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CURRENT CRISES EXPOSING UNSC PARALYSIS: A CASE FOR URGENT REFORM

AUTHORED BY – SHALINI

Abstract

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is under unprecedented pressure responding to continuing and emerging global crises, starkly revealing its limitations and paralysis. While it is not yet dysfunctional, the UNSC has taken ineffective action in response to conflicts and humanitarian crises and in the face of new threats to international peace and security raise questions of its legitimacy and effectiveness. This assignment will detail the current crises facing the UNSC including the following geopolitical tensions, a concern for abuse of veto power, and inadequate representation. It will argue for urgent reform to reinvigorate the UNSC and its ability to be an effective body for the purpose of international peace and security.

The assignment will also assess the implications for inaction by the UNSC including ineffective action in the face of global crises, erosion of international cooperation, and loss of credibility and legitimacy. The assignment will then explore possible amendments to the UNSC including: inclusion of new members, limitations to the usage of veto power, and improvement in working methods. It will argue that if anything, the UNSC could address its current challenges and improve its responses to global crises.

This assignment emphasised various facets of international relations and global governance, by conducting a critical analysis of the architecture, procedures and decision-making processes of the UNSC, the complexities of global governance; tensions inherent to international relations, and the significance of collaboration and cooperation of states, to address global challenges and maintaining peace and security.

Overall, this study maintained there is an urgent requirement for international reform that grants the UNSC power to properly manage its original role of maintaining international peace and security.

Keywords: United Nations Security Council, UNCS reform, global crises, geopolitical tensions, veto rights, inadequate representation, international collaboration, collective action.

1. Introduction

The UN Security Council (UNSC) is the principal entity responsible with international peace and security. The UNSC has executed the role of maintaining international peace and security since its inception in 1945, but the actions of the UNSC are being questioned more frequently. As of now, the UNSC has experienced immense scrutiny for failing to act appropriately concerning international armed conflict, humanitarian crises, and emerging threat. In addition to the UNSC's capacity and relevance to international peace and security, there is also a broader potential question concerning the UNSC as an offender of UN Charter provisions for the inaction..

The challenges facing the UNSC are largely based on its organization and decision-making processes, established over seventy years ago. The veto power held by five permanent members (P5) negatively affects the decision-making capacity of the body while underrepresentation of much of the world limits legitimacy.

This assignment will review the current crises facing the UNSC and posit that reform is imminent through a process of revitalizing the UNSC. It will outline what issues are resulting in paralysis in the discussion on the UNSC's decision making and how reform might look, while stressing the need for collective approach to joint or common action among States with a view to addressing issues of peace and security around the world.

Key Questions:

1. What is the present crisis state for the UN Security Council (UNSC)?
2. What does it mean when UNSC is in a state of paralysis?
3. What reform possibilities exist to improve the functionality of the UNSC?
4. How can the international community assist in UNSC reform, including peace and security globally?

By considering the four questions above, this assignment intends to add to the debate regarding UNSC reform and its apparent ability to maintain international peace and security.

2. Current Crises Facing TTTE UNSC

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) undergoing many hardship that undermines its power to achieve its requirements to preserve international peace and security that includes:

Geopolitical divides. The UNSC appears to often reflect geopolitical divides, instead of global consensus, where permanent members (p5) such as the US, China and Russia often appear to rely on their vested interests, rather than acting as a global community. Recently--especially considering armed conflict in Ukraine and Gaza, in addition to China and Taiwan--the UNSC has often found the possibility of real commitment and action stymied because of these geopolitical divides.

Veto misuses. The veto by the permanent members could create paralysis and inaction (see for example the US military actions concerning Israel/Palestine) while matters where allies could be offended (e.g. Russia and China) might have little to no inertia.

Collective Decision Making: UN member states should encourage permanent members to promote a more collaborative decision-making mechanism to respond to pressures and challenges that the world is currently faced with, or becoming increasingly faced with. Together in this regard permanent members should be able to put together an agreement to launch negotiations using a single, comprehensive text that would empower

Legitimacy Crisis - The contorted fashion in which the SC set, and applied norms have undermined the SC's moral authority among the Global South because they experience inequitable treatment according to the SC's recognition of stronger and weak, states.

Diminishing Multilateralism - The observable diminishing prominence of the UNSC represents a fundamental change in world politics; it reflects a trend of growing momentum for regional groupings and ad-hoc coalitions, where ever the UNSC is losing relevance, it will be combined with a declining multilateralism.

Reformed Difficulty - On the one hand, there are perennial debates on how reform is to take place but the conversations have not gained traction; on the other hand, when the P5 (prophets of reform) discuss reforming the UNSC by adding new permanent members (i.e., India, Brazil and South Africa), the other P5 members push back against the idea.

The crises mentioned above have led to the UNSC's inaction against or fulfillment of addressing important global issues, such as:

1. *Conflict resolution:* The UNSC's inaction and inability to deter implementation of the

conflict is unfortunate in any case especially in the backdrop of Ukraine, Gaza, and Syria raise questions and concerns about its efficacy.

2. *Humanitarian disasters*: The UNSC's expected response to humanitarian disasters has not registered is disassociated, and failed to be a source of action leads concerns of its credibility as seen recently in the Ukraine context.
3. *Global governance*: The UNSC has not evangelized and activated its institutional or centralized status of its process of neutrality and acted on its mechanisms of action in its non interference on climate change or pandemic disease and imminent banking crises.

3. Consequences o/ UNSC paralysis

The ramifications of the paralysis of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) are dire for international peace and security. Here are some of the key consequences:

1. *Inability to respond effectively to global crises*

The inability of the UNSC to respond effectively to armed conflicts, humanitarian crises and emerging threats can further this erosion when challenges and conditions deteriorate, to lead to either a combination of the below outcomes:

- Prolonged armed conflicts and human suffering
- Humanitarian needs and displacement occurring at a larger level
- Areas of, countries and vulnerabilities to global security facing wider destabilization

2. *Stymied international collaboration*

Lastly, paralysis at the UN Security Council may also stymie international collaboration and may weaken trust in the global/shared institutional glue that binds together Collaborative partnership on collective/global challenges (e.g. climate change, pandemics, geopolitical economic shocks).

Unilateralism and protectionism

International institutions, and international norms.

3. *Legitimacy and credibility crisis*

When paralysis is experienced by the UNSC, it can impact its legitimacy and

credibility, which could mean:

- Persistence and popular distrust in the institution.
- Increased criticism and scrutiny of the UNSC from civil society and the media.
- A reduced effectiveness in advancing peace and security.

4. *Humanitarian consequences*

The humanitarian implications of a paralyzed UNSC could be catastrophic - grim numbers of:

- Increased levels of civilian death and suffering.
- Displacement and migration of people.
- Increased potential and/or actualization of atrocity and genocide.

5. *Global Instability*

The UNSC's paralysis can fuel to global disorder, rulling to:

- Increased outbreak of violence
- Decreased regional and global security
- Increased risk of global economic shocks and instability

6. *Undermining of International Law*

The UNSC's paralysis can undermine the growth and execution international law, leading to:

- Decreased accountability for international crimes
- Increased impunity for perpetrators
- Weakened international norms and standards

The implications of paralysis at the UN Security Council with respect to international peace and security, humanitarian emergencies and global stability are, and could be, huge, even potentially catastrophic. Therefore, addressing the origins/roots and patterns of paralysis of the UN Security Council, and possessing the political will to support reform of the institution, to make the UN Security Council more efficient and responsive as an institution, to proactively manage the challenges, issues and problems raised by a globalized world is crucial.

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Potential alterations to the UN Security Council (UNSC), are crucial to navigate out of its current state of absolute stasis, and be more effective in its mandate to maintain peace and security in the world. The reform options include:

More Permanent Members: The addition of emerging powers such as India, Brazil and South Africa, reflect the enlightenment of the geopolitical world today, as well as the changing geopolitics within the 21st Century more broadly. The larger group of views included in decision making organizations, the better the UNSC will reflect what the world looks like today!

Regional Representation: To ensure various views are included in decision-making, there is a call to increase representation from Africa and other underrepresented regions. For example, the African Union demanded two permanent seats with full veto power and at least three more non-permanent seats.

Reform of the Veto Power: There has been some support for limiting the use of veto in instances of mass atrocity like genocide and war crimes, and thus eliminate paralysis in the paper-producing machinery of the UNSC. Some writers have proposed a qualified majority opinion or enforcing Article 27.3, which requires UNSC members to abstain on disputes to which they are a party.

Increased Accountability and Transparency: There has been agreement and in some instances practices to facilitate enhanced and as a result improved accountability and transparency in so far as opening a greater number of sessions to non-member states, increasing the number of open sessions, and allowing members to make an address at the end of a UNSC session, to report on issues, or engage in informal consultations. Regular public reporting of the activities and decisions of the UNSC should also support accountability.

Collective Decision Making: UN member states should encourage permanent members to promote a more collaborative decision-making mechanism to respond to pressures and challenges that the world is currently faced with, or becoming increasingly faced with. Together in this regard permanent members should be able to put together an agreement to launch negotiations using a single, comprehensive text that would empower UN member

states to deliberate various models of the reform processes at the same time.

Some notable proposals and initiatives include:

- *G4 Coalition*: Brazil, Germany, India, and Japan advocate for permanent membership on the UNSC for themselves, a minimal concession on the veto and two permanent for regional Africa.
- *Uniting for Consensus (UFC) Coalition*: This coalition supports expanding the councils elected membership from 10 to 20, so that countries come from many more countries and we achieve a council deserving to represent an equal world.
- *African Union (AU)*: The African Union is calling for two permanent members with full veto rights for the two, and not less than three further non-permanent seats for Africa.
- *Criteria Based Approach*: A Criteria Based Approach exists, where aspiring countries adopt the declared aspirant status in pursuit of accountability and effective processes by the member or mission country. a Criteria Based Approach supports real contributions to the collective global security, and some statutory criteria.

4. Case Studies: UNSC Paralysis in Action

Recent case studies have demonstrated the paralysis of the UNSC and the obstacles to take effective action in relation to a broad range of complex global crises.

Case Study 1: Ukraine-Russia Conflict

The stalemate of the UNSC to take action in 2022 with respect to Russia's invasion of Ukraine is typical UNSC paralysis. In this crisis, the UNSC is paralyzed about adopting resolutions that denounce Russia's actions, because Russia is a permanent member and can veto and thus inhibit the UNSC from any substantive actions.

Case Study 2: Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

The paralysis of the UNSC with regard to the Israeli-Palestinian issue has equally demonstrated the recurring failures of the UNSC to vetoes by the United States to prevent it from taking any resolution or meaningful actions in relation to an act of war engaged by a sovereign state, now arguably commonly which is operating by means of apartheid against another state. The US has vetoed substantive resolutions about ongoing humanitarian crisis, a

loss of lives of the Palestinian people, and suffering of the Palestinian people, where the UNSC has made a resolution to return both Palestinians and Israelis back to the negotiating table.

Case Study 3: Syria Civil War

The UNSC's ineffectiveness on the Syrian civil war has been attributed to the vetoes exercised by Russia and China before complex social unrest evolved into civil war and to avoid consequences, including any obligation to recall their complicity, supporting and protecting the Syrian government from accountability for mass human suffering, displacement and, at times, notable atrocity crimes.

Case Study 4: Yemen Humanitarian Crisis

The UNSC has been challenged to act on the humanitarian crisis in Yemen because of differences among its members in this case specifically the United States, other Western states, some Arab and Muslim states. This resulted in insufficient humanitarian assistance and insufficient civilian protection.

Main Takeaways

These case studies illustrate the UNSC limitations and paralysis when responding to crisis situations across the globe in each of these cases, primarily in the following ways :

- *Veto power*: The use of veto power comes from permanent members when the UNSC wants to act in a certain way, but one member has an objection that prevents action.
- *Divisions on membership*: Divisions among members can restrict the UNSC's ability to act in times of crisis to improve rate when the need exists.
- *Limited representation*: the UNSC does not represent the perspectives and interests in adequate fashion to all regions and all countries.

These case studies illustrate case for reform in the UNSC on chain of events and limitations to this important institution in the areas of enforcement for maintaining or bringing about international peace and security in the world.

5. Conclusion

The paralysis of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is a real issue that prevents it from fulfilling its proper role in maintaining peace and security across the globe. The case studies we looked into and subsequently examined in this assignment display the catastrophic

consequences of the UNSC's inactivity - from wars that prolong humanitarian disasters, to human suffering.

Urgent reforms must take place in order to reactivate the UNSC and restore effectiveness. Potential reforms range from the number of permanent member states, into changing the way in which vetoes operate, to how they carry out their work, may address some of the underlying reasons for the paralysis of the UNSC.

The global community must come together in a show of goodwill for reforming the UNSC to ensure its continued relevance and effectiveness in assisting in the confronting of challenges. By collaboration nations can revive the UNSC and work together towards a more secure and safe world.

Key Recommendations:

1. Broaden permanent membership to encompass emerging global powers and under-represented regions.
2. Fix the veto in cases of mass atrocities and humanitarian catastrophe.
3. Amend methods of work To include transparency, accountability and inclusivity.
4. Enhance collective action of nations to address global peace and security challenges.

When enacted, these reforms could restore UNSC credibility and utility and produce a world that is more peaceful and secure.

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