable and consistent contributions to the council.

Moreover, an amendment is necessary for the voting process for the council, which currently requires "affirmative vote of nine members including the concurring votes of the permanent members" (UN Charter, Article 27). Since the overuse of veto is often causing the council to result in a deadlock, the amendment of Article 27 is crucial in order to recover the efficiency of the council. Rather than fundamentally abolishing the veto power, it would be more plausible to regulate its use or make the voting process more lenient. For example, this Article could be changed to state that a resolution 'requires an affirmative vote of nine members including the approving votes from at least four permanent members'. This amendment should decrease the frequency of deadlocks, increasing the efficiency of the council.

In order to effectively improve the council's structural efficiency, the Chapter 5 of the UN Charter should be amended. This would be done by a "a vote of two thirds of the members of the General Assembly and ratified in accordance with their respective constitutional processes by two thirds of the Members of the United Nations, including all the permanent members of the Security Council" (UN Charter, Article 108).

10. Conclusion

As mentioned earlier, the USA's rivalry with China is reaching its climax, while its rivalry with Russia is also persistent. There have been multiple hot conflicts recently, including the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the conflict between Israel and Hamas. However, the Security Council has been ineffective in mitigating these global conflicts. These failures are due to its structural vulnerabilities to the rivalry between the superpowers. The vulnerabilities include the binary nature of the council, which leads to the nations meaninglessly objecting to proposals in order to oppose their rivals. Furthermore, the permanent members have too much power compared to the non-permanent members, allowing them to completely nullify resolutions and prioritise their self interest over the general will of the member states. Moreover, the excessive authority of the P5 enables them to abuse their power to avoid consequences against its aggressions, making them the absolute, overpowering figures of the council. Compared to this excessive power of the permanent members, the non-permanent members virtually have no power in the Security Council. The thoughts and opinions of the E10 rarely

influence the Security Council's decision as their opinions are often overshadowed by the permanent members.

In the final analysis, the biggest structural flaw of the United Nations Security Council is that its structure makes it susceptible to geopolitical tension between the rivals, which creates a binary atmosphere in the council. Although other structural flaws, including the veto power and the non-permanent members' lacking influence, are also significant detractors of the efficiency of the council and require amendments, these flaws are fundamentally caused by the geopolitical tensions. For example, the geopolitical tension causes the fragmentation between the nations, leading to an increasing use of vetoes, which was shown through the data analysis. Additionally, the binary nature created by the geopolitical tension limits the space for the non-permanent states to express their views.

The tension between the three rivals -the USA, China, and Russia- is greater than ever, and there are concerns that a direct conflict between the rivals is imminent, which could be the biggest world war that humanity has ever faced. Without amending these structural flaws, the UN Security Council would be paralysed during the upcoming conflicts between superpowers, and its legitimacy would be questioned. The United Nations is presently in a critical state, and without a reform of the Security Council, the rivalry between the superpowers will annihilate the organisation. In order for the United Nations to not repeat the mistakes of its predecessor, the League of Nations, it must develop into an organisation which is independent from the superpowers.

References

- [1] Balsch, A. Ryder, H. and Eguegu, O. "Decolonizing the United Nations Means Abolishing the Permanent Five", *Foreign Policy*, 2020
- [2] "Why has the Syrian War lasted 12 years?", *BBC*, 2022
- [3] Benvenuti, A. Chung, C. P. Khoo, N. and Tan, A. "China's Foreign Policy - The Emergence of a Great Power", *Routledge*, 2022
- [4] Burke White, W. W. "Power Shifts in International Law: Structural Realignment and Substantive Pluralism", *Harvard Academic Journal* Vol.56, 2015
- [5] Cajigal, A. Iqbal, D. James, Z. Junaid, A. and dos Santos, D. "The United Nations Security Council in the 21st Century: Evaluating its Design and Structure", *Oxjournal*, 2023
- [6] Campbell, K. M. and Rapp-Hooper, M. "China is Done Biding its Time", *Foreign Affairs*, 2020
- [7] Dayal, A. and Dunton, C. "The UN Security Council Was Designed for Deadlock - Can it Change?", *United States Institute of Peace*, 2023
- [8] Duffy, B. Hewlett, L. McCrae, J. and Hall J. "Divided Britain?: Polarisation and fragmentation trends in the UK", *The Policy Institute of King's College London*, 2019
- [9] "The L-69 UN Security Council Reforms Event", ECOSOC Chamber, 2023
- [10] "GDP Ranking", *World Bank*, 2023
- [11] "2024 Military Strength Ranking", *Global Fire Power*, 2024
- [12] Hathaway, O. A. and Patrick, S. "Can the UN Security Council Still Keep the PEace? Reassessing its Role, Relevance, and Potential for Reform", *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 2015
- [13] Hosseinzadeh, P. Zareipour, M. Baljani, E. and Moradali, M. R. "Social Consequences of the COVID-19 Pandemic. A Systematic Review", *PubMed Central*, 2022

- [14] Rolf, J. N. Janssen, N. J. and Liedtke, M. “Projecting General Assembly Voting Records onto an Enlarged Security Council: An Analysis of the G4 Reform Proposal”, *Rhine-Waal University of Applied Sciences*, 2021
- [15] Lynch, C. “UN Security Council Paralyzed as Contagion Rages”, *Foreign Policy*, 2020
- [16] “L-69 Ministerial Joint Press Statement”, Government of India Ministry of External Affairs, 2023
- [17] Martini, E. “UN Security Council Reform. Current Developments”, *Istituto Affari Internazionali*, 2009
- [18] Mbara, G. C. Gopal, N. Ehiane, S. and Patrick, H. O. “Re-evaluating the African Union’s Ezulwini Consensus in the Reform of the United Nations’ Security Council”, *Journal of the African Union Studies* Vol. 10, 2021
- [19] Mearsheimer, J. J. “The Inevitable Rivalry”, *Foreign Affairs*, 2021
- [20] Nadin, P. “How the UN Security Council Failed Syria”, *The Interpreter*, 2017
- [21] Patrick, S. Mbete, S. Spektor, M. Guihong, Z. Novosseloff, A. Heusgen, C. Mukherjee, R. Lipsy, P. Y. Izquierdo, M. R. C. Adebajo, A. Kolosovskiy, A. Ng, J. Singh, P. Yinanc, B. Gowan, R. and Dayal, A. “UN Security Council Reform: What the World Thinks”, *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 2023
- [22] “Jaishankar holds first Australia-India-Indonesia trilateral in New York”, *The Print*, 2022
- [23] “G4, L-69 Countries Underline Importance of Security Council Expansion on UNGA Sidelines”, *Statecraft*, 2023
- [24] United Nations, “General Assembly Debates Security Council’s Rising Veto Use”, 2024
- [25] United Nations General Assembly, Resolution 11 of the Eleventh Emergency Special Session, “Letter dated 28 February 2014 from the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council”, adopted 12 October 2022, A/RES/ES-11/4
- [26] United Nations General Assembly, Resolution 59, “Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters”, not adopted 6th July 2005, A/59/L.64
- [27] United Nations General Assembly, “Uniting for Peace”, adopted 3rd November 1950, A/RES/377 (V)
- [28] United Nations General Assembly, Draft Resolution 60, “Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters”, not adopted 14th December 2005, A/61/L.41
- [29] United Nations Security Council, Draft Resolution 155, “Albania, Andorra, Antigua and Barbuda, Australia, Austria, Bahamas, Barbados, Belgium, Belize, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Estonia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Haiti, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Kiribati, Kuwait, Latvia, Lesotho, Liberia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, New Zealand, Niger, North Macedonia, Norway, Palau, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Samoa, San Marino, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Timor-Leste, Trinidad and Tobago, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and

Northern Ireland and United States of America: draft resolution”, not adopted 25th February 2022 , S/2022/155

[30] United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, “UN Human Rights Office estimates more than 306,000 civilians were killed over 10 years in Syria conflict”, 2022

[31] Von Einsiedel, S. Malone, D. M. and Ugarte, B. S. “The UN Security Council in an Age of Great Rivalry”, *United Nations University Working Paper Series* No. 04, 2015

[32] Wolfers, A. “Discord and Collaboration”, *Essays on International Politics* 210, 1962

[33] Zhao, S. “Chinese Foreign Policy Under Xi: No Longer ‘Binding Time’”, *Inkstick*, 2023