



Security Council

Topic Guide: The question of Security Council Reform

Introduction

The security council was created with the aim to maintain and ensure international peace and security. However, the issues debated by the security council have changed over the last 75 years and diversified to include issues such as counter-terrorism and non-proliferation. This poses the question of whether the original design of the Council is still fit for purpose in a modern world with modern issues.

Previous Efforts

G4: Germany, Brazil, Japan, and India all believe they have a strong claim to become permanent Security Council members, and all support each other's claim. Britain has also voiced support for all four bids.

Uniting for Consensus: Mostly regional rivals of the G4, they propose a new category of membership, semi-permanent membership.

High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change: Group of experts who produced a report in 2004 with two models for reform.

Problems

To make a change to the UN charter, a $\frac{2}{3}$ majority is needed in the General Assembly, along with the support of all P5 members. For this reason, any major change to the structure of the Council will have to satisfy all groups. The P5 are particularly reluctant to approve any change in the structure that might dilute their powers. Part of the reason the P5 exist is to incentivise the world's powers to support the UN both financially and politically - what might happen if all the P5 nations were to withdraw support for the UN? Furthermore, there are calls for African Representation within the P5 nations.

Possible Ideas to Consider

- What are the priorities for reform: representation or effectiveness?
- Would a P5 member be readily willing to give up their privileges?
- Does the current P5 represent the real spread of power today?
- Why did the League of Nations' council fail? How can we avoid making the same mistakes today?
- How much power do non veto members have? Is it worth expanding the number?
- If some countries receive permanent membership, might a new cohort make a bid for permanent membership in 20/30 years' time?
- Would it be better to focus reform on changing the structure of the Security Council or revising its working methods?
- Why have previous reform efforts failed?
- Would increasing the number of P5 countries reduce the effectiveness of the Council?

Further Reading

- UN United to Reform
 - <https://reform.un.org>
- UNA-UK: Reforming the UN Security Council
 - <https://una.org.uk/reforming-un-security-council>
- United Nations University: United Nations Security Council Reform
 - <https://unu.edu/publications/articles/united-nations-security-council-reform.html>
- Georgetown Journal of International Affairs: Reforming the United Nations Security Council: Increasing Equality in the International Arena
 - <https://gja.georgetown.edu/2022/09/09/reforming-the-united-nations-security-council-increasing-equality-in-the-international-arena/>