

**VETO POWER AND THE CHALLENGES OF UNITED NATIONS SSECURITY
COUNCIL'S PEACE EFFORTS: A CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF ISRAELI –
PALISTENIAN CONFLICT**

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Abstract

Established by the June 1945 signing of her Charter and it subsequent October 1945 rectification by a majority number of its signatories following the devastation of World War II, the United Nations emerged as a replacement of the ineffective League of Nations to prevent future global conflicts, maintain international peace and security, foster cooperation among nations and to serve as a center for harmonizing the actions of states in achieving those goals. However over 80 years later, even though with verifiable success of peace missions, the protracted Israeli – Palestinian crisis that appears to be defying every solution, raises questions regarding the effectiveness of international institutions in promoting peace and security particularly the UN's goal of peace and security, the harmonization of nation states actions, giving of humanitarian assistance to those in need, protection of human rights, and upholding of international law. Using the qualitative-descriptive methods, while adopting Realist Theory, the study critically examines the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) veto power and its implications for the effectiveness of Council's peace efforts. By analyzing how veto dynamics shape agenda-setting, mandate formulation, the resolution adoption and its impact on peace in the region. It finds out that veto-enabled powers for permanent members often translate into constrained collective action, thereby weakening the organization's authority in periods of acute escalation and humanitarian crisis. The paper concludes and recommends that meaningful UN peace interventions in conflicts especially the Israeli –Palestinian case requires the reform the UN Security Council mechanism, especially the Veto mechanism emphasizing the importance of fairness and inclusivity in multilateral decision-making.

Key Word: *United Nation, United Nations Security Council, conflict, Veto Power, Peace and Challenges*

Introduction

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict as Agussalim et'al (2025) noted is argued to be one of, if not the longest-standing international conflict with the most complex global humanitarian crises. Stretching back to the late 19th century confrontations through the early 20th century, the conflict escalated after the eventual 1947 establishment of an Israeli state on the account of the United Nations General Assembly's Resolution 181 which proposed the division of Palestine into two states (one Jewish and one Arab) and Jerusalem to be governed under international administration (Ahmed & Ali, 2024).

As a result, what follows was and has been violence, displacement, and an unresolved territorial dispute which has profoundly continues to affect the stability of the region. While the Palestinian state and people have been revolting against Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza strip that insured after the 1967 Six-Day war, construction of illegal settlements and discrimination (Caplan, 2019), and the most recent of the conflict being the October 7th, 2023 surprised Hamas military attacks on southern Israel, resulting in thousands of Israeli civilian casualties and prompting a retaliatory response from Israel with Israeli airstrikes, causing over 1,400 deaths in Gaza in just 48 hours (Dewantara et al., 2025), which has continued in different magnitude till date.

At the center of this protracted conflict that has and is consuming lives in hundreds of thousands- mostly children and women, and properties including hospitals and schools, is the United Nations Security Council whose inability to stop what is largely described as genocide at the moment, or facilitate a meaningful peace processes Agussalim et'al (2025) over this years has drawn international outrage and have intensified criticism of the United Nations mandate of maintaining international peace and security, and has spurred debate about the relevance and effectiveness of its structure in addressing such humanitarian crises (Setiawan, 2025).

Despite several efforts of intervention by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) as the principal global body responsible for maintaining international peace and security, through resolutions aimed at resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict with at least 36 draft resolutions issued from 1945 to 2023 (Christina, 2025), this efforts has consistently been undermined by the use of veto power, particularly by the United States, which has blocked about 34 of these resolutions, while Russia and China each blocked one (Asrar & Hussein, 2023). Not until the 25th March, 2024 resolution (Olayiwola, 2024), the UNSC courtesy the powers of a single member to prevent enforcement through veto, has been undermining every UN peace effort, allowing humanitarian concerns of Palestine to be overshadowed by political objectives as the US has frequently utilized its veto to block resolutions deemed unfavorable to Israel (Le, 2025).

Literature Review

The United Nation in 1945 was established in the quest to curtail future war(s), as the leaders of countries which had worked together to end World War II, championed the creation of a global organization as a response to the shortcomings of the League of Nations (Debidatta, 2016). Alongside 5 other composite major branches namely General Assembly, Economic and Social Council, Trusteeship Council, International Court of Justice and the Secretariat, the Security Council is the linchpin of international peace and security with unparalleled authorities to impose sanctions, authorize military interventions, and mandate peacekeeping operations (Chandio, 2014; Martinali, 2024).

Article 24 (1) empowered the Security Council mechanism with the responsibility for preserving international peace and security (Ahmed, 2025). The Council according to Article 33(1) is mandated to use various peaceful resolution methods, including negotiation, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement, etc. (Bandoro, 2005); recommend under Articles (36-37), a coercive measure while Article (41-42) empowers deployment of armed action in the event that a peaceful resolution is not William achievable (Lynch, 2021).

One of the foundational principles that form the basis of the United Nations is the sovereign equality of states enshrined in Article 2(1) of the Charter which according to Henkin, cited in Martinali (2024), explains newly independent states did not challenge international law but joined the liberal rules-based order without great protest. However, despite the embodiment of the principle of sovereign equality of states, the UNSC as many have observed, harbors a fundamental contradiction. The privileged five as argued by Martti and Ville (2020) had awarded themselves a special status in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) concerning their tenure – the status of permanency, and its voting procedures. Similarly, Martinali (2024) regretted that the principle which posits that entities endowed with internal autonomy and external independence inherently share an indisputable equality with one another had been subverted by a privilege –“permanency and veto power” conferred upon a select few.

Apparently, more troublesome than the self-award permanent status by the so called great five nations within the United Nation’s Security Council is their Veto power. The principle of weighted voting, the so-called right to veto according to Pemberton (2013), has been rejected as a violation of the principle of sovereign equality. The gridlock caused by the veto in recent decades, the SCR (2026) narrated has led to various initiatives seeking to restrain its use, particularly in cases where atrocities of crimes are a factor. The Veto power has generated concerns, even argued that it erodes the Council’s legitimacy and effectiveness, as it is perceived to serve the interests of a few rather than the collective good. The legitimacy of the UN Security Council according to Martinali (2024) is marred by intense debate about the Article 27(3) enabled contentious veto power held by its five permanent members that allows one of them to block any substantive resolution unilaterally, profoundly shaping the Council’s decision-making processes and outcome.

While the UNSC has success stories of peace efforts, its inability to address recent crises, such as the Syrian civil war, Russian invasion of Ukraine and the protracted Israeli – Palestinian conflict has raised significant concern regarding its effectiveness. The persistent failure of the UNSC to act decisively in these conflicts as argued by Kerr (2019), Lynch (2024) among others, has been attributed to the veto power of the permanent members, which has often resulted in diplomatic deadlocks and inaction on critical issues. Setiawan (2025) noted that the Security Council’s inability to effectively address issues such as genocide and mass atrocities in Gaza is a result of structural inefficiencies and the political dominance of the Permanent 5 members (Setiawan, 2025). The great powers ensured that no important action could be taken without their joint consent, and through their control over the amendment process, their unique position could not be altered unless they collectively agreed to such a change (Francis in Martti, 2024).

Theoretical Framework

Realism emerged in response to the devastating consequences of the Second World War, developed as a critical of idealist and liberal approaches. According to Realism as Blanton and

Kegley (2017) explained, regardless of how equal international law on institutions may appear, every state prioritizes its own political and national interests in the system hence, International relations cannot be based solely on moral principles or the pursuit of peace as elaborated by Hans J. Morgenthau, in his works “politics among nations” and “the struggle for Power and Peace”.

The central argument is that, like human beings, the states which they run are inherently power seeking and therefore no state can fully adhere to idealistic international norms or moral principles which explain the power struggles that characterize the system. From the realist perspective, war is a normal condition of international politics (Devetak, 2012). Other prominent scholars include Reinhold Niebuhr, Robert Butterfield, Jhon Herz, George F. Kennan, Kenneth Waltz, Arnold Wolfers, and Robert Osgood.

Realist theory, as discussed by Alcover et al. (2024), help understand that state behaviour in the UNSC is primarily driven by national interest, which explains the frequent use of the veto by permanent members, particularly the U.S., to protect strategic allies. The veto power enables the P5 to act according to their own national interests, often at the expense of global peace initiatives because of their might. As a result, while the UNSC remains the primary forum for addressing international peace and security, it has been rendered ineffective in cases like Gaza, where the interests of powerful states are directly involved.

Methodology

The study employs the qualitative research methodology to explore the political dynamics within the United Nations Security Council and their impact on enforcing resolutions in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Qualitative research is appropriate as it focuses on the meanings and interpretations of individuals or groups assign to specific phenomena (Creswell, 2014). It allows the collection of Data through secondary data sources, including academic journals, government publications, official UN resolutions, news articles, global politics and conflict resolution think tanks, and reports by international organizations, such as the Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International. The data collection process involved library research and online archives, particularly focusing on primary sources like UNSC resolutions, voting records, and official statements by member states.

Findings and Discussion

The UNSC’s Response to Israeli-Palestinian Conflict`

The UNSC peace efforts has been proved to be ineffective due to a number of reason as noted by (Cohen et’al, 2024) including the inability to execute resolutions, and especially the political interest and influence of great powers through the use of veto power especially by the US to block resolutions deemed unfavorable to Isrsael.

The veto power mechanism designed to avoid hasty decisions that could escalate conflict, through restrain from what the permanent members may perceive as overreach Ahmed & Shawkat (2025), has end up facilitating the paralysis of the UNSC as the cavalier use of the veto in the subsequent years has hindered the Council’s efforts to maintain effectively, international peace and security (Webb, 2014; S C R, 2026). The US after casting her first vetoes in 1970 at the UNSC Mee Staff, (2024), has from that point used the veto more than any other permanent member, most frequently to block decisions that it believes would be detrimental to the interests of Israel with majority of it affecting Palestinians peace proposals, self-determination efforts and

sanctions or call for Israel's withdrawal from occupied territories (Asrar and Hussein, 2023; Mee Staff, 2024).

Since 1945, a total of 36 UNSC draft resolutions as at October, 2023 according to Asrar and Hussein (2023), have been vetoed by one of the five permanent members where 34 were vetoed by the US and two by Russia and China. In their report, some key vetoed resolutions include: i. March and December resolutions, following the second Intifada or uprising that started in 2000 (ii) February 18, 2011 resolution condemning Israeli settlements in the Palestinian Territories as an obstacle to peace (iii) A draft resolution against the US recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital in 2017 declaring it as null and void, demanding that the status of Jerusalem be determined in line with UN regulations (iv) a resolution After the Great March of Return, in 2018 condemning "the use of any excessive, disproportionate and indiscriminate force" while calling for a two state solution and (v) the October 18, 2023 resolution calling for "humanitarian pauses" and for Israel to rescind its evacuation order for northern Gaza (Chicago council on Global Affairs, 2023; Aljezeera, 2023).

Furthermore, in a Post-October 7, 2023 Gaza War analysis, Knell (2025) and Amnesty International (2025) reported that the US has vetoed for times, UNSC draft resolution against Israel while Russia and China also vetoed an October 25, 2023 resolution demanding the immediate release of hostages taken by Hamas. The US vetos include: (i) October 18, 2023 resolution (ii) December 8, 2023 resolution and (iii) February 20, 2024 draft, all demanding an immediate humanitarian ceasefire. While two were against (iv) November 20, 2024 and (v) June 4, 2025 resolutions, both demanding an "immediate, unconditional and permanent" ceasefire, the sixth veto was against a September 18, 2025 resolution demanding an immediate ceasefire and the release of hostages (Chicago council on Global Affairs, 2023; UN News 2025, Amnesty International; and BBC, 2025)

The politics of veto power in the United Nations Security Council in the submissions of (Olayiwola, 2024) and Tahmina (2026) is the major complication, the UN peace efforts in the Middle East is encountering while exposing the level of complicity by of the United Nations Security Council especially the US. More also, Humphrey's (2017) "Israeli-Palestinian Conflict and the United Nations Peace Initiative" concluded that the UN peace efforts on Israeli-Palestinian conflict became unproductive due to the politics of veto, prevalent among the permanent members, particularly the exercise of veto power by the US and its allies towards a total cessation of hostility on the Palestinian people and their unconditional support for the State of Israel.

"The implications of this veto are especially devastating for Palestinians especially in Gaza, where Israel has unleashed an unprecedented campaign of annihilation through what many are calling genocide that is consuming every civilian including women and children and is brutally pushing hundreds of thousands of residents out of the city to unsafe and unfit areas in the south of the Gaza Strip. Israel's relentless onslaught is accelerating the erasure of the ancient city, its heritage and Palestinian identity.

Conclusion

The paper concludes that the persistence of crisis in the Middle East, especially the Israeli-Palestinian conflict which has protracted for over six (6) decades now, emphasizes the failures and significant limitations of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) in handling humanitarian crises and preserving international peace. The dynamics of this conflict as

Anyalebechi (2025) opined, reveals the harmful impact of veto power, the complex interaction of the permanent five Security Council members and the urgent need for reform and democratization of the global governance structures. That the Veto, in addition to the argument that it violates the philosophy of equality, the excessive use of this power of Veto as predicted by her opponent at the Maiden San Francisco meeting (S C R, 2026) has instead been a disservice and detrimental to the effectiveness of the Security Council's discharge of its primary role of maintenance of global peace and security against the intended unanimity of the permanent members of the Security Council while discharging its primary duty under the charter

Recommendations

The paper recommends the reforms the UN Security Council as a body and the decision-making processes including: (i). expansion of the membership of the Security Council by increasing the number of both permanent and non-permanent members, with especially third world states to reflect global political realities, thereby reducing the disproportionate influence.(ii). Adoption of a simple majority policy against the single Veto power status quo in adopting resolutions proposed for the protection of international peace, security and human rights at the security Council. (iii). The study further suggests that United Nation peace keeping strategy be changed for a better one that will meet the present day needs of the international community and address squarely the issues of illegal settlement in the occupied West Bank, the status of Jerusalem, the issue of illegal blockade and all other forms of abuse of international law.

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