

# WHAT KIND OF PEACE CAN THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL PROMOTE?

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## Abstract

Given the current context of increasing threats to peace and the inaction of the United Nations Security Council, this article asks whether the veto power of permanent members (P5) is the main problem facing the institution and what kind of peace it could promote. Through a review of the literature on the subject and analysis of secondary, public data, it was found that the problems of the UNSC are not limited to the reckless use of the veto. The UNSC suffers from serious problems of lack of transparency; incompleteness and provisional nature of the rules governing its working methods; lack of control over legality; and reproduction of colonial logic in the distribution of issues (*penholdership*) on which the Council focuses. Thus, the peace that this body could promote, if its members reached a consensus, would continue to reproduce asymmetries and inequalities in a world whose thirst for justice would not be quenched.

**Keywords:** Peace. United Nations Security Council. Working Methods. Colonialism.

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# QUE PAZ PODE O CONSELHO DE SEGURANÇA DAS NAÇÕES UNIDAS PROMOVER?

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## Resumo

Diante do contexto atual de aumento de ameaças à paz e da inação do Conselho de Segurança das Nações Unidas, este artigo se pergunta se o veto dos membros permanentes (P5) é o principal problema da instituição e que paz ela poderia promover. Por meio de revisão bibliográfica a respeito do tema e análise de dados secundários, públicos, foi constatado que os problemas do CSNU não se restringem ao uso imprudente do veto. O CSNU padece de graves problemas de falta de transparência; incompletude e provisoriedade das normas que regulamentam seus métodos de trabalho; falta de controle de legalidade; e reprodução de lógica colonial na distribuição dos temas (*penholdership*) sobre os quais o Conselho se debruça. Assim, a paz que esse órgão poderia promover, caso seus membros chegassem a um consenso, continuaria a reproduzir assimetrias e desigualdades de um mundo cuja sede de justiça não estaria aplacada.

**Palavras-chave:** Paz. Conselho de Segurança das Nações Unidas. Métodos de Trabalho. Colonialismo.

# ¿QUÉ PAZ PUEDE PROMOVER EL CONSEJO DE SEGURIDAD DE LAS NACIONES UNIDAS?

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## Resumen

Ante el contexto actual de aumento de las amenazas a la paz y la inacción del Consejo de Seguridad de las Naciones Unidas, este artículo se pregunta si el veto de los miembros permanentes (P5) es el principal problema de la institución y qué paz podría promover. A través de una revisión bibliográfica sobre el tema y el análisis de datos secundarios públicos, se constató que los problemas del Consejo de Seguridad de las Naciones Unidas no se limitan al uso imprudente del veto. El CSNU adolece de graves problemas de falta de transparencia; incompletitud y provisionalidad de las normas que regulan sus métodos de trabajo; falta de control de la legalidad; y reproducción de la lógica colonial en la distribución de los temas (penholdership) sobre los que se pronuncia el Consejo. Así, la paz que este órgano podría promover, si sus miembros llegaran a un consenso, seguiría reproduciendo las asimetrías y desigualdades de un mundo cuya sed de justicia no se vería saciada.

**Palabras clave:** Paz. Consejo de Seguridad de las Naciones Unidas. Métodos de trabajo. Colonialismo.

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## Introduction

The year 2025 marks the 80th anniversary of the United Nations—an anniversary overshadowed by unprecedented budgetary and liquidity crises and by multiple threats to peace. According to the most recent *Policy Position Paper* issued by *The Elders* (2025), the world is experiencing its highest peak of violent conflict since the creation of the UN. In 2024, 59 armed conflicts were recorded in which at least one party was a state actor. This is the highest number of state-based conflicts documented since the end of World War II. Unlike those of the past, today's conflicts are prolonged, with indefinite and uncertain timelines, and peace agreements have become increasingly rare and short-lived, as the peaceful settlement of disputes has reached its lowest point in the last 50 years. Whereas in the 1970s approximately 23% of armed conflicts ended with peace agreements, that number dropped to just 4% in the second decade of the twenty-first century (IEP 2025).

According to the *Global Peace Index* (IEP, 2025)—which measures levels of peace across three broad areas (safety and societal security; ongoing domestic and international conflicts; and militarization)—the goal of global peace appears increasingly distant in 2025, and the world has become less peaceful over the past 17 years. The same report shows that while spending on peacekeeping and peacebuilding represented 0.83% of all military expenditure in 2014, this figure fell even further to 0.52% in 2024. During the same period, the number of peace operations declined by 42%, even as armed conflicts and threats to peace increased.

Against this backdrop, the paralysis and inaction of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) in ending these violent conflicts—which disproportionately affect women and girls<sup>2</sup>—saving lives, and restoring peace has become increasingly evident. This paralysis is often attributed to the veto power of the permanent members (The Elders 2025). The most recent and striking examples include the Russian Federation's vetoes on matters pertaining to its invasion of Ukraine, and the United States' vetoes against any initiative—even humanitarian ones—aimed at de-escalating the ongoing

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2 According to the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), conflicts and situations of instability exacerbate pre-existing patterns of discrimination against women. "Women's Human Rights and Gender-Related Concerns in Situations of Conflict and Instability," n.d. *United Nations*. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/women/womens-human-rights-and-gender-related-concerns-situations-conflict-and-instability>. Accessed December 16, 2025.

genocide carried out by Israel in the Gaza Strip.<sup>3</sup> The report cited above calls for a new international architecture for peace and security, including the abolition of the veto power in the Council, a restructuring of the international financing system, increased global investment in public goods, and the appointment of a woman as the first female Secretary-General of the UN.

With regard to the proposal for a new international architecture for peace and security, while we acknowledge the gravity of the use of the veto in the face of massacres and invasions that render international law little more than symbolic text, we question what kind of peace the Security Council is actually capable of promoting. We argue that the Council's problems go far beyond the abuse that some of its permanent members make of this power, particularly since France and the United Kingdom, for example, have refrained from exercising this prerogative since the end of the Cold War.<sup>4</sup> Any reform of the Security Council should therefore consider, in addition to the veto, the serious issues of lack of transparency; the incompleteness and provisional nature of the rules governing its working methods; the absence of legality oversight; and the lack of legitimacy and democratic representation in the allocation of thematic responsibilities (penholdership) on which the Council focuses—problems that will be critically discussed in the pages that follow.

In this sense, and in view of a scenario marked by challenges that call for bold and genuinely transformative reform proposals, it seems important to present new perspectives through which to analyse a violent world in which war appears not only to have become indefinitely and uninterruptedly prolonged, but also to have penetrated new spaces previously understood as “civilian.”

To answer the question “what kind of peace can the United Nations Security Council promote?”, we employ a methodology based on a literature review and the analysis of publicly available secondary data. Due to the need to comply with editorial standards and formatting requirements, we limit ourselves to a concise critical presentation of what we consider to be the Security Council's main legal problems, followed by concluding remarks.

3 On September 23, 2025, President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva addressed the United Nations General Assembly and stated in his speech that “nothing—absolutely nothing—justifies the *genocide* currently underway in Gaza” (emphasis added). Full speech available at <https://www.gov.br/planalto/pt-br/acompanhe-o-planalto/discursos-e-pronunciamentos/2025/09/discurso-do-presidente-lula-na-abertura-do-debate-geral-da-80a-assembleia-geral-das-nacoes-unidas>. Accessed December 16, 2025.

4 The term “Cold War” refers to the historical period between March 12, 1947, the date of U.S. President Harry Truman's speech launching the struggle against communism, and December 26, 1991, the date of the dissolution of the USSR.

## A Brief Critical Overview of the Main Problems of the United Nations Security Council

Among the six organs established by the UN Charter—the Secretariat, the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the International Court of Justice (ICJ), and the Trusteeship Council (which still formally exists, although it has suspended its activities since 1994)—the United Nations Security Council is the only one endowed with the prerogative to maintain international peace and security, as well as the only body capable of issuing legally binding decisions. Beyond its authority to adopt binding norms, the Security Council's power is further expressed through its exclusive mandate under international law to authorize the legitimate use of force in the situations provided for in Chapter VII of the UN Charter.

There is, however, an important exception to this rule. As we shall see, the Cold War was a period during which the Council experienced genuine paralysis, and the veto power was used extensively. Of the 299 vetoes cast between 16 February 1946 and 18 September 2025, 72% occurred during this historical period. In this context, and at the initiative of the United States—seeking a way to overcome the paralysis caused by repeated vetoes from the Soviet Union—the General Assembly adopted Resolution 377(V), known as *Uniting for Peace*, which granted the Assembly the subsidiary authority to take measures aimed at the restoration of international peace and security:

[...] if the Security Council, because of lack of unanimity of the permanent members, fails to exercise its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security in any case where there appears to be a threat to the peace, breach of the peace, or act of aggression, the General Assembly shall consider the matter immediately with a view to making appropriate recommendations to Members for collective measures, including in the case of a breach of the peace or act of aggression the use of armed force when necessary, to maintain or restore international peace and security. (Security Council Report, Art. 1. UN, A/RES/377, 1950).

Despite having been proposed during the Korean War, the *Uniting for Peace* resolution was first used to establish the UN's very first peacekeeping mission—the First United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF I). This occurred shortly after the veto cast on 13 October 1956, when France and the United Kingdom rejected draft resolution S/3710, which called for the immediate

cessation of hostilities perpetrated by Israel, France, and the United Kingdom against Egypt, following President Nasser's nationalization of the Suez Canal. It is thus significant that the UN's first peacekeeping mission was authorized by the General Assembly and withdrew, among others, Israeli troops from territory that had been invaded and illegally occupied.

Peace and security, development, and human rights are the three fundamental pillars of the United Nations, and each pillar corresponds to an independent council: the Security Council (UNSC); the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC); and the Human Rights Council (HRC). While the UNSC and ECOSOC have existed since the UN's founding in 1945, the Commission on Human Rights only attained the status of a Council in 2006, through a resolution of the UN General Assembly and under protest from the United States. The belated institutional elevation of human rights within the UN bureaucracy also reflects the paradigm shift the organization underwent in the 2000s: the effort to reposition and mainstream individual human rights throughout the institution as a whole and, in particular, within debates on peace and security.

When acting under Chapter VII, the Security Council intervenes on a case-by-case basis. Whenever a complaint concerning a threat to the peace is brought before it, Council members first attempt to encourage conciliation between the conflicting parties and to establish principles for a potential peace agreement. They may also promote fact-finding and mediation, deploy a mission to the area, appoint special envoys, or request the Secretary-General's good offices to achieve a peaceful settlement of the dispute. If armed conflict has already begun, the UNSC may issue ceasefire directives aimed at preventing escalation or deploy military observers or a peacekeeping mission to help reduce tensions and separate opposing forces. Additionally, the Council may choose to impose sanctions, including:

- a) economic sanctions; arms embargoes; financial penalties and restrictions; and travel bans;
- b) severance of diplomatic relations;
- c) blockades; or even collective military action.

Chapter V of the United Nations Charter (Arts. 23–32) provides only minimal guidance on the Security Council's structure, membership, functions, and powers, and leaves to the Council itself the authority to adopt its own rules of procedure and to determine the method for selecting its president (Art. 30 of the UN Charter). With regard to its composition, the Council currently has 15 members, consisting of 5 permanent members (P5) and 10 elected members (E10).

In addition to functioning as both a legislative and executive body, the UNSC exercises the authority to determine the admissibility of its own competence; that is, it decides whether a particular situation merits the Council's attention. Once this assessment is made, it is the same body that decides whether it should act and what form that response should take.

Because the Council has never produced a prior or unified definition of "peace," it is the assessment of each concrete situation that determines the response in each case. The San Francisco Charter provides virtually no rules or limitations regarding the Council's functioning and competences. The only real constraint on the Council's authority arises when a matter does not receive the necessary political support to be placed on the agenda or to authorize the sanctions or interventions proposed. In this sense, it becomes crucial to understand the rules and working methods adopted by the UNSC, as well as the power dynamics that shape the institution.

Even today, the Security Council's working methods are regulated in part by a provisional rules of procedure adopted in 1946, which have undergone 11 amendments to date, the eleventh having taken place in 1982 to include Arabic as an official language of the Council's communications. Although no amendment has been made in the past 23 years, the Council has clarified its working methods and procedures through Presidential Notes, the most recent of which was issued on December 13, 2024 (S/2024/507), under the US presidency of Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield. By way of comparison, the UN General Assembly approved its rules of procedure on November 17, 1947, at its second session, through the adoption of resolution 173 (III), which entered into force on January 1, 1948.

In addition to lacking legal force—since it has never been formally approved—the Council's provisional rules of procedure are also highly incomplete. They do not stipulate, for instance, a minimum quorum required to begin a meeting, although in practice it is inconceivable that a meeting would proceed without all 15 members present, even when the format is that of informal consultations (Gharekhan 2006). The provisional rules also fail to specify when a meeting should be held formally or in the format of informal consultations, which take place in a separate room rather than in the Council Chamber. The most recent Presidential Note, in its third paragraph, merely recommends—using vague language—that a balance be maintained between efficiency and transparency in the Council's work. It therefore reaffirms the Council's commitment to holding open and closed meetings, as well as informal consultations, depending on the situation and the stage of deliberation on a given issue. The paragraph further states that, regardless

of the format chosen, the Council must promote transparency in its work.<sup>5</sup> However, how is it possible to promote transparency in informal and closed meetings, in which no record is kept?

The rules contained in Chapter IX of the provisional rules of procedure (rules 48 to 57), which address the publicity and transcription of meetings (recording of meetings is required, whether public or private), refer exclusively to formal meetings held in the Council Chamber. Informal consultations, so widespread a practice that there are dedicated rooms designed specifically for such meetings,<sup>6</sup> are not recorded in any official report of the Council, which prevents us from affirming that the debates occurring in those spaces are governed by the rules of the provisional regulations. Only Council members are permitted inside the consultation room; the press is likewise prohibited from entering these spaces. According to former Indian Ambassador Chinmaya R. Gharekhan, former Permanent Representative of India to the UN and former Under-Secretary-General during the tenure of Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the refrain repeatedly heard from P5 delegates was

“The Security Council is the master of its procedures” is a maxim, which is often heard in the consultations room, almost always from delegates of the same permanent members referred to earlier, when they want to go against established practices and, often, written rules [...]

[The result of this lack of transparency is that] The Security Council takes its decisions on the issues brought before it by member states on the basis of the political equations prevailing on each occasion<sup>7</sup> (Gharekhan, 2006, 14–15).

5 The original English wording of the third paragraph reads: “In order to strike the right balance between the transparency and the efficiency of its work, the Security Council reaffirms its commitment to use both open and closed meetings, as well as informal consultations, depending on the situation and the stage in its consideration of a matter. Notwithstanding the choice of format, the Security Council will aim to promote transparency in its work.” United Nations Security Council. 2024. Note by the President of the Security Council, December 13, 3. <https://docs.un.org/en/S/2024/507>. Accessed December 16, 2025.

6 The Security Council Consultation Room is located on the second floor of the Conference Building and had its décor and furniture completely renovated in 2013 through a donation by the Russian Federation. See: Security Council Consultation Room (United Nations 2013). According to Gharekhan (2006), the permanent members also have their own exclusive “informal consultation room,” located between the ECOSOC Chamber and the Security Council Chambers.

7 “The Security Council is the master of its procedures’ is a maximum heard from delegates of the same permanent members, when they want to go against established practices and, often, written rules [...] the Security Council takes its decisions on the issues brought before it by member states on the basis of the political equations prevailing on each occasion.”

One therefore perceives that much of the Security Council's day-to-day functioning and working methods—those moments in which decisions are actually made—derive not from the norms contained in the provisional rules of procedure, much less from the UN Charter, but from practices that emerge during informal consultations and become embedded in the Council's routine. According to the former Indian ambassador (2006), when a formal meeting takes place, the Council convenes and delegates' statements are recorded, but practically all decisions have already been taken beforehand and informally.

The lack of clarity and transparency surrounding the Council's procedural rules is further compounded by the absence of any defined mechanism for reviewing the legality of Security Council decisions before the International Court of Justice, as evidenced in the Lockerbie case.<sup>8</sup> The San Francisco Charter does not specify who may exercise the "arbitral function" or who has the final authority to interpret the UN's constitutive document. Libya's attempt to challenge the legality of the Council's resolutions led scholars such as Michael Reisman (1993 quoted in True-Frost 2007) to argue, as early as the 1990s, that the United Nations was facing a "constitutional crisis." Yet more serious than a crisis is the fact that no institution within the UN's bureaucratic structure exercises legality review over Security Council acts. Throughout its entire existence, the UNSC has recommended that two member states bring a dispute before the ICJ only once—in 1947<sup>9</sup>—and has requested an advisory opinion from the Court only once, in 1970.<sup>10</sup> The Council has never exercised its prerogative under Article 94(2) of the UN Charter to enforce ICJ judgments. Moreover, the United States vetoed two draft resolutions<sup>11</sup> that called for full compliance with the ICJ's judgment of 27 June 1986 in the "Military and Paramilitary Activities in and against Nicaragua (Nicaragua v. United States)"

8 In 1988, an airplane was destroyed by a bomb in a terrorist attack and crashed in the Scottish town of Lockerbie, killing 270 people. The United States and the United Kingdom suspected two Libyan officials and demanded that Libya surrender them. To exert pressure, the Security Council adopted Resolutions 731 (1992), 748 (1992), and 883 (1993), condemning the attack and imposing a series of economic, diplomatic, and military sanctions on Libya. Libya contested the actions of the U.S. and the U.K. before the Security Council, arguing that surrendering its citizens would violate the 1971 Montreal Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts Against the Safety of Civil Aviation. In 1992, the Court denied the request for provisional measures, but in 1998 it issued a landmark decision affirming its jurisdiction. Before the Court could rule on the legality of the Council's resolutions, a settlement was reached and the Libyan suspects were handed over and tried by a Scottish court in the Netherlands. This was the first and only time that a country challenged the legality of Security Council actions before the International Court of Justice; to date, the Council has never had its acts judicially reviewed by the Court.

9 The Corfu Channel Case between Albania and the United Kingdom.

10 Through Resolution 284, the UN Security Council requested an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice on the legal consequences of South Africa's occupation of Namibia.

11 Draft resolution S/18250, submitted by Congo, Ghana, Madagascar, Trinidad and Tobago, and the UAE, was vetoed by the United States on 31 July 1986. A subsequent draft, S/18428, jointly submitted by the same countries, was also vetoed on 28 October 1986.

case.<sup>12</sup> That judgment found that the United States had armed, equipped, and financed paramilitary groups—the Contras—to overthrow Nicaragua’s Sandinista government, thereby violating customary international law prohibiting intervention in another state’s internal affairs. It also found that the United States had interrupted peaceful maritime commerce, in breach of its obligations under Article XIX of the 1956 Treaty of Friendship, Commerce and Navigation signed in Managua, and therefore that Nicaragua was entitled to compensation.

Between 16 February 1946 and 18 September 2025—the dates of the first and most recent vetoes cast in the Security Council—the veto power was exercised in 299 draft resolutions (United Nations 2025a), 194 of them during the Cold War. The Russian Federation/USSR is the state that has used the veto most frequently in the Council’s history, casting it 137 times during that period—98 times as the Soviet Union and 39 times as the Russian Federation. Thus, 64% of all vetoes were exercised during the Cold War.

The veto power, however, is only one facet of the authority exercised by the permanent members within the Security Council. The ability to serve as penholder also reveals much about the current dynamics of dominance and control within the body. In the Council’s diplomatic jargon, the penholder is the country that holds the prerogative to propose and draft the initial version of a resolution on a given issue. The practice of determining which state “owns” a particular file is not mentioned anywhere in the Council’s provisional rules of procedure and is relatively recent, having emerged in 2003 as part of an informal arrangement when the so-called P3 (the United States, the United Kingdom, and France) attempted to resolve a problem of competition among themselves and thus divided the thematic areas between them:

To many it has appeared that the predominance of penholding by the P3 has been intended to shut out other Council members, notably the E10, from having drafting opportunities. *But in its origins, the system developed more to resolve the problem of France, the United Kingdom, and the United States sometimes strenuously competing with each other to produce the draft that would gain traction*<sup>13</sup>. (Sievers and Daws 2023, emphasis added)

12 For an analysis of the case and the decisions of the International Court of Justice, see: International Court of Justice 1988.

13 To many it has appeared that the predominance of penholding by the P3 has been intended to shut out other Council members, notably the E10, from having drafting opportunities. *But in its origins, the system developed more to resolve the problem of France, the United Kingdom and the United States sometimes strenuously competing with each other to produce the draft that would gain traction.*

In a political arrangement that closely resembles the logic employed at the Berlin Conference (1884–1885)—when imperial powers believed that the formula for achieving peace was to partition Africa into colonies and negotiate among themselves who would claim which territory—the P3 concluded that dividing nearly all Security Council files among themselves, while leaving the other 12 members virtually excluded, would be a reasonable solution for ensuring the Council’s effectiveness in addressing complex peace and security issues.

At present, the Security Council does not publish any official information on which states may serve as penholders. Based on what we observe in Ireland’s statement during the 2022 open debate on the Council’s working methods, in the report of the Arria-formula meeting convened by Russia that same year, and in documents from Brazil’s *série telegráfica*, there is no explicit or consensually agreed-upon rule defining which countries should serve as penholders.

Of the 46 items currently on the Security Council’s agenda in 2025, 32 are controlled by the United States, the United Kingdom, France, or Russia. This number rises even further when we consider country-specific files: the P3 control 19 out of 27 such dossiers. The Western permanent members of the Security Council also hold the authority to propose or copropose resolutions concerning all ongoing peacekeeping missions.

In a letter addressed to the President of the Security Council in March 2023, Ambassador Pedro Comissário Afonso, Permanent Representative of Mozambique, Mali’s Foreign Minister, Ambassador Abdoulaye Diop, informed the African country’s rejection of France’s right to draft resolutions on Mali — an authority it has held in the Council since 2012. The letter followed Mali’s 2022 complaint to the Security Council alleging violations of its airspace by France, as well as “acts of aggression, subversion and destabilization” (United Nations, 2023). Mali’s request was not granted.

Colonialism is, fundamentally, a discourse about the *Other* in which the *Other* participates only as object—that is, a discourse about the *Other* in which the *Other* possesses no power of speech. As Kilomba (2020) explains, “colonialism is a *long history of imposed silence* [...] of tortured voices, broken tongues, imposed languages, obstructed discourses” (Kilomba 2020, 27) (emphasis added). In this sense, we understand the current division of penholdership within the Security Council as an open colonial wound—one that has been identified and denounced repeatedly. An example is the statement made by the then Permanent Representative of Gabon, Michel Xavier Biang, at an Arria-formula meeting convened by Russia in 2022, in

which he declared: “We [the A3—the three non-permanent African members of the Security Council] would like to hold the pen to ensure the destiny of our peoples” (United Nations 2022).

It is also important to note that the P3’s power as penholders goes beyond the prerogative of drafting an initial version of a resolution on a given issue; they are the ones who organize meetings and debates on the file they “own,” and they also hold the prerogative to preside over those meetings. According to Gregory (2023), once the draft has been prepared, it circulates first among the P3 and their close allies to gather support; it is then informally shared with Russia and China, and only afterwards with the rest of the Council. The E10 are usually given very little time to propose amendments. Moreover, such amendments tend not to be well received once a consensus has already been reached among the P5, according to the literature consulted and to an informal conversation with a Brazilian diplomat who has twice observed the Council in action.

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## Final Considerations

The Security Council is an extremely political arena, marked by strong colonial remnants, in which the will and power of the strongest prevail. The veto power is merely one facet of this dominance, exercised at the expense of an environment regulated by legal norms previously agreed upon through a democratic process. The rules governing the Council’s working methods reveal transience, lack of transparency, and, above all, subordination to prevailing political interests. These deficiencies are especially troubling when one considers the Council’s immense creative power in shaping the law: beyond issuing binding norms, it is the Council that determines what constitutes a threat to international peace and security, thereby creating and defining what does—and does not—represent such a threat, and deciding when, how, and in which territories military intervention and/or economic sanctions will occur. The Council is thus the arbiter of its own competence. It is also well known, since the Lockerbie case, that no external body, not even the International Court of Justice, exercises legality review over the Council’s resolutions.

The capacity to build new coalitions and the ability to “navigate” this environment, which often resembles a minefield, seem essential for the E10, who, at great effort, wield limited influence in this organ and consistently

call attention to its colonial practices.<sup>14</sup> The Council is, therefore, a space of unequal power, characterized by the overwhelming dominance of the P5—and especially the P3—yet also marked by constant contestation. The Council’s structure favors those who have been there the longest, who better understand its inner workings and master the methods that can be used to achieve specific goals. Even when the E10 succeed in influencing the Council’s agenda and bringing new issues to the fore, as occurred with the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda, introduced by Namibia with strong support from Jamaica and Bangladesh, their non-permanent status means that those who are always present ultimately take ownership of these issues. This is also the case with the WPS agenda itself, for which the United Kingdom serves as penholder, while the United States holds the pen on matters relating to sexual violence.

Simultaneously with this reality, beginning in the 2000s, we witnessed an expansion of the UN Security Council’s competencies and the gradual replacement of the concept of international security (between nations) with the concept of human security. This shift, in turn, had as its main consequence an increase in the Council’s power to legislate and intervene in issues previously not considered within its jurisdiction, effectively transforming the Council into a kind of “super-legislator on all matters.”

We understand this increase in the Council’s power as an enhancement of its discursive rather than its actual authority, since its capacity to normalize conflicts, as a regulatory body meant to prevent and implement peaceful solutions to disputes, appears to diminish as its competencies expand, especially in light of the growing number of threats to peace.

Thus, we observe that the expansion of the Security Council’s competencies was not accompanied by a democratization of the body, nor by greater transparency or representativeness. For this reason, we conclude that the peace this organ might promote, were its members able to reach consensus, would continue to reproduce the asymmetries and inequalities of a world whose thirst for justice would remain unassuaged.

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14 In June 2022, Ireland issued a joint statement on behalf of all E10 members, addressing the President of the Council to call for greater coordination between the UNSC and the main UN bodies, notably the Peacebuilding Commission. The statement also called for the implementation of Presidential Note 507 on the Council’s working methods; the sharing of current and past Council information and documents with the E10; the need to adopt a “gender lens” in efforts to advance the UNSC’s working methods (there is no mention of racial issues); the need to adopt objective and transparent criteria in the Sanctions Committee; the need for penholders to interact more with committees, subsidiary bodies, and working groups; the reminder that no country is above the UN Charter; the call for respect for consensus proposals made by non-permanent members; the restriction of the use of the veto, especially in conflicts that generate serious humanitarian crises; the sharing of the role of penholder; an objective and evidence-based explanation regarding the application of sanctions against individuals and institutions.

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