

United Nations Security Council Reform and the Global South: An International Law Perspective

Subham Kumar Sahu

PhD Research Scholar, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

Abstract

The reform of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has emerged as one of the most persistent and contentious issues in contemporary international law and global governance. Established in 1945 in the aftermath of the Second World War, the Security Council was designed to maintain international peace and security through a structure that reflected the geopolitical realities of the mid-twentieth century. More than eight decades later, profound transformations in the international community have rendered the Council increasingly unrepresentative of contemporary global power distributions and demographic realities. The growing influence of states from the Global South, particularly emerging powers such as India, Brazil, South Africa, and Nigeria, has intensified demands for a more equitable and democratic Security Council.

This article critically examines the legal, political, and normative dimensions of Security Council reform from the perspective of the Global South. It evaluates the historical origins of the Council's composition, the legal framework governing institutional reform under the United Nations Charter, and competing reform proposals advanced by states and regional organizations. The article argues that the existing structure of the Security Council perpetuates historical inequalities embedded within the post-war international order and undermines the legitimacy of collective security mechanisms. While legal obstacles to reform remain significant, particularly due to the veto power exercised by the permanent members, the increasing assertiveness of Global South states presents an opportunity to reconceptualize representation, legitimacy, and accountability within the United Nations system.

The article concludes that meaningful reform is essential not only for institutional legitimacy but also for ensuring the continued relevance of the Security Council in addressing twenty-first-century challenges. A reformed Council that incorporates broader representation from the Global South would better reflect the principles of sovereign equality, democratic participation, and inclusive multilateralism that underpin contemporary international law.

Keywords: United Nations Security Council, Global South, Security Council Reform, Veto Power, International Law, United Nations Charter, Sovereign Equality, Collective Security, Global Governance, Developing States.

1. Introduction

The United Nations Security Council occupies a central position within the institutional architecture of contemporary international law. Entrusted with the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security under Article 24 of the United Nations Charter, the Council possesses unique authority to adopt binding decisions affecting states, international organizations, and individuals alike.¹ Its powers extend from the authorization of military force and peacekeeping operations to the imposition of economic sanctions and the establishment of international criminal tribunals.²

Despite its extensive authority, the Security Council has long faced criticism regarding its legitimacy, representativeness, and accountability. These concerns have become particularly pronounced among states of the Global South, which collectively constitute the overwhelming majority of United Nations membership but remain significantly underrepresented within the Council's decision-making structures.³ The contemporary composition of the Security Council continues to reflect the geopolitical realities of 1945 rather than the political, economic, and demographic conditions of the twenty-first century.⁴

The concept of the Global South encompasses developing countries across Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean, and parts of Oceania that share historical experiences of colonialism, economic marginalization, and limited influence within international institutions.⁵ Although diverse in political systems and developmental trajectories, these states have increasingly articulated common concerns regarding structural inequalities embedded within global governance frameworks. The Security Council has become a focal point of such criticism because its permanent membership and veto system disproportionately privilege a small number of states while excluding major regions and populations from meaningful participation in decisions affecting international peace and security.⁶

The demand for Security Council reform has intensified in response to several contemporary developments. First, the dramatic expansion of United Nations membership from fifty-one founding states in 1945 to 193 member states today has transformed the demographic composition of the international community.⁷ Second, emerging powers from the Global South have acquired significant economic and political influence, challenging traditional distributions of international power. Third, repeated instances of Security Council paralysis in relation to crises in Syria, Ukraine, Palestine, and elsewhere have raised questions regarding the effectiveness and legitimacy of existing institutional arrangements.⁸

This article examines Security Council reform through the lens of international law and Global South perspectives. It argues that meaningful reform constitutes both a legal and normative imperative necessary to preserve the legitimacy of the collective security system. The article further contends that contemporary reform debates should be understood not merely as disputes concerning institutional design but as broader struggles over representation, equality, and justice within the international legal order.

2. Historical Foundations of Security Council Representation

The origins of the Security Council are deeply rooted in the geopolitical circumstances surrounding the conclusion of the Second World War. The institutional design adopted at the San Francisco Conference reflected a pragmatic compromise between aspirations for universal collective security and the realities of great-power politics.⁹ The architects of the United Nations believed that effective international peace and

security required the participation and cooperation of the major military powers, leading to the creation of permanent seats for China, France, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, and the United States.¹⁰

The inclusion of permanent membership and veto powers represented a deliberate departure from the institutional failures of the League of Nations. The League's inability to prevent aggression during the 1930s convinced policymakers that major powers would only participate in a collective security system if their vital interests were protected through special institutional privileges.¹¹ Consequently, Article 27 of the Charter granted each permanent member the power to block substantive Council decisions irrespective of broader international support.

While this arrangement may have reflected geopolitical realities in 1945, its continued existence raises significant concerns regarding representativeness and legitimacy. The permanent members collectively represent less than one-third of the contemporary global population.¹² Entire regions, including Africa and Latin America, remain excluded from permanent representation despite their substantial contributions to United Nations activities and their demographic significance.¹³

From a Global South perspective, the existing structure embodies historical inequalities inherited from colonial and post-colonial power relations. Most African and Asian states were not independent at the time of the Charter's drafting and therefore had no opportunity to participate meaningfully in determining the institutional design of the Security Council.¹⁴ As a result, many developing countries perceive the Council as an institution that reflects the interests of former colonial powers rather than contemporary principles of sovereign equality.

The principle of sovereign equality occupies a foundational position within international law. Article 2(1) of the Charter explicitly affirms the sovereign equality of all member states.¹⁵ Yet the Security Council's composition appears to create a hierarchy among states that is difficult to reconcile with this principle. Permanent members enjoy privileges unavailable to the overwhelming majority of United Nations members, including the ability to veto decisions supported by the broader international community.

This tension between formal equality and institutional inequality has generated extensive scholarly debate. Critics argue that the veto system undermines democratic legitimacy and perpetuates structural asymmetries within global governance.¹⁶ Defenders contend that great-power privileges remain necessary to ensure international stability and maintain the participation of influential states within the United Nations framework.¹⁷

The Global South has generally aligned with the former position, emphasizing the need for institutional reforms that better reflect contemporary realities. The persistence of colonial-era power structures within international institutions has become a central theme in postcolonial critiques of international law, which argue that many aspects of the international legal order continue to reproduce historical patterns of domination and exclusion.¹⁸

These concerns have become increasingly prominent as states such as India, Brazil, South Africa, and Nigeria have emerged as influential regional and global actors. Their growing economic and political significance has strengthened arguments that the current composition of the Security Council no longer corresponds to actual distributions of power and responsibility within the international system.

3. International Law and the Legal Framework of Security Council Reform

The legal framework governing Security Council reform is primarily contained within Articles 108 and 109 of the United Nations Charter. These provisions establish procedures for Charter amendment and review, reflecting the constitutional character of the Charter within the international legal system.¹⁹

Article 108 provides that amendments shall enter into force when adopted by a two-thirds vote of the General Assembly and subsequently ratified by two-thirds of United Nations members, including all permanent members of the Security Council.²⁰ This requirement effectively grants each permanent member a veto over Charter reform initiatives, creating a significant legal obstacle to institutional transformation.

The amendment procedure reflects the broader constitutional compromise underlying the Charter. While member states possess collective authority to modify institutional arrangements, permanent members retain ultimate control over changes affecting their privileged status. Consequently, reform proposals that seek to alter permanent membership or restrict veto powers face substantial legal and political challenges.

From a Global South perspective, this arrangement creates a paradoxical situation in which those states most likely to lose privileges through reform possess the authority to prevent such changes from occurring. Critics argue that this structure entrenches institutional inequality and limits the capacity of the international community to adapt governance mechanisms to evolving circumstances.²¹

The only significant reform of Security Council membership occurred in 1965, when the number of non-permanent seats increased from six to ten.²² While this amendment modestly improved geographical representation, it did not address concerns regarding permanent membership or veto powers. Consequently, many developing countries regard the 1965 reform as insufficient to resolve broader issues of legitimacy and representation.

4. Security Council Reform Proposals and the Aspirations of the Global South

The contemporary debate on Security Council reform has generated numerous proposals seeking to address deficiencies in representation, legitimacy, and effectiveness. While reform initiatives vary significantly in scope and institutional design, most share the common objective of adapting the Council to contemporary geopolitical realities. From the perspective of the Global South, reform is not merely a procedural matter but a question of distributive justice within the international legal order.²³

The most influential reform proposal has emerged from the Group of Four (G4), consisting of India, Brazil, Germany, and Japan. The G4 advocates an expansion of both permanent and non-permanent categories of membership. Under its proposal, six new permanent seats would be created, including two for African states and two for Asian and Latin American states.²⁴ The proposal seeks to enhance representativeness while preserving the institutional continuity of the Council.

India's claim to permanent membership has received particular attention within reform debates. As the world's most populous state and one of the largest contributors to United Nations peacekeeping operations, India argues that its exclusion from permanent membership undermines the representative legitimacy of

the Council.²⁵ Indian scholars have further contended that India's democratic traditions, economic growth, and increasing diplomatic influence justify a more prominent role within global governance institutions.²⁶

Similarly, Brazil has advanced claims based upon its leadership within Latin America and its longstanding commitment to multilateral diplomacy. As the largest state in Latin America and a significant participant in peacekeeping and development initiatives, Brazil has argued that the absence of permanent representation from Latin America constitutes a serious institutional deficiency.²⁷

The African continent presents perhaps the strongest case for expanded representation. Africa comprises fifty-four member states, representing approximately twenty-eight percent of the United Nations membership, yet possesses no permanent seat on the Security Council.²⁸ This absence appears particularly problematic given that a substantial proportion of Security Council deliberations concern conflicts and security challenges within Africa itself.²⁹

The African Union has articulated its position through the Ezulwini Consensus and the Sirte Declaration. The Ezulwini Consensus demands at least two permanent seats with veto powers and five additional non-permanent seats for Africa.³⁰ The proposal is grounded in principles of historical justice and equitable geographical representation. African states argue that the continent's exclusion from permanent membership reflects colonial-era inequalities that have no legitimate place within contemporary international institutions.

The legal arguments advanced by African states frequently invoke the principle of sovereign equality and the requirement that international institutions reflect the diversity of the international community. According to this perspective, permanent African representation is not merely a political aspiration but a normative necessity derived from principles of fairness and inclusiveness embedded within the Charter framework.³¹

However, the African position also faces practical challenges. The absence of consensus regarding which states should occupy potential permanent seats has complicated negotiations. South Africa, Nigeria, and Egypt are frequently identified as leading candidates, yet regional rivalries have impeded the development of a unified approach regarding representation.³²

In contrast to the G4 proposal, the Uniting for Consensus (UfC) group opposes the expansion of permanent membership. Led by countries such as Italy, Pakistan, Argentina, and South Korea, the UfC argues that creating additional permanent seats would merely reproduce existing inequalities.³³ Instead, the group advocates expanding the number of non-permanent seats while preserving opportunities for periodic rotation and accountability.

Supporters of the UfC approach contend that permanent membership is fundamentally inconsistent with democratic governance principles. They argue that increasing the number of privileged states would not resolve concerns regarding legitimacy but would instead institutionalize new forms of inequality.³⁴ According to this view, reform should focus on enhancing representativeness through elected membership rather than extending permanent privileges to additional states.

The disagreement between the G4 and the UfC illustrates broader tensions within reform debates. While both groups acknowledge the need for greater representation, they differ fundamentally regarding the

appropriate institutional mechanisms for achieving this objective. The resulting deadlock has significantly impeded progress toward comprehensive reform.

Another influential proposal emerged from the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change established by the Secretary-General in 2003. The Panel proposed two alternative models for Security Council expansion. Model A envisaged six new permanent seats without veto powers and three additional non-permanent seats, while Model B proposed eight renewable seats with longer terms alongside one additional non-permanent seat.³⁵

The High-Level Panel emphasized that institutional legitimacy and effectiveness are mutually reinforcing rather than contradictory objectives. According to its analysis, a Security Council perceived as unrepresentative may struggle to secure compliance with its decisions, thereby undermining its effectiveness in maintaining international peace and security.³⁶ This observation remains highly relevant in contemporary reform debates.

The Secretary-General's subsequent report, *In Larger Freedom*, similarly highlighted the necessity of adapting international institutions to changing realities. The report argued that the legitimacy of global governance depends upon the capacity of institutions to reflect contemporary distributions of power and responsibility.³⁷

Despite widespread recognition of the need for reform, negotiations within the Intergovernmental Negotiations (IGN) process have produced limited substantive progress. Established in 2008, the IGN framework has facilitated discussions regarding membership categories, veto powers, regional representation, and working methods.³⁸ However, deep divisions among member states continue to obstruct consensus regarding specific reform proposals.

The persistence of these disagreements reflects the complexity of balancing competing principles and interests. States seek reform that enhances their own influence while simultaneously preserving broader institutional stability. Consequently, negotiations often become exercises in strategic bargaining rather than genuine efforts to achieve collective solutions.

For many Global South states, the slow pace of reform has generated frustration regarding the responsiveness of the United Nations system. The continued inability to address longstanding concerns regarding representation has contributed to perceptions that international institutions remain resistant to meaningful democratization.³⁹

5. The Veto Power and the Crisis of Legitimacy

No aspect of Security Council reform has generated greater controversy than the veto power. Article 27(3) of the Charter grants each permanent member the authority to prevent the adoption of substantive resolutions irrespective of the level of international support they enjoy.⁴⁰ While originally conceived as a mechanism for preserving great-power cooperation, the veto has increasingly become a source of institutional paralysis and legitimacy deficits.

The use of the veto has been particularly controversial in situations involving humanitarian crises and mass atrocity crimes. Repeated vetoes concerning Syria, Palestine, and Ukraine have prevented collective

action despite widespread international concern regarding ongoing violence and human suffering.⁴¹ Critics argue that such outcomes undermine the Security Council's responsibility to maintain international peace and security and weaken confidence in the collective security system.

From a Global South perspective, the veto symbolizes broader inequalities embedded within the international legal order. It permits a small number of states to override the preferences of the overwhelming majority of United Nations members, thereby creating an apparent contradiction between sovereign equality and institutional practice.⁴²

The legal justification for the veto traditionally rests upon arguments concerning effectiveness and political realism. Proponents contend that major powers would be unlikely to participate in a collective security system that could authorize coercive measures against their fundamental interests.⁴³ According to this reasoning, the veto represents a necessary compromise between ideal principles and practical realities.

However, contemporary circumstances differ substantially from those prevailing in 1945. The international community has expanded dramatically, new centers of economic and political influence have emerged, and normative commitments to democracy and human rights have become increasingly prominent. Consequently, many scholars question whether traditional justifications for the veto remain persuasive.⁴⁴

Several reform initiatives have sought to address concerns regarding veto usage without formally abolishing the institution. One prominent proposal is the French-Mexican initiative advocating voluntary veto restraint in situations involving mass atrocity crimes.⁴⁵ Under this proposal, permanent members would refrain from exercising the veto when credible evidence indicates the occurrence of genocide, crimes against humanity, or war crimes.

Similarly, the Accountability, Coherence and Transparency (ACT) Group has promoted a Code of Conduct encouraging Security Council members to support timely and decisive action in response to mass atrocities.⁴⁶ Although these initiatives lack legally binding force, they reflect broader efforts to reconcile great-power privileges with evolving normative expectations regarding international responsibility.

The Global South has generally supported such initiatives while simultaneously advocating more comprehensive reforms. Many developing countries regard voluntary restraint as a useful interim measure but not a substitute for structural transformation. From their perspective, the legitimacy crisis surrounding the veto cannot be fully resolved without addressing underlying inequalities in representation and decision-making authority.

The debate regarding veto reform also raises important questions concerning the constitutional character of the United Nations Charter. Some scholars have argued that the veto should be interpreted consistently with broader Charter purposes and principles, including respect for human rights and the maintenance of international peace and security.⁴⁷ Others maintain that the veto constitutes an unconditional legal prerogative that cannot be restricted through interpretative techniques.⁴⁸

These competing perspectives illustrate the broader tension between legal formalism and normative evolution within international law. While the Charter's text clearly recognizes veto powers, changing understandings of legitimacy and accountability have generated increasing pressure for reinterpretation and reform.

For the Global South, the veto debate ultimately concerns more than institutional procedure. It reflects fundamental questions regarding who exercises authority within the international system and whose interests are prioritized in decisions affecting global peace and security. As long as these concerns remain unresolved, demands for Security Council reform are likely to persist.

6. Global South Approaches to International Institutional Reform

The demand for Security Council reform cannot be understood in isolation from broader debates concerning the democratization of international institutions. For many states of the Global South, the question of representation within the Security Council forms part of a larger critique of global governance structures established during the immediate post-Second World War period. Institutions such as the United Nations Security Council, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank continue to reflect historical distributions of power that no longer correspond to contemporary political, economic, and demographic realities.⁴⁹

The Global South's critique is deeply informed by postcolonial approaches to international law. Postcolonial scholars have argued that many international institutions emerged within a historical context characterized by colonial domination and unequal participation.⁵⁰ Although formal colonialism has largely disappeared, institutional arrangements established during that era often continue to shape contemporary decision-making processes. Security Council reform is therefore viewed not merely as an administrative adjustment but as part of a broader project of correcting historical injustices embedded within international governance structures.

This perspective has been particularly influential among African, Asian, and Latin American states. These regions collectively represent the overwhelming majority of the world's population and comprise most United Nations member states. Yet their influence within the Security Council remains limited when compared with that of the permanent members.⁵¹ The resulting disparity has contributed to perceptions that the Council lacks sufficient democratic legitimacy to exercise authority on behalf of the international community as a whole.

From a legal perspective, the Global South frequently invokes the principle of sovereign equality as a normative foundation for reform. Article 2(1) of the United Nations Charter recognizes the sovereign equality of all member states. While sovereign equality does not necessarily require identical institutional privileges, many developing countries argue that existing disparities have reached a level inconsistent with the Charter's foundational principles.⁵²

Moreover, Global South states increasingly emphasize the concept of inclusive multilateralism. This approach seeks to ensure that international decision-making processes reflect the diversity of the international community and incorporate perspectives from all regions. Inclusive multilateralism is particularly important in matters concerning peace and security because Security Council decisions often have significant consequences for developing countries.⁵³

The growing influence of emerging powers has further strengthened demands for reform. States such as India, Brazil, South Africa, Indonesia, Nigeria, and Mexico have become increasingly active participants

in international diplomacy and global economic governance. Their expanding capabilities challenge assumptions underlying the post-1945 distribution of institutional authority.⁵⁴

India's position is especially significant in this regard. As the world's largest democracy, one of its largest economies, and a major contributor to United Nations peacekeeping operations, India has consistently argued that contemporary realities justify permanent membership.⁵⁵ Similar arguments have been advanced by Brazil and South Africa, which emphasize their leadership roles within their respective regions.

The emergence of these powers has transformed reform debates from questions of symbolic representation into issues concerning the redistribution of influence within the international system. Consequently, opposition to reform often reflects concerns regarding the potential implications of institutional change for existing power structures.

7. Critical Evaluation of Competing Reform Models

The various reform proposals advanced over the past three decades each possess distinct strengths and weaknesses. A critical evaluation of these proposals reveals the complexity of balancing effectiveness, legitimacy, representativeness, and political feasibility.

The G4 proposal offers perhaps the most comprehensive attempt to address contemporary representational deficits. By expanding permanent membership to include major states from underrepresented regions, the proposal seeks to align Security Council composition with current geopolitical realities.⁵⁶ The inclusion of India and Brazil would significantly enhance representation for Asia and Latin America, while additional African seats would address longstanding concerns regarding continental exclusion.

However, critics argue that the G4 proposal risks replicating existing inequalities. The creation of new permanent members may improve geographical representation while simultaneously entrenching new hierarchies among developing countries. Smaller states have expressed concerns that permanent membership could concentrate influence within regional powers at the expense of broader participation.⁵⁷

The Uniting for Consensus proposal seeks to avoid this problem by expanding only non-permanent membership. This approach emphasizes accountability through periodic elections and avoids creating additional privileged categories of states.⁵⁸ Nevertheless, critics contend that non-permanent seats cannot provide the level of influence necessary to address structural imbalances within the Council. States serving limited terms often struggle to shape long-term agendas or exercise sustained leadership in peace and security matters.

The African Union's position occupies a unique place within reform debates. The Ezulwini Consensus combines demands for greater representation with calls for historical justice. African states argue that the continent's exclusion from permanent membership is particularly indefensible given its demographic significance and the Security Council's extensive involvement in African conflicts.⁵⁹

The strength of the African position lies in its normative appeal. The absence of permanent African representation appears increasingly difficult to justify under contemporary standards of equality and inclusiveness. Yet practical challenges persist, particularly regarding the selection of African permanent

representatives. Regional competition among potential candidates has complicated efforts to present a unified strategy.

Veto reform presents even greater difficulties. Complete abolition would undoubtedly enhance formal equality among states but appears politically unrealistic. Permanent members have shown little willingness to relinquish their privileges, and the Charter amendment process effectively grants them the authority to prevent such reforms.⁶⁰

More modest proposals involving voluntary restraint or procedural limitations may therefore offer more practical alternatives. While these initiatives do not eliminate structural inequalities, they could reduce instances of paralysis and improve the Council's capacity to respond to humanitarian crises.⁶¹

From a Global South perspective, the ideal reform model would combine expanded representation with enhanced accountability. Such an approach would seek to balance the need for effective decision-making against the demands of democratic legitimacy and geographical inclusiveness. Achieving this balance remains one of the central challenges facing contemporary international institutional reform.

8. International Law, Legitimacy, and the Future of Collective Security

The legitimacy of international institutions depends not only upon their legal authority but also upon perceptions regarding the fairness and inclusiveness of their decision-making processes. In the context of the Security Council, legitimacy concerns have become increasingly pronounced as representational disparities have widened between institutional structures and contemporary geopolitical realities.⁶²

International law has traditionally recognized the importance of legitimacy in securing compliance with legal norms and institutional decisions. States are more likely to support and implement decisions adopted through procedures perceived as fair and representative.⁶³ Conversely, institutions that appear unresponsive to changing circumstances risk declining effectiveness and diminishing authority.

The Security Council's legitimacy challenges are particularly significant because of the binding nature of its decisions. Unlike many international organizations, the Council possesses the authority to impose obligations upon states irrespective of their consent.⁶⁴ Such authority requires a strong foundation of legitimacy if it is to command broad international support.

Global South critiques highlight the tension between legal authority and democratic representation. While the Council's powers derive from the Charter, its composition continues to reflect historical arrangements established when much of Africa and Asia remained under colonial rule.⁶⁵ As a result, many developing countries question whether existing institutional structures adequately reflect contemporary understandings of equality and participation.

These concerns have implications extending beyond institutional design. The effectiveness of collective security depends upon the willingness of states to cooperate with Security Council decisions. If significant segments of the international community perceive the Council as unrepresentative, compliance and cooperation may become increasingly difficult to secure.⁶⁶

The future of collective security therefore depends, at least in part, upon the capacity of the United Nations to adapt its institutions to changing realities. Reform should not be understood as a threat to international stability but rather as a mechanism for preserving institutional relevance and legitimacy.⁶⁷

The experience of other international organizations demonstrates that institutional adaptation is both possible and necessary. International institutions routinely evolve in response to new challenges, membership expansions, and changing political conditions. The Security Council should not be regarded as an exception to this broader pattern of institutional development.⁶⁸

At the same time, reform efforts must recognize political realities. The legal requirements governing Charter amendment make comprehensive transformation difficult to achieve. Consequently, meaningful progress may require incremental approaches combining procedural improvements, enhanced transparency, expanded representation, and voluntary limitations on veto usage.⁶⁹

Such measures would not resolve all concerns regarding inequality and representation. Nevertheless, they could contribute significantly to strengthening the legitimacy and effectiveness of the Security Council while preserving the stability of the broader United Nations system.

9. Conclusion

The debate concerning Security Council reform represents one of the most significant constitutional questions facing contemporary international law. More than eighty years after the establishment of the United Nations, the institutional structure of the Security Council continues to reflect historical circumstances that no longer correspond to contemporary realities. The rise of the Global South, the expansion of United Nations membership, and the emergence of new centers of economic and political influence have fundamentally transformed the international community.

This article has argued that demands for reform are grounded not merely in political aspirations but also in important normative principles embedded within the international legal order. The principles of sovereign equality, representative legitimacy, and inclusive multilateralism provide compelling foundations for reconsidering existing institutional arrangements. The continued exclusion of major regions and populations from permanent representation undermines the credibility of the Security Council and weakens confidence in the collective security system.

The Global South's critique highlights broader tensions between historical power structures and contemporary expectations regarding democratic participation in international governance. While the existing Security Council has played a significant role in maintaining international peace and security, its legitimacy increasingly depends upon its capacity to adapt to changing circumstances. Failure to pursue meaningful reform risks widening the gap between institutional authority and international acceptance.

Among the various reform proposals examined, no single model offers a complete solution. The G4 proposal addresses representational deficits but may create new inequalities. The Uniting for Consensus approach emphasizes accountability but may inadequately address structural imbalances. The African Union's position provides a powerful normative framework grounded in historical justice but faces practical implementation challenges.

Nevertheless, certain conclusions emerge clearly. First, Africa's exclusion from permanent membership is increasingly indefensible. Second, greater representation for major developing countries is necessary if the Council is to reflect contemporary geopolitical realities. Third, the continued use of the veto in situations involving mass atrocities raises serious questions concerning legitimacy and accountability. Finally, meaningful reform is essential for preserving the long-term effectiveness of the collective security system.

The future of the Security Council will ultimately depend upon the willingness of states to reconcile political interests with broader commitments to fairness and inclusiveness. International law provides both the framework and the normative justification for such efforts. Although reform remains politically challenging, it is neither legally impossible nor institutionally undesirable. Rather, it constitutes an essential step toward constructing a more representative, legitimate, and effective system of global governance.

A reformed Security Council capable of incorporating the voices and interests of the Global South would strengthen not only the legitimacy of the United Nations but also the broader international legal order upon which contemporary peace and security depend.

FOOTNOTES/ REFERENCES

1. U.N. Charter art. 24, para. 1.
2. Erika de Wet, *The Chapter VII Powers of the United Nations Security Council* 13–20 (Hart Publishing 2004).
3. Bardo Fassbender, *UN Security Council Reform and the Right of Veto* 1–10 (Kluwer Law International 1998).
4. Thomas G. Weiss & Sam Daws eds., *The Oxford Handbook on the United Nations* 145–151 (Oxford Univ. Press 2018).
5. Vijay Prashad, *The Poorer Nations: A Possible History of the Global South* 1–8 (Verso 2012).
6. Edward C. Luck, *UN Security Council: Practice and Promise* 77–84 (Routledge 2006).
7. United Nations, *Growth in United Nations Membership*, U.N. Dep't of Global Communications (2024).
8. Ian Hurd, *International Organizations: Politics, Law and Practice* 121–126 (6th ed. 2023).
9. Ruth B. Russell, *A History of the United Nations Charter* 714–725 (Brookings Institution Press 1958).
10. Hans Kelsen, *The Law of the United Nations* 280–285 (Stevens & Sons 1950).
11. Inis L. Claude Jr., *Swords into Plowshares: The Problems and Progress of International Organization* 83–90 (4th ed. 1971).
12. Nico Krisch, *The Security Council and the Great Powers*, in *Max Planck Encyclopedia of Public International Law* (2013).
13. African Union, *The Ezulwini Consensus, Ext/EX.CL/2 (VII)* (2005).
14. Antony Anghie, *Imperialism, Sovereignty and the Making of International Law* 196–201 (Cambridge Univ. Press 2004).
15. U.N. Charter art. 2, para. 1.

16. Thomas M. Franck, *The Power of Legitimacy and the Legitimacy of Power*, 100 *Am. J. Int'l L.* 88, 90–96 (2006).
17. Michael J. Glennon, *Limits of Law, Prerogatives of Power* 39–44 (Palgrave Macmillan 2001).
18. B.S. Chimni, *International Law and World Order: A Critique of Contemporary Approaches* 227–235 (2d ed. 2017).
19. U.N. Charter arts. 108–109.
20. Rosalyn Higgins, *Problems and Process: International Law and How We Use It* 173–176 (Oxford Univ. Press 1994).
21. Mohammed Bedjaoui, *Towards a New International Economic Order* 91–94 (UNESCO 1979).
22. G.A. Res. 1991 A (XVIII), *Question of Equitable Representation on the Security Council*, U.N. Doc. A/5515 (Dec. 17, 1963).
23. Ramesh Thakur, *The United Nations, Peace and Security* 286–292 (Cambridge Univ. Press 2006).
24. U.N. General Assembly, *Report of the Open-Ended Working Group on Security Council Reform*, U.N. Doc. A/59/47 (2004).
25. Government of India, *India and United Nations Security Council Reform: Official Position Paper* (2023).
26. C. Raja Mohan, *Crossing the Rubicon: The Shaping of India's New Foreign Policy* 189–194 (2003).
27. Paulo Roberto de Almeida, *Brazil and UN Reform*, 25 *Revista Brasileira de Política Internacional* 15 (2012).
28. United Nations, *Membership of the United Nations*, U.N. Statistics Division (2024).
29. Adekeye Adebajo, *The Curse of Berlin: Africa after the Cold War* 303–309 (Oxford Univ. Press 2010).
30. African Union, *Ezulwini Consensus*, *supra* note 13.
31. Dire Tladi, *The African Union and Reform of the Security Council*, 17 *African Yearbook of Int'l Law* 183, 190–197 (2009).
32. Adebayo Adedeji, *Comprehending African Conflicts* 225–228 (Zed Books 1999).
33. *Uniting for Consensus Group*, *Position Paper on Security Council Reform* (2023).
34. Luigi Bonanate, *The United Nations and Democratic Reform*, 11 *Global Governance* 45, 52–56 (2005).
35. *Report of the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility*, U.N. Doc. A/59/565 (2004).
36. *Id.* paras. 249–256.
37. U.N. Secretary-General, *In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security and Human Rights for All*, U.N. Doc. A/59/2005 (2005).
38. U.N. General Assembly Decision 62/557, *Intergovernmental Negotiations on Security Council Reform* (2008).
39. Kishore Mahbubani, *The New Asian Hemisphere* 214–220 (PublicAffairs 2008).
40. U.N. Charter art. 27, para. 3.
41. Jennifer Trahan, *Existing Legal Limits to Security Council Veto Power in the Face of Atrocity Crimes* 33–42 (Cambridge Univ. Press 2020).
42. Fassbender, *supra* note 3, at 275–282.
43. Kelsen, *supra* note 10, at 294–300.

44. Ian Johnstone, Security Council Deliberations: The Power of the Better Argument, 14 *Eur. J. Int'l L.* 437, 439–444 (2003).
45. French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, Political Declaration on Suspension of Veto Powers in Cases of Mass Atrocities (2015).
46. Accountability, Coherence and Transparency Group (ACT), Code of Conduct Regarding Security Council Action Against Genocide, Crimes Against Humanity or War Crimes (2015).
47. Erika de Wet, The Interpretation of Security Council Resolutions, 16 *Max Planck Y.B. U.N. L.* 183, 192–201 (2012).
48. Dapo Akande, The Legal Nature of Security Council Veto Powers, 14 *J. Conflict & Security L.* 321, 325–331 (2009).
49. José Antonio Ocampo, *Resetting the International Monetary (Non)System* 11–16 (Oxford Univ. Press 2017).
50. Antony Anghie, *supra* note 14, at 265–271.
51. United Nations, Member States of the United Nations (2024).
52. U.N. Charter art. 2(1).
53. U.N. Secretary-General, *Our Common Agenda* (2021).
54. Amitav Acharya, *The End of American World Order* 67–82 (2d ed. 2018).
55. Shashi Tharoor, *Pax Indica* 297–305 (Penguin 2012).
56. Fassbender, *supra* note 3, at 318–327.
57. Weiss & Daws, *supra* note 4, at 694–699.
58. Uniting for Consensus Group, *supra* note 33.
59. Tladi, *supra* note 31, at 198–204.
60. Higgins, *supra* note 20, at 174–176.
61. Trahan, *supra* note 41, at 213–220.
62. Franck, *supra* note 16, at 96–103.
63. Thomas M. Franck, *Fairness in International Law and Institutions* 7–25 (Oxford Univ. Press 1995).
64. U.N. Charter arts. 25, 39–42.
65. Anghie, *supra* note 14, at 273–279.
66. Ian Hurd, *After Anarchy: Legitimacy and Power in the United Nations Security Council* 65–89 (Princeton Univ. Press 2007).
67. Ramesh Thakur, The United Nations in Global Governance, 16 *Global Governance* 203, 205–213 (2010).
68. Jan Klabbers, *An Introduction to International Organizations Law* 301–315 (4th ed. 2022).
69. B.S. Chimni, Reforming the International Institutional Order: A Global South Perspective, 21 *Asian J. Int'l L.* 45, 51–63 (2021).