

**OASIS INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL MODEL UNITED NATIONS**

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Guiding package

Topic: Discussing the restructuring of the veto power

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12. **Abstract :**

The United Nations Security Councilhas a special property which is the veto power. This power belongs to the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council. It gives China, United States, Russia, United Kingdom, France the right to veto any resolution. In other words, it is able to prevent a resolution from passing.. Also it plays a role in the selection of the Secretary General, as a permanent member can block the selection of the Secretary General. However the veto power does not apply to procedural matters.

The veto power has been an existing concept since the League of Nations. At that time there was 15 countries having veto power. The fact that many countries had that power made it difficult for the League to agree on issues. When the United Nations was created in 1945, the veto power was established with article 27 of the UN charter. The United States, Soviet Union, China and the United Kingdom had favored the principle of unanimity[[1]](#footnote-0), in order to cooperate but also protect their own sovereign rights.

The veto power is controversial, many consider it as a limitation to the UN actions, because of the power that the decisions of the permanent members have over the world.

The countries’ different policies and tendencies intervene with the actions they take towards the different resolutions. Many consider it a barrier to international stability, and a safeguard against many countries’ domination. Evenmore some countries have tried to be a veto countries and encourage the restructuring or the expansion of permanent seats of the Security Council.

1. **Introduction:**

Chuck Hagel once said : “The United Nations has a critical role to play in promoting stability, security, democracy, human rights and economic development. The UN is as relevant today as at any time in its history, but it needs reform”. The United Nations main role when founded in 1945 was the maintenance of international peace and security.

The United Nations continues to evolve, in order to efficiently contribute to any international crisis. Originally, the 5 veto countries had been given that power to take a definitive decision in the Security Council , to maintain peace. However, many believe that this same veto power is a restriction to the UN’s development. As a result the United Nations Security Council reform has been a demand from many countries specifically the G4 nations. Many countries are aiming to increase the membership in the Security Council. Recently in September 2017, the US representative introduced a resolution that seeks support for India to obtain a permanent membership of the UNSC.

1. **Definition of key terms :**
2. **Veto:** a vote by which one of the five permanent members of the UN security council can overrule actions or decisions of the meetings matters ( non-procedural )[[2]](#footnote-1)
3. ***Substantive :***  belonging to an essential part of a thing[[3]](#footnote-2)
4. ***Permanent members:*** Are the five states that in 1945 the UN charter granted them permanent seats on the UN Security Council. [[4]](#footnote-3)
5. **UN Charter:** It is the foundational treaty of the United Nations as an intergovernmental organization that was written in 1945. [[5]](#footnote-4)
6. **Unanimity:** agreement by all people involved. [[6]](#footnote-5)
7. **Thirld World:** The developing countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America[[7]](#footnote-6)
8. **Decolonization**: To allow a country (previously a colony) to be self-governing and independent[[8]](#footnote-7)
9. **Gross domestic product** (GDP) of a country: It is one of the main factors to indicate the economical state of a country. It represents the value of all goods and services produced over a time. It is referred as the size of the economy. [[9]](#footnote-8)
10. **Consensus**: a general agreement [[10]](#footnote-9)
11. **Sovereign**: The possession of supreme or ultimate power[[11]](#footnote-10)
12. **Background information :**

The origin of the veto power was long before the creation of the United Nations in 1945. In the League of Nations the members of the council had the right to veto on non-procedural matters. In 1936, the league had expanded the number of non-permanent members into 15 countries. The large number of vetoes made it difficult for the league to agree on issues, due to the opposition of interests of the countries.

During the negotiations at Dumbarton Oaks and Yalta for the United Nations, the main dominant countries like the United States, Soviet Union, United Kingdom, China had favored the idea of unanimity.

The United Nations Security Council is one of the principal organs of the UN, that takes the role of maintaining peace, the approval of changes to the UN charter and the acceptance of new members to the UN. The United Nations Security Council veto power is given to the five permanent members of the council. These members are the : United States, China, France, United Kingdom, Russia. Those members can veto any resolution and vote on non-procedural matters, it can also block the passing of a Secretary General. The first distinction is the permanence of their being in the UN Security Council. Article 27 of the UN charter establishes that all substantive decisions must be made by votes of permanent members.

A huge issue is caused by the veto power as sometimes the permanent member states would veto for their own benefit, without considering other member states, for instance the cold war when Russia and the United States were in conflict. That made it difficult for the UNSC to establish its goals. Due to constant opposition between the two countries policies, since 1946, 200 resolutions have been vetoed in the UNSC, while the majority were from Russia and the United States.

Another example, in 2004 Russia and China threatened to use their veto power considering the Sudanese region of Darfur, where large-scale killings and ratings were committed, which were aided by government officials. China owned approximately 40 percent share of Sudan’s main oil field. Despite numerous reports proving human rights violations, direct UN intervention was not allowed.[[12]](#footnote-11)

The reform of the Security Council and its Veto Power regulation has been one of the most major topics of all time. During the past 70 years, it is very clear that non-permanent members of the United Nations Security Council do not resent the five permanent ones’ power. In fact, the non-permanent members have called for a new Council membership including the expansion of the permanent seats. The issue is that any sort of change in the Council has to first be consented by the permanent members, which shows how powerful the five members are.

In addition, some countries have formed alliances in order to restructure the charter of the UNSC and add more permanent members of the council The G4 countries which are: Brazil, Germany, India and Japan whom support each other claim in order to obtain permanent seats on the UN’s Security Council. However, their effort is often interrupted by the Uniting for Consensus movement[[13]](#footnote-12). Yet, some may encourage the restructuring of the veto power is necessary as France and the UK are not in the same political stance as after the war.

Some countries position and development in all aspects, give them the right and power to be permanent members of the council.The countries which are the seven largest International Monetary Fund (IMF) [[14]](#footnote-13), having advanced economies in the world. Those countries are: Canada, France, Germany, United States, Italy, United Kingdom and Japan. Which includes 3 of the 5 permanent members of the UNSC.

Evenemore, some countries who constitute nowadays military and economical power are striving to be permanent members of the Security Council. As a result, the restructuring of the veto power has been a demand by many countries who consider it a boundary to achieving global stability. Whether the final decision might be the total abolishment of the veto power, or the decrease or increase of permanent member countries.

**V. Major Countries involved:**

* **The Russian Federation:** is one of the most important permanent members of the Security Council. It has used its veto power over 100 times since 1946. A positive evolution is that in recent years the number of vetoes has decreased to only a third of that during the Cold War period, as the number of resolutions has highly increased in the Council. Regarding abstention from voting, ever since the Soviet Union’s abstention over the Spanish question in 1946, there has been a change where abstention by one or more of the permanent five members will not prevent the adoption of a resolution.
* **The United States of America:** is the country with the second most used vetoes, holding a record of 79 vetoes since it became a permanent member of the Security council. Most recently president Donald Trump has threatened to veto any measure passed by Congress that blocks his national emergency declaration to build a border wall
* **The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland :** comes in third as the country who uses its veto power the most. The United Kingdom has used its veto power 29 times, the first time took place on 30 October 1956 during the Suez crisis. Since the end of the Cold War in 1991, the usage of the veto power by the different permanent members has become different. France and the UK have not used a veto since 1989
* **The People’s Republic of China :** has been a permanent member of the Security Council since the 24th of 1945. China is the country with the least vetoes used since it has been a permanent member of the Security Council . China first used the veto on 25 August 1972 to prevent Bangladesh's admission to the United Nations. Between 1971 and 1976 the People's Republic of China abstained on 30% of Security Council Resolutions. China then joined Russia in many double-vetoes since the outbreak of the Syrian Civil War.
* **The Republic of India**: has one of the world's largest economies in the world. Since 2014, india’s economy has been the fastest growing one in the world, surpassing China, yet the republic of india is still not a permanent member of the Security council. India believes it must have a permanent seat in the UN Security Council as its absence hurts the credibility of the UN system. India and other countries of the G4 are seeking early reform the United Nations Security Council to better reflect contemporary realities.

**VI. Major organizations involved:**

* **Global Policy Forum (GPF)**; This organization was founded in 1993 to promote accountability of international organizations, such as the UN and strengthen international law. It takes on multiple matters such as the Security council’s reformation, global taxes, hunger crisis. The organization had provided a research on a variety of matters such as the UN reform[[15]](#footnote-14).
* **Amnesty International (AI):** The non-governmental organization was founded in 1961 in London that focuses on human rights.It has called on the P5 to give up their veto power, the organization’s Secretary General Salil Shetty once accused the countries that they use veto of : "promote their political self-interest or geopolitical interests above the interest of protecting civilians."[[16]](#footnote-15)

**VII. UN involvement:**

The first significant reformation of the Security Council occured in 1965, which increased the number of non-permanent members from 6 to 10 members. In 1992, Boutros-Ghali was elected the Secretary General, that led to discussion the reformations of UNSC again. He was motivated to restructure its composition to make the Security Council a more effective organ of the UN that contributes to changing the world. Many had supported the reformation of the Security Council, like Rejaul Laskar who once said: “ for the continued existence and relevance of the UN, it is necessary to ensure that it represents as nearly as possible the reality of the power equation of the twenty-first century world.

In 1992, Japan and Germany had become financial contributors and from the world’s most developed countries, as a result they began to demand permanent seats on the council. Also Brazil and India as regional powerful countries started the demand of permanent seats.

The General Assembly Task Force on the UNSC reform has delivered a report. That focuses on the representation and the increase of the UNSC membership . It recommends finding a solution for the negotiations on reformations of the council. As it puts a timeline of a mandatory conference to discuss the changes of reformation.

A plan emerged in 2005, where the UN Secretary General Kafi Annan called the UN to reach a consensus to expand the council to 24 members rather than 15. As the former Secretary General once said: “I firmly believe that the council should be reformed: it cannot continue as it is. The world has changed and the UN should change and adapt. If we don’t change the council, we risk a situation where the primacy of the council may be challenged by some of the new emerging countries.”[[17]](#footnote-16)

**VII. Guiding questions:**

1. How can the committee ensure the satisfaction of all members of the UN concerning Veto power?
2. How should the seats of the Security Council be distributed?
3. On what basis a country becomes a permanent member?
4. Does \*your country\* support the UNSC reformation?
5. Would the expansion of the council’s seats be beneficial or harmful?
6. Would the abolishment of the veto power as a whole a viable solution for the matter?
7. Should any of the current veto countries become non-permanent members?
8. If the number of permanent countries increase, what countries shall become vetoes?
9. How many countries should be in the UNSC?
10. Should the UNSC countries be permanent or temporary?

**VII. Possible solutions:**

* The expansion of the number of seats of the UNSC
* The removal and abolishment of the veto power
* Equal number of seats in the UNSC for each continent group
* The reformation of permanent seats based on countries developpements

**VII. Useful links**

* UN reform. Available on: <https://www.globalpolicy.org/un-reform.html>
* Member States Call for Removing Veto Power, Expanding Security Council to include new permanent seats as General Assembly debates Reform Plans for 15 member organ. Available on: <https://www.un.org/press/en/2018/ga12091.doc.htm>
* United Nations Security Council Reform. Available on: <https://ourworld.unu.edu/en/united-nations-security-council-reform>

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* Time to reform the Veto Power?. Available on: <https://international.la-croix.com/news/time-to-reform-the-un-veto-power/4394#> , consulted the 25 of June 2019
* Member States Call for removing Veto Power, Expanding Security Council to include New Permanent Seats , as General Assembly Debates Reform Plans for 15-Member Organ. Available on: <https://www.un.org/press/en/2018/ga12091.doc.htm> , consulted the 25 of June 2019
* Assessing the veto. Available on: https://intpolicydigest.org/2017/04/11/assessing-the-veto/ , consulted the 25 of June 2019
* Why France wishes to regulate use of the veto in the United Nations Security Council. Available on: <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/french-foreign-policy/united-nations/france-and-the-united-nations-security-council/article/why-france-wishes-to-regulate-use> , consulted the 29 of June 2019
* Veto Power hindering reform of UN security Council. Available on: <https://www.parliament.gov.za/news/veto-power-hindering-reform-un-security-council> , consulted 1 of July 2019
* What is the G7..Its purpose and history of influence. Available on: <https://www.internationalrelationsedu.org/what-is-the-g7-its-purpose-and-history-of-influence/> , consulted the 3 of July 2019
* UN Security Council: G4 countries seek early reform of UN Security Council. Available on: <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/g4-countries-seek-early-reform-of-un-security-council/articleshow/60776007.cms?from=mdr> , consulted the 4 of July 2019
* India, other G4 Nations concerned over Pace of UN Security Council Reform. Available on: <https://www.ndtv.com/world-news/g4-nations-including-india-concerned-over-pace-of-un-security-council-reform-1922643> , consulted the 4 of July 2019
* A solution to the UNSC Veto Problem. Available on: <https://medium.com/@ThomasMacIntosh/a-solution-to-the-unsc-veto-problem-9c0b0d622bdb> , consulted 4 July 2019
* UN charter. <https://treaties.un.org/doc/publication/ctc/uncharter.pdf> , consulted 6 July 2019
* United Nations Security Council Reform. Available on: <https://ourworld.unu.edu/en/united-nations-security-council-reform> , consulted 10 July 2019
* United Nations Security Council Reform. Available on: <https://www.accord.org.za/conflict-trends/united-nations-security-council-reform/> , consulted 10 July 2019
* Vision 2020; A discussion of UN Security Council Reform. Available on: <https://ourworld.unu.edu/en/vision-2020-a-discussion-of-un-security-council-reform> , consulted 11 July 2019
* Security Council Reform. Available on: <https://ourworld.unu.edu/en/vision-2020-a-discussion-of-un-security-council-reform> , consulted 11 July 2019
* The UN Security Council. Available on: <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/un-security-council> , consulted 12 July 2019.
* Amnesty International has called on the five permanent members of the UN Security Council to give up their right to a veto when atrocities are being committed. Has the veto prevented wars from being brought to an end? , consulted 12 July 2019.

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1. Definition key term 5 [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
2. **Definition of veto**: <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/veto-power> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
3. **Definition of substantive:** <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/substantive?s=t> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
4. **Current Members;** <https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/content/current-members> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
5. **Charter of the United Nations:** <https://www.un.org/en/charter-united-nations/> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
6. **Definition of unamity:** <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/unanimity> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
7. **Definition of Third World:** <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/third-world> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
8. **Definition of Decolonization**: <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/decolonization?s=t> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
9. **What is the GDP, and why is it so important to economists and investors:** <https://www.investopedia.com/ask/answers/what-is-gdp-why-its-important-to-economists-investors/> [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
10. **Definition of consensus:** <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/consensus> [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
11. **Definition of sovereign**: <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/sovereign> [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
12. <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/politics-jan-june06-china-darfur_04-25> [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
13. A movement that was developed in the 1990s, that opposes the possible expansion of seats in the Security Council. That movement was led by Italy to oppose the seats of the G4. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
14. ( IMF) International Monetary Fund; is an international organization that has 189 countries aiming for global monetary cooperation, and secure financial stability. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
15. UN Reform. Available on: <https://www.globalpolicy.org/un-reform.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
16. Amnesty calls on UN powers to lose veto on genocide votes. Available on: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-31617141> [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
17. Kafi Annan Foundation, UN Security Council must be revamped. Available on: <https://www.kofiannanfoundation.org/transitions-to-peace/un-security-council-must-be-revamped-2860/> [↑](#footnote-ref-16)