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THE ROLE OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL IN MAINTAINING INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY

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ABSTRACT

The Security Council is the principal organ of the United Nations responsible for maintaining international peace and security. It addresses international disputes and adopts the necessary measures to prevent their escalation or transformation into armed conflicts. In doing so, it relies on a variety of peaceful means such as mediation, negotiation, and the imposition of economic sanctions. When necessary, it may also resort to military measures to ensure international stability. Its resolutions are binding upon member states, thereby reinforcing respect for international law. The Council also operates in coordination with other United Nations bodies to harmonize international efforts in this field. However, its effectiveness is sometimes limited due to the divergent political interests of its permanent members.

KEYWORDS

Security Council, United Nations, International Peace, International Security, Dispute Settlement, Diplomacy, Sanctions, Military Measures, Binding Resolutions, International Law, Global Governance, Permanent Members

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Introduction

The Security Council is one of the most important principal organs of the United Nations, entrusted with the responsibility of maintaining international peace and security in accordance with the United Nations Charter. It plays a central role in addressing international disputes and seeking their resolution through peaceful means or by adopting binding measures directed at member states. It also aims to prevent threats to peace and suppress acts of aggression, thereby ensuring stability in international relations.

The United Nations has granted the Security Council extensive powers, including the imposition of economic sanctions and, when necessary, military intervention. However, the effectiveness of the Council is often influenced by political balances and the interests of the permanent members, particularly through the use of the veto power. Hence, the importance of studying the role of the Security Council in maintaining international peace and security and assessing the extent of its effectiveness in achieving the objectives of the United Nations.

Accordingly, this study seeks to answer the following research question: To what extent does the Security Council contribute to maintaining international peace and security? To address this issue, the study is divided into two main sections:

1. The Security Council and mechanisms for implementing its decisions.
2. The Security Council between decision-making authority and implementation challenges.

The Security Council and Mechanisms for Implementing Its Decisions

This section examines an important aspect of the Security Council's work in maintaining international peace and security. It relies on a variety of mechanisms and procedures that combine peaceful means and, where necessary, military measures.

Mechanisms of the Security Council in Maintaining Peace

The Security Council's mechanisms include cooperation with other UN bodies and the use of peaceful measures in decision-making and implementation.

Relationship with the General Assembly

The relationship between the Security Council and the General Assembly is based on cooperation in addressing international issues. They jointly participate in appointing the Secretary-General, and the Council may refer matters to bodies affiliated with the General Assembly. It also submits periodic reports on its activities.

Relationship with the Economic and Social Council

This relationship is based on cooperation and information exchange. The Security Council relies on data and reports provided by the Economic and Social Council, as stipulated in Article 65 of the UN Charter (United Nations, 1945).

Relationship with the Trusteeship Council

The relationship is governed by Chapters XII and XIII of the UN Charter. The Security Council exercises a supervisory role over trusteeship agreements and ensures that international peace and security are maintained in trust territories (United Nations, 1945).

Peaceful Measures Adopted by the Security Council

Provisional Measures

Chapter VI of the UN Charter provides mechanisms for the peaceful settlement of disputes. Parties are encouraged to resolve conflicts through peaceful means of their choice before UN intervention (United Nations, 1945).

Measures Not Involving the Use of Force (Article 41)

These measures include economic sanctions, interruption of transport and communications, and severance of diplomatic relations (United Nations, 1945).

Military Measures and Their Role

Military measures represent exceptional tools used when peaceful means fail. Under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, the Security Council may adopt binding military actions to restore international peace and security. If states fail to comply with non-military measures, the Council may resort to the use of force under Article 42 to suppress aggression or restore stability (United Nations, 1945). A notable example of this framework in action is the Gulf War, where the UN authorized the use of force to compel Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait (Al-Daqqaq & Al-Khalifa, 2011).

The Security Council Between Decision-Making Authority and Implementation Challenges

This section highlights the gap between the legal authority of the Security Council and the practical challenges of implementing its decisions.

Authority of the Security Council and Oversight Mechanisms

Legal Foundations

Article 39 of the UN Charter grants the Security Council explicit authority to determine threats to peace and to take appropriate measures to manage them (United Nations, 1945).

Practical Considerations

There are differing views on the Council's role, particularly regarding its influence over international justice and political considerations (Laabidi, 2010).

Oversight of Decisions

The UN Charter does not explicitly provide judicial mechanisms for reviewing the legality of Security Council decisions, leaving the foundational text of the Charter itself as the main point of reference.

The Veto Power: Nature and Use

The veto power allows the five permanent members to block any non-procedural resolution. While it operates as a legal mechanism within the architecture of the UN system, it often hinders effective decision-

making. The Syrian crisis stands out as a clear contemporary example where repeated veto use by permanent member states has systematically blocked decisive international action (Madani, 2014).

Effectiveness of Security Council Decisions

Compliance of Member States

Member states are legally obligated under Article 25 of the Charter to comply with and execute Security Council decisions, especially those formally issued under the coercive powers of Chapter VII (United Nations, 1945).

Challenges in Implementation

Despite their binding nature under international law, many resolutions face critical implementation deadlocks due to political divisions and a lack of baseline consensus among global powers (Al-Nasif, 2018). The ongoing deadlock over the Syrian crisis directly illustrates the Council's structural limitations in enforcing its resolutions (Al-Nasif, 2018).

Conclusions

The Security Council remains the central body within the United Nations system responsible for maintaining international peace and security. It has been granted broad powers to intervene in cases of threats to peace or acts of aggression.

This study shows that while the Council attempts to manage international crises through peaceful means such as negotiation, mediation, and sanctions, or through coercive measures when necessary, recent international developments—particularly conflicts such as Gaza and escalating regional tensions involving Iran and Israel—highlight severe limitations in its overall effectiveness. These structural limitations are largely due to conflicting geopolitical interests among its permanent members and the resulting frequent use of the veto power. Thus, despite its absolute legal and institutional importance, the Security Council continues to face significant challenges in effectively implementing its decisions across the globe.

Findings

- The Security Council possesses broad legal powers but is significantly constrained by political realities.
- Contemporary conflicts reveal severe execution limitations in enforcing its resolutions globally.
- The veto power remains a major institutional obstacle to achieving swift international justice and lasting peace.

Recommendations

1. Reform the veto power system to reduce or prohibit obstruction on vital humanitarian decisions.
2. Strengthen the procedural role of the General Assembly when the Security Council fails to act due to a permanent member deadlock.

Enhance operational mechanisms for enforcing international decisions, especially inside highly unstable conflict regions.

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