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BİRLEŞMİŞ MİLLETLER GÜVENLİK KONSEYİ'NİN YAPISAL FELCİ: BÜYÜK GÜÇ POLİTİKALARI VE GAZZE KRİZİ

TALHA İSMAİL DUMAN - MEHMET RAKİPOĞLU

Assistant Professor at Sakarya University, Middle East Institute

Mail: ismailduman@sakarya.edu.tr



ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7638-2082>

Assistant Professor at Mardin Artuklu University, Department of Political Science and International Relations

Mail: mehmetrakipoglu@artuklu.edu.tr



ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6287-6943>

Öz

Bu çalışma, Birleşmiş Milletler Güvenlik Konseyi'nin (BMGK) yapısal işlevsizliğini, Ekim 2023–Ocak 2025 tarihleri arasındaki Gazze Savaşı'na verdiği tepkiyi analiz ederek incelemektedir. BMGK'daki taslak kararlar, oylama kayıtları ve toplantı tutanaklarından yararlanarak, özellikle Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nin veto yetkisini stratejik biçimde kullanarak ateşkes girişimlerini nasıl engellediği veya baltaladığı ortaya konulmuştur. Çalışma, vetonun büyük güçler arasında uzlaşa sağlama aracından, stratejik engelleme mekanizmasına dönüştüğünü ve Konsey'in insani krizlere etkin müdahalesini zayıflatıldığını ileri sürmektedir. Bulgular, daimî olmayan üyeler arasında ateşkesi destekleyen geniş bir çoğunluk olmasına rağmen, özellikle ABD'nin İsrail lehine aldığı pozisyonun BMGK'yı felce uğrattığını göstermektedir. Geçirilen kararların dahi yoğun siyasi tavizler ve hukuki yorumlarla ciddi biçimde zayıflatıldığı tespit edilmiştir. Gazze örneği, BMGK'nın mevcut yapısal sınırlarını ve acil reform ihtiyacını açıkça ortaya koymaktadır. Veto yetkisinin kötüye kullanımını sınırlamadan, BMGK'nın gelecekteki insani felaketlere karşı etkin bir güvenlik organı olma iddiası giderek zayıflamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Birleşmiş Milletler Güvenlik Konseyi (BMGK), Gazze Savaşı, Veto Yetkisi, BM Reformu, ABD'nin BMGK'daki Rolü, Büyük Güç Siyaseti.

Makaleye Ait Bilgiler

Makale Türü: Araştırma
Geliş Tarihi: 30. 04. 2025
Kabul Tarihi: 18. 06. 2025
Yayın Tarihi: 25. 06. 2025
Yayın Sezonu: Ocak - Haziran

Makaleye Atıf Bilgisi

DUMAN Talha İsmail - RAKİPOĞLU Mehmet, (2025). "The Structural Paralysis of the UN Security Council: Great Power Politics and the Gaza Crisis". *Muhafazakâr Düşünce*. Yıl: 21 Sayı: 68 (44-71).

muhafazakârdüşünce • yıl: 21 - sayı: 68 • Ocak-Haziran 2025

THE STRUCTURAL PARALYSIS OF THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL: GREAT POWER POLITICS AND THE GAZA CRISIS

TALHA İSMAİL DUMAN - MEHMET RAKİPOĞLU

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the longstanding structural dysfunction of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) through an in-depth analysis of its response to the Gaza War between October 2023 and January 2025. Drawing on draft resolutions, voting records, and meeting transcripts, it explores how permanent members, particularly the United States, strategically utilized veto power to block or undermine ceasefire initiatives. The paper argues that the veto has evolved from a tool of great-power consensus-building into an instrument of strategic impediment, undermining the Council's effectiveness in addressing mass humanitarian crises. Findings reveal that despite broad support from non-permanent members for immediate ceasefire resolutions, strategic alignments—especially the U.S. protection of Israeli interests—paralyzed the Council's ability to act. Even resolutions that passed were substantially weakened through political compromises and legal reinterpretations. The Gaza case thus reveals the substantial limitations of the UNSC's current structure, reinforcing calls for urgent institutional reform. Without an end to veto abuse, the UNSC risks being irrelevant in future humanitarian catastrophes.

Keywords: United Nations Security Council (UNSC), Gaza War, Veto Power, UN Reform, US Role in UNSC, Great Power Politics.

Introduction

Since the outbreak of Israel's war on Gaza on October 7, 2023, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has convened repeatedly to address the escalating humanitarian crisis and intensifying violence. In the fifteen months between the start of the war and the ceasefire deal of January 19, 2025, the Security Council held thirteen formal votes on Gaza-related draft resolutions. Nine of these thirteen draft resolutions failed to pass, while only four were adopted. Despite the unprecedented scale of destruction, with approximately 50,000 Palestinians reportedly killed, but more are estimated to be around 186.000 (*Gaza Toll Could Exceed 186,000, Lancet Study Says, 2024*), tens of thousands more injured, and much of the Gaza Strip ruined, the limited success in adopting resolutions has reignited longstanding concerns over the institutional paralysis of the UNSC, particularly regarding the use of the veto power by permanent members.

The United States' (US) veto power stands at the center of this deadlock, as it used this power on six ceasefire-related draft resolutions during this period. Although Russia and China have also exercised their veto powers, the United States has emerged as the principal obstacle to initiatives calling for an immediate and unconditional cessation of hostilities. In contrast, the overwhelming majority of non-permanent members consistently voted in favor of ceasefire proposals, revealing a deep divide within the Council. The failure of even the adopted resolutions to produce substantive outcomes has further underscored the limitations of the UNSC's effectiveness and prompted renewed calls for structural reform.

Although the literature has extensively analyzed the use of the veto in major conflicts (Chaziza, 2014; Okada, 2023; Sarsar, 2004) where China has economic interests, there has been a conspicuous balancing behaviour against the United States, the sole superpower. This article discusses whether the Chinese and Russian vetoes on Syria can be interpreted as a potential threat to counterbalance American moves in world politics, particularly in the Middle East. After abstaining on the no-fly zone over Libya, China vetoed thrice on the Syrian crisis. Beijing used its position to frame the agenda of the Security Council and to indirectly challenge US objectives in the region. China's diplomatic cooperation and coordination with Russia displays their mutual determination to check the US' moves in United Nations Security Council (UNSC, the recent Gaza war remains significantly underexplored. Recent effort to address this gap include Mbah, Mbah, and Hultquist's (2024) study,

which explores the role of the UN and its agencies, including the UNSC, during the 2023 Israel-Hamas war through the lens of Liberal Institutionalism. While their article provides valuable insights into the UN's broader mediatory role, it focuses more on the theoretical foundations of international cooperation and the activities of various UN bodies, rather than offering a detailed, resolution-by-resolution analysis of the Security Council's deadlock over Gaza (Mbah et al., 2024). This study aims to build upon and complement such approaches by offering empirical investigation into the UNSC's internal dynamics and voting behavior during the Gaza crisis. Addressing this gap, this article poses the following research question: How did the permanent members of the UNSC justify their voting behavior on Gaza-related resolutions between October 2023 and January 2025, and what does this reveal about the political and institutional dynamics shaping collective security responses?

The study focuses on the rhetorical and strategic positioning of the permanent members, particularly the United States, Russia, and China, drawing on official UN documents including drafts-resolutions, and voting-meeting records. Special attention is given to statements delivered by these states after the voting sessions, which provide crucial insights into the legal, humanitarian, and security-based arguments employed to defend their positions. For example, U.S. representatives recurrently invoked "Israel's right to self-defense" and the imperative of securing the release of hostages held by Hamas to justify opposition to ceasefire resolutions. In contrast, Russia and China emphasized humanitarian protection and adherence to international law as grounds for supporting ceasefire initiatives. Beyond tracing the divergences among member states, the article also examines the complex and contentious processes behind adopting the four successful resolutions. While their limited effectiveness on the ground is acknowledged, the primary emphasis lies on the intense negotiations, political compromises, and diplomatic maneuvering required to achieve even minimal consensus. These dynamics shed light on the structural and political barriers that hinder effective multilateral action in times of acute crisis.

This article proceeds in five sections: following the introduction, it outlines the methodology and theoretical framework, presents a comprehensive analysis of UNSC Gaza-related resolutions between October 2023 and January 2025, discusses findings in relation to great power dynamics, and concludes with implications for UNSC reform. The focus on the period from October 7, 2023, to January 19, 2025, stems from the absence of comprehensive analyses covering the Security Council's behavior during the most intense phase of

the Gaza war. While several resolutions on Palestine have been adopted in earlier decades, this timeframe represents a distinct phase of UNSC paralysis amid a historically unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe.

By situating the Gaza deadlock within broader debates on UNSC reform, this article argues that the inability to act decisively in the face of mass civilian suffering highlights the urgent need to revisit the Council's decision-making structure, particularly the use and abuse of the veto. It contributes to the literature on international organizations by offering an empirically grounded account of how great power politics interact to shape multilateral responses to humanitarian catastrophes.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative content analysis to examine how the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (P5) -the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Russia, and China- framed their positions and interpreted one another's voting behavior during discussions of Gaza-related drafts and resolutions between October 2023 and January 2025. The decision to limit the dataset to this period reflects a methodological focus on the Security Council's response during the most acute phase of the Gaza war, ensuring analytical depth and contemporary relevance. The researchers' design follows a four-step qualitative analysis: (1) collecting official UN documents; (2) close reading and coding of meeting transcripts; (3) thematic categorization; and (4) interpretive analysis grounded in institutional and rhetorical theory.

The analysis draws on the official statements made by these countries' representatives (permanent representatives or deputy ambassadors) in twelve Security Council meetings. Although thirteen draft or final resolutions were introduced during this period, two of them (S/2023/792 and S/2023/795) were discussed in the same session, resulting in twelve distinct meeting records. While the main focus is on the P5, selected comments from non-permanent members are also reviewed when relevant to understanding the broader discursive context.

Qualitative content analysis, in contrast to quantitative approaches that rely on predetermined categories and frequency counts, focuses on the interpretation of meaning that emerges from the text itself (Forman & Damschroder, 2007). It involves inductive reasoning and the identification of themes derived directly from close reading of textual material (Zhang & Luther, 2020). A manual-interpretive approach is adopted, prioritizing contextual understanding. This interpretivist approach aligns with recent scholarship

that examines the UNSC meeting records to examine how states construct and contest normative positions through rhetorical strategies in multilateral decision-making processes (Curran & Holtom, 2015; Seven, 2022).

The analysis proceeded in several steps. First, each meeting transcript was examined line by line to grasp the full content of the statements made by P5 representatives. Second, prominent themes and arguments were identified through repeated readings. These included legal concepts (e.g., “self-defense” and “international law”), humanitarian appeals (e.g., “protection of civilians,” “hostage release,” “access to aid”), and political narratives (e.g., “double standards,” “hypocrisy,” “selective application of norms”). In addition to mapping how each permanent member justified its own vote, particular attention was paid to how they described and responded to the positions of other members, such as how Russia criticized U.S. vetoes or how the U.K. framed its abstentions. This focus on both self-justification and inter-member evaluation enables the study to uncover the political and rhetorical dynamics underlying institutional paralysis.

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review: UNSC Reform and Veto Power Problem

This section defines key terms such as “institutional paralysis”, “strategic impunity”, and “veto abuse”, and situates them within the broader literature on UNSC reform. (Balci, 2024; Gifkins, 2021; Mälksoo, 2010). These concepts form the analytical foundation of the study. The United Nations was founded in 1945 to maintain international peace and security, promote human rights, and foster social and economic development after World War II. Among its principal organs, the UNSC is primarily responsible for maintaining international peace and security (Çalik Topuz & Arafat, 2023, p. 358; Lowe, 2008). Structurally, the UNSC comprises fifteen members: P5 and ten non-permanent members elected for two-year terms by the General Assembly (Hannah Allen & Yuen, 2022, p. 13; Luck, 2008, p. 65).

UNSC decision-making is divided into procedural and substantive matters. Procedural decisions require an affirmative vote from nine members and cannot be vetoed (Çağlayan, 2021, p. 456). In contrast, substantive decisions require at least nine affirmative votes, including the concurring votes of all five permanent members, thus enabling any P5 member to block resolutions by exercising a veto (Balci, 2024; Mälksoo, 2010, p. 95). The UN Charter grants any one P5 member the ability to “totally derail any resolution” simply

by casting a veto, highlighting the extraordinary imbalance embedded within the Council's decision-making process (Mälksoo, 2010, p. 98) This structural privilege causes a direct contradiction between the Council's claimed democratic ideals and its inherently autocratic structure (Gifkins, 2021, pp. 1–4).

Substantive decisions are typically formalized as “resolutions” carrying considerable political and legal implications, while procedural decisions are labeled “decisions” and deal with the Council's internal processes. The permanent members' exclusive right to classify matters as procedural or substantive further entrenches power asymmetries within the Council (Krisch, 2008, p. 144). This power asymmetry has led some to describe the UNSC as an “exclusive aristocracy” of powerful states dominating the “masses” of the General Assembly (Mälksoo, 2010, p. 98).

The UNSC has demonstrated significant structural ineffectiveness in addressing protracted crises such as Western Sahara, Syria, and Mali. In Western Sahara, the 1991 Settlement Plan for a self-determination referendum was undermined by political deadlock between Morocco and the Polisario Front, exacerbated by France's protective stance toward Morocco, leading to a shift toward ambiguous “political solutions” (Theofilopoulou, 2017). Similarly, in Syria, the UNSC's paralysis was evident as geopolitical rivalries between Russia and the United States blocked decisive action, sidelining global humanitarian concerns (Aurobinda Mahapatra, 2016, p. 44).

Particularly in the post-Cold War era, the veto mechanism has been increasingly employed to shield allies, notably by the United States in defense of Israel. Historical records show that since 1972, the U.S. has used its veto more than 50 times to block resolutions critical of Israel (Newton, 2021; *The 49 Times the US Used Veto Power against UN Resolutions on Israel*, 2024), even committing a genocide documented and proven by many international organizations such as Amnesty International (You Feel Like You Are Subhuman': Israel's Genocide Against Palestinians in Gaza, 2024).

The Paralyzing Role of the US and Reform Debates

The veto has long served as a paralyzing tool, particularly wielded by the United States. The veto systematically enables great powers to block initiatives contrary to their interests (Aral, 2019, p. 77). The US's persistent use of its veto power to shield Israel, even in cases of clear violations of international law, has exacerbated the structural dysfunction of the UN Security Council (Sarsar, 2004, p. 460). During Israel's genocidal war on Gaza, this trend intensified,

with the U.S. vetoing six out of thirteen ceasefire resolutions, prioritizing its strategic alliance with Israel over universal humanitarian imperatives (Sarsar, 2004, p. 455). Through these actions, the U.S. not only obstructed efforts to halt the violence but also legitimized unlawful acts, reinforcing the Council's systemic deadlock and undermining its credibility as a guardian of global peace and security. Since UNSC enforcement powers and unilateral veto privileges of the US often combine to form a "recipe for inaction" during major humanitarian crises, especially when great-power interests are involved (Mälksoo, 2010, p. 99). The meaning and role of the veto right within the UNSC, thus, transcend procedural significance. It symbolizes the structural entrenchment of power disparities in international governance. Ontologically, while the UNSC exists as the premier body for international peace, functionally, its effectiveness is undermined by the strategic use of the veto. Consequently, its ability to uphold peace and security is often subordinated to the geopolitical interests of its permanent members. This paralyzing dysfunction of the UNSC has triggered reform discussions about the UN and its structure.

Therefore, although the UNSC was established to function as the guardian of collective security, its institutional design, notably the veto right, has often enabled great powers to prioritize their strategic interests over global consensus. As Mälksoo (p. 95) argues, the veto creates a form of "legal hegemony" within the international legal system, where great powers' strategic interests undermine the collective aims of the Council. This chronic structural flaw has ignited persistent debates surrounding the Council's legitimacy and functionality (Çolak & Köse, 2020; Gould & Rablen, 2017; Hannah Allen & Yuen, 2022, p. 14) her ne kadar diğer örgütler ile kıyaslanamaz bir temsil gücüne sahip olsa da; kurulduğu 1945 yılından günümüze BM'nin uluslararası konjonktürde önemli ölçüdeki gelişmelerin beraberinde getirdiği değişimlere etkili çözümler üretmesi beklenmektedir. BM'nin yürütme, hayati kararların onay ve icra mekanizması olarak işlev gören Güvenlik Konseyi (BMGK. States such as Brazil, India, Germany, and Japan- the G4- and the African Group emerged as primary advocates for restructuring the Council to reflect contemporary geopolitical realities (Çolak & Köse, 2020, p. 22; Cox, 2009; Gould & Rablen, 2017, p. 146; Luck, 2008, p. 66; Weiss, 2003, p. 148) her ne kadar diğer örgütler ile kıyaslanamaz bir temsil gücüne sahip olsa da; kurulduğu 1945 yılından günümüze BM'nin uluslararası konjonktürde önemli ölçüdeki gelişmelerin beraberinde getirdiği değişimlere etkili çözümler üretmesi beklenmektedir. BM'nin yürütme, hayati kararların onay ve icra mekanizması olarak işlev gören Güvenlik Konseyi (BMGK. Their proposals have focused on expanding both

permanent and non-permanent categories, ensuring greater representation for Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Some (Lättilä & Ylönen, 2019, p. 166) proposed a “Two-Layered Regional Model,” envisioning UNSC membership allocation based on regional representation, population size, economic weight, cultural diversity, and democratic credentials. In contrast, other scholars (Thakur, 2004, p. 67) argued for reforms grounded in enhancing the Council’s representativeness and inclusivity. Nonetheless, achieving consensus remains elusive (Berdal, 2003, pp. 7–8).

Recently, new actors have entered the reform discourse of the UNSC. Türkiye has notably become a vocal critic of the current UNSC structure. President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s slogan, “The world is bigger than five,” encapsulates Ankara’s critique of the P5-dominated order (Acer et al., 2023). Türkiye emphasizes equitable regional representation and the need to diminish the veto’s paralyzing effect to restore the UN’s credibility in responding to global crises (Acer, 2022). While the UNSC exists ontologically as an instrument of collective security, it is functionally compromised. Initially intended to secure unanimity among great powers and prevent global conflict, the veto has become a mechanism for perpetuating strategic impunity. Therefore, the UNSC’s structure, particularly the veto power of its permanent members, has compromised its ability to act decisively in times of crisis.

The persistent use of the veto, especially by the United States in defense of Israel, has demonstrated that the Council often operates more as a battleground for great-power politics than as a guarantor of international peace and security. Calls for UNSC reform are thus not merely rhetorical but arise from the profound structural deficiencies that have rendered the Council increasingly ineffective. Proposals for regional representation, decision-making democratization, and veto curtailment are essential to restoring the Council’s credibility. Nevertheless, given the procedural hurdles and entrenched interests, meaningful reform remains a difficult task (Hosli & Dörfler, 2019, p. 37), if not a utopian aspiration (Schaefer, 2017, p. 63; Binder & Heupel, 2021, p. 63). Yet, as the Gaza conflict tragically illustrates, the cost of inaction is measured in human suffering and the erosion of international norms.

UNSC Gaza Resolutions and Drafts: A Dataset of Thirteen Initiatives

Between October 7, 2023, and the declaration of a ceasefire in Gaza on January 19, 2025, the UNSC convened numerous times to deliberate on the

rapidly escalating humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza. In total, thirteen draft resolutions were introduced to address the situation. Only four of these were ultimately adopted, while the remaining nine failed, either due to a permanent member's veto or because they did not receive the minimum number of affirmative votes. This section examines voting and meeting records of these thirteen resolutions, beginning with draft proposals that were blocked or defeated, and concluding with a detailed analysis of the four resolutions successfully adopted following protracted and often contentious negotiations.

Draft Resolution S/2023/772: The Debate over Condemning Hamas

On October 16, 2023, Russia submitted the draft resolution S/2023/772 to the UNSC, calling for “an immediate, durable and fully respected humanitarian ceasefire” in Gaza. The draft condemned violence against civilians, demanded hostage releases, and urged unhindered humanitarian access. Russia presented it as a “purely humanitarian” proposal, co-sponsored by Arab Group members and supported by Palestine (UN Security Council 9439th Meeting, 2023, p. 2). Despite its humanitarian tone, the resolution failed: five votes in favor (China, Russia, Gabon, Mozambique, UAE), four against (United States, United Kingdom, France, Japan), and six abstentions.

The main opposition to this draft centered on the absence of an explicit condemnation of Hamas. The US called the absence “outrageous and indefensible” (UN Security Council 9439th Meeting, 2023, p. 3) while the UK and France echoed concerns over the lack of attribution for the 7 October operation of Hamas. Abstaining states, including Albania and Switzerland, criticized missing references to international law but showed reluctance to oppose Washington's framing openly. Ultimately, the debate revealed that for the United States and its allies', condemning Hamas was a higher priority than humanitarian action. Despite addressing some of Israel's key demands, the Russian draft's failure to explicitly criminalize Hamas led the U.S. to act as Israel's behalf within the Council, paralyzing even modest humanitarian initiatives (Al Jazeera, 2023a).

Draft Resolution S/2023/773: Between Humanitarian Rhetoric and U.S.-Led Paralysis

On October 18, 2023, Brazil presented a new draft resolution, S/2023/773 to the UNSC, condemning the Hamas attacks of 7 October as “heinous ter-

rorist acts” and calling for humanitarian access and the release of hostages. The text incorporated elements previously demanded by the U.S. yet failed to explicitly affirm Israel’s “right to self-defense”. Although twelve members supported the resolution, the U.S. vetoed it, arguing that it did not sufficiently recognize Israel’s security concerns. U.S. Ambassador to the UN Thomas-Greenfield emphasized the need to “let diplomacy play out” and criticized the absence of explicit language affirming Israel’s right to self-defense (*UN Security Council 9442nd Meeting*, 2023, p. 5). The United Kingdom abstained for similar reasons, despite acknowledging the resolution’s condemnation of Hamas. UK Ambassador to the UN Dame Barbara Woodward stated: “The draft resolution needed to be clearer on Israel’s inherent right to self-defense” (*UN Security Council 9442nd Meeting*, 2023, p. 9) Like the U.S., the UK emphasized a selective reading of international law that privileges state security narratives over the broader imperatives of civilian protection.

Although Russia initially responded positively to Brazil’s draft resolution, it ultimately abstained due to the rejection of its proposed amendments which were calling for a ceasefire and condemning Israeli attacks on civilian infrastructure. The first amendment sought to insert a clear call for an “immediate, sustainable and respected humanitarian ceasefire,” moving beyond the notion of temporary “humanitarian pauses” (*UN Security Council 9442nd Meeting*, 2023, p. 2). The second one aimed to explicitly condemn the indiscriminate attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure in Gaza, including the deadly airstrike on Al Ahli Arab Hospital, and to denounce the blockade of Gaza as a violation of international humanitarian law. Russia’s envoy sharply criticized the Council’s direction, accusing some members of prioritizing military escalation over humanitarian relief. This episode revealed that even when humanitarian concerns were addressed and Hamas was condemned, the U.S. insisted on maximalist language favoring Israel. As a result, the UNSC once again failed to adopt a humanitarian resolution, reinforcing patterns of paralysis rooted in great-power alignments.

S/2023/792 and S/2023/795: Reciprocal Vetoes Block U.S. and Russian Draft Resolutions

On October 25, 2023, the UNSC debated two competing draft resolutions: S/2023/792 which was submitted by the United States, and S/2023/795 which was presented by Russia. The U.S. draft strongly condemned the Hamas attacks of 7 October, affirmed Israel’s right to self-defense, and called for humanitarian pauses. However, it lacked any reference to an immediate

ceasefire, leading Russia and China to veto it. China described the draft as “seriously unbalanced” and warned that it would pave the way for further escalation (*UN Security Council 9453rd Meeting*, 2023, p. 4).

In response, Russia proposed its draft resolution, S/2023/795, which condemned Hamas, demanded a humanitarian ceasefire, and criticized attacks on civilians and the blockade of Gaza. Despite addressing earlier criticisms, the Russian draft was vetoed by the United States and the United Kingdom. U.S. officials dismissed it as a “bad-faith resolution” that failed to reflect “realities on the ground” (*UN Security Council 9453rd Meeting*, 2023, p. 7). The UK criticized the absence of meaningful consultations.

Taken together, the debates surrounding both drafts revealed the extent to which the positions of key Council members were shaped by their political alignment with the parties directly involved in the conflict. While Russia adjusted its language to address earlier criticisms, including the explicit condemnation of Hamas, the U. S. maintained a clear stance that no resolution would be acceptable unless it fully reflected Israel’s demands. This approach left the Council deadlocked and reinforced perceptions of its inability to act impartially despite mounting humanitarian needs.

Draft Resolution S/2023/970: Global Consensus, American Veto

On December 8, 2023, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) submitted the draft resolution S/2023/970, calling for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza. It was co-sponsored by 97 UN Member States within 24 hours, reflecting an exceptional level of global consensus. The draft emphasized an immediate cessation of hostilities, the release of hostages, and unrestricted humanitarian access. Thirteen Council members voted favorably, including France, Russia, and China. However, the United States vetoed the resolution, citing its failure to condemn Hamas’s attacks on 7 October and to reaffirm Israel’s right to self-defense. U.S. Deputy Ambassador Robert Wood argued that an “unconditional ceasefire” would allow Hamas to regroup (*UN Security Council 9499th Meeting*, 2023, p. 24). While the UK abstained, France lamented the Council’s disunity. Russia and China harshly criticized the U.S. veto, accusing Washington of prioritizing strategic alliances over humanitarian imperatives. Russia’s Ambassador called it a “death sentence” for civilians (*UN Security Council 9499th Meeting*, 2023, p. 7). The broad international support for the draft resolution contrasted sharply with the Council’s paralysis, once again exposing how a single permanent member’s veto could override overwhelming global demands for urgent humanitarian action.

S/2024/173 and S/2024/239: Competing Ceasefire Drafts

In early 2024, Algeria and the United States proposed rival ceasefire resolutions. Algeria's draft (S/2024/173) called for an immediate, unconditional ceasefire and humanitarian access. Although it was supported by 13 Council members, the U. S. vetoed this text, arguing that it would "jeopardize" sensitive hostage negotiations mediated with Egypt and Qatar (*UN Security Council 9552nd Meeting*, 2024, p. 5). The UK abstained again, referring concerns about harming negotiations, while Russia and China supported the Algerian text, denouncing the U.S. veto as enabling further bloodshed (*UN Security Council 9552nd Meeting*, 2024, p. 10). On the other hand, France, despite voting in favor, criticized the draft for lacking a clear condemnation of the October 7 Hamas operation.

One month later, the U.S. submitted its revised draft (S/2024/239), which endorsed the "imperative of an immediate and sustained ceasefire" tied to the release of hostages. Although the draft was supported by 11 members, including France and the UK, it was vetoed by China and Russia. China criticized the U.S. proposal as "ambiguous," warning that it evaded the central demand for an unconditional ceasefire (*UN Security Council 9548nd Meeting*, 2024, p. 7) Russia described it as a "hypocritical initiative" designed to free Israel's hands for continued military action. Algeria also voted against the U.S. draft, stating that it failed to reflect the immense suffering endured by Palestinians and lacked accountability measures for Israel. These two competing drafts once again demonstrated the Council's deep strategic divisions, with humanitarian priorities subordinated to geopolitical maneuvering and permanent member rivalries.

S/2024/312 and S/2024/835: Two Final Attempts

Blocked by a U.S. Veto

In April 2024, Algeria submitted a new draft resolution, S/2024/312, recommending Palestine's admission as a full UN member. Supported by 12 Council members, it was vetoed by the United States, while the UK and Switzerland abstained. Algeria, acting on behalf of the Arab Group, the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation (OIC), and the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), stressed that Palestine's membership was a moral imperative. Russia and China condemned the U.S. veto. Russia's Ambassador described it as a "hopeless attempt" to halt the course of history, accusing Washington of seeking to "break the Palestinians' will" (*UN Security Council 9609th Meeting*,

2024, p. 3). China called the veto “deeply disappointing” and criticized it as “gangster logic.” In contrast, the U. S. reiterated its support for a two-state solution but claimed the Palestinian bid was “premature” and lacked sufficient backing from the UN Admissions Committee. This development further highlighted the Security Council’s paralysis on Palestinian statehood, reinforcing how permanent members’ strategic interests continue to undermine overwhelming international consensus.

The second draft, submitted in November 2024 by all ten non-permanent UNSC members (S/2024/835), demanded an “immediate, unconditional and permanent ceasefire” in Gaza, alongside the release of hostages and large-scale humanitarian access. Fourteen members voted in favor. Again, only the United States opposed and cast its veto. The U.S. argued that the resolution “would have sent a dangerous message to Hamas: that there is no need to come back to the negotiating table,” (*UN Security Council 9790th Meeting*, 2024, p. 3) and objected to its failure to condemn the 7 October attacks. Thereupon, some UNSC member state representatives strongly condemned the U.S. veto. China warned that vetoes were pushing Gaza “further into darkness and desperation,” and asked, “Do Palestinian lives mean nothing?” (*UN Security Council 9790th Meeting*, 2024, p. 6). Russia accused Washington of “callous and cynical obstruction” and quoted the U.S.’s own earlier language on Sudan to highlight its “hypocrisy” (*UN Security Council 9790th Meeting*, 2024, p. 9). Moreover, Algeria’s Ambassador Bendjama described the Council’s inaction as “a sad day for the Security Council,” stressing that “Gaza, once known as a city of children, has tragically become a city of orphans” (*UN Security Council 9790th Meeting*, 2024, p. 5). The Palestinian observer also voiced anguish: “Maybe — for some — we have the wrong nationality, the wrong faith, the wrong skin colour; but we are humans, and we should be treated as such” (*UN Security Council 9790th Meeting*, 2024, p. 13). These final two failed resolutions were not just symbolic setbacks, but stark reflections of the Security Council’s deepening paralysis amid one of the gravest humanitarian crises in recent memory. They revealed the structural limitations of multilateral diplomacy, where a few’s veto power can override the overwhelming majority’s will.

Table 1: Excerpts from Statements by UNSC Permanent Members on Gaza Draft Resolutions (October 2023–January 2025)

Outcome / Veto	USA	UK	France	Russia	China
S/2023/772 Failed – Not enough votes	“outrageous, hypocritical, indefensible”	“Israel’s right to self-defence”	Israel’s “right to defend itself”	“selfish aspirations”	“collective punishment”
S/2023/773 Vetoed by USA	“self-defence right”	“inherent right to self-defence”		“hypocrisy and double standards”	“shocked and disappointed”
S/2023/792 Vetoed by Russia & China	“Russia’s cynical and irresponsible behaviour”			“dubious provisions”	“evasive approach”
S/2023/795 Failed – Vetoed by USA & UK	“not worth wasting any more time discussing “	“Israel’s right to self-defence”	“several essential elements were lacking”	“absolutely unacceptable”	“urgent ceasefire”
S/2023/970 Vetoed by USA	“unsustainable ceasefire”	“the atrocities Hamas committed”	“refusal to genuine negotiations”	“cynically blocking”	“extremely hypocritical”
S/2024/173 Vetoed by USA	“put sensitive negotiations in jeopardy “	“some of our proposals were not taken on board”	“culpable ambiguity”	“the destructive policy of a single member”	“deeply dissatisfied and disappointed”
S/2024/239 Vetoed by Russia & China	Russia’s “hypocrisy to throw stones when it lives in a glass house itself”	“deeply disappointed”	demands “unconditional release of all hostages and lasting ceasefire”	“hypocritical statements”, “crocodile tears”	“taken this detour and played a game of words”

S/2024/312 Vetoed by USA	" Hamas is an integral part of the State envisioned in this draft resolution "	" Ensuring that Hamas is no longer in charge of Gaza "	" in favour of elevating the status of Palestine in the United Nation "	" The aim is to break the Palestinians' will to turn them into servants and second-class persons "	" decades-long dream of the Palestinian people ruth- lessly dashed "
S/2024/835 Vetoed by USA	" Israel had a right to de- fend itself "	" We regret... to reach a consensus "	" deeply re- grettable "	" cynically stand in the way of de- mands "	" very disap- pointed "

Hard-Won Consensus: The Adoption of Gaza Resolutions amid Diplomatic Gridlock

Between October 7, 2023, and the ceasefire of January 19, 2025, the UNSC adopted only four resolutions related to the situation in Gaza. The first, Resolution 2712, was passed on November 15, 2023, after weeks of deadlock. Proposed by Malta, the resolution focused on the protection of children in Gaza, demanding "urgent and extended humanitarian pauses," "immediate and unconditional release of all hostages," and full humanitarian access. Though it refrained from calling for a ceasefire, it marked the Council's first formal action. The resolution passed with 12 votes in favor, while the United States, United Kingdom, and Russia abstained. According to U.S. Ambassador Thomas-Greenfield, "The United States could not vote yes on a text that did not condemn Hamas" (*UN Security Council 9479th Meeting*, 2024, p. 5). Similarly, the UK stated that it "regrets that the resolution could not clearly condemn the Hamas terrorist attacks" (*UN Security Council 9479th Meeting*, 2024, p. 7). Russia, by contrast, abstained due to the resolution's failure to demand a ceasefire. Ambassador Nebenzia argued that "humanitarian pauses are not and cannot be a replacement for a ceasefire," warning that without halting hostilities, civilians "will again find themselves being bombed." He criticized the Council for producing only a "hollowed out" resolution and described the final text as "a weak call... a disgrace." He also expressed his

concern that “the provisions of the resolution will not be implemented on the ground,” and denounced what he saw as U.S. efforts to “water down” the language and avoid any binding cessation of violence (*UN Security Council 9479th Meeting*, 2024, p. 10-11).

On the other hand, the United States blocked a Russian amendment to the Maltese draft resolution that sought to include a call for “an immediate, durable and sustained humanitarian truce.” Although the amendment proposal was supported by five members, including Brazil and China, it failed due to U.S. opposition and nine abstentions (*Al Jazeera*, 2023b). While Washington refrained from vetoing the resolution, likely to avoid growing criticism of its obstructionist role, it, nonetheless, shaped its boundaries by opposing any language that might imply a formal ceasefire. In contrast to earlier draft resolutions which it had vetoed for omitting a condemnation of Hamas or failing to affirm Israel’s right to self-defense, the U.S. abstained in this case to avoid the appearance of being unconcerned amid a worsening humanitarian crisis. Yet, it firmly upheld Israel’s red lines again, ensuring the final text would not place Israel under significant pressure or constraint, while still projecting a more conciliatory stance.

The second resolution adopted by the Security Council on the situation in Gaza, Resolution 2720, came on December 22, 2023, following a week of intense negotiations. Drafted by the United Arab Emirates and revised repeatedly to accommodate U.S. demands, the resolution called for the immediate, safe, and unhindered delivery of humanitarian aid “at scale” across the Gaza Strip and requested the appointment of a UN Coordinator to establish a mechanism to monitor and accelerate assistance (*BBC*, 2023). Unlike its predecessor, the resolution implied a broader operational scope through the creation of a new institutional framework, but once again avoided explicitly calling for a ceasefire, even in the face of mounting international pressure and worsening conditions on the ground.

The resolution passed with 13 votes in favor, none against, and two abstentions by the United States and Russia. The U.S. abstention, despite Washington’s central role in shaping the final text, reflected its refusal to accept any explicit reference to a cessation of hostilities. In fact, the original draft’s call for an “urgent suspension of hostilities” was removed because of U.S. insistence and replaced with a diluted formula urging “steps to create the conditions for a sustainable cessation.” Nevertheless, Russia responded by proposing an oral amendment to reinstate the earlier, stronger language calling for an “urgent

suspension of hostilities” (*UN Security Council 9520th Meeting*, 2023, p. 4). Although the amendment received the support of 10 Council members, it ultimately failed due to a veto cast by the United States, which objected to any formulation that could be interpreted as calling for a ceasefire. In her remarks, U.S. Ambassador Thomas-Greenfield hailed the resolution as a “strong step forward,” emphasizing the appointment of a humanitarian coordinator and reiterating that international humanitarian law applies to both Hamas and Israel. However, she also expressed frustration that the Council had once again failed to condemn Hamas explicitly (*UN Security Council 9520th Meeting*, 2023, p. 5-6). Russia’s envoy condemned the outcome as a “tragic moment” and accused Washington of “twisting arms” to neutralize the resolution’s impact (*UN Security Council 9520th Meeting*, 2023, p. 3-4). Echoing concerns raised by several Council members, China and France expressed regret that the resolution’s language on a ceasefire was not stronger.

Though the resolution was framed as a humanitarian advance, its passage once again revealed the deep divisions among Council members, particularly over how to reconcile the imperative of immediate relief with demands for legal accountability and growing international concern over the scale of civilian suffering in Gaza. The negotiations also disclosed the extent to which the United States was willing to steer the process according to its strategic preferences, including insisting on the removal of ceasefire language, weakening the scope of UN oversight, and repeatedly delaying the vote through procedural interventions. That Washington ultimately abstained, even after securing nearly all of its desired changes, underscored the narrow space for consensus and the persistent tension between humanitarian imperatives and geopolitical interests within the Council.

The third and most consequential resolution to date, Resolution 2728, was adopted on March 25, 2024, after months of diplomatic paralysis and the failure of multiple ceasefire initiatives. Its adoption came just three days after a draft resolution sponsored by the United States, which avoided calling for a ceasefire, was vetoed by Russia and China. In contrast, Resolution 2728, introduced by the ten elected members of the Council, demanded “an immediate ceasefire for the month of Ramadan respected by all parties leading to a lasting sustainable ceasefire.” It also called for the “immediate and unconditional release of all hostages” and emphasized the need to lift all barriers to humanitarian assistance. The resolution passed with 14 votes in favor and only one abstention by the United States. Although the reso-

lution marked the Council's first explicit call for a ceasefire, its adoption reflected a series of intense negotiations and last-minute compromises. The most contentious issue centered on the removal of the word "permanent" from the ceasefire clause, which was replaced by the more ambiguous term "lasting" (*UN Security Council 9586th Meeting*, 2024, p. 3). Russia attempted to reinstate the original wording through an oral amendment, arguing that such vague language could allow Israel to resume military operations after Ramadan. The amendment failed, highlighting a fundamental split between Council members who insisted on a definitive and time-unlimited ceasefire and those who insisted on vagueness, effectively allowing Israel to maintain its operational freedom.

While the U. S. abstained from the vote, it emphasized support for what Ambassador Thomas-Greenfield described as "some of the critical objectives in this non-binding resolution" (*UN Security Council 9586th Meeting*, 2024, p. 5). However, Washington's insistence on describing the resolution as non-binding drew criticism from several Council members. China's Ambassador Zhang Jun countered that "Security Council resolutions are binding," (*UN Security Council 9586th Meeting*, 2024, p. 8) and Mozambique's envoy similarly affirmed that "all UNSC resolutions are binding and mandatory" (*Al Jazeera*, 2024). The U.S. interpretation allowed it to appear responsive to growing international concern while limiting any legal pressure on Israel. The vote also signaled a visible strain in U.S.-Israeli relations. Shortly after the resolution passed, the official social media account of the Israeli Prime Minister stated, "The United States has abandoned its policy in the UN today" (*Al Jazeera*, 2024). In protest, Israel canceled a planned visit of its delegation to Washington. Nevertheless, by ensuring the removal of the word "permanent" and framing the resolution as non-binding, the U. S. sought to avoid unnecessary straining its relationship with Israel. Its abstention thus functioned as a carefully calibrated gesture: a tacit acknowledgment of the mounting humanitarian crisis in Gaza and an effort to soften international criticism, while still maintaining alignment with Israel's core security concerns. Even so, the resolution's passage was significant, as it represented the most substantial step the Security Council had taken since 7 October to exert political pressure on Israel, going beyond the more limited and indirect language of the previous two resolutions.

The fourth and final resolution, Resolution 2735, was adopted on June 10, 2024, with 14 votes in favor and one abstention by Russia. Endorsing a U.S.-backed three-phase ceasefire plan, the resolution called for an immediate cessation of hostilities, the release of hostages, the withdrawal of Israeli forces from populated areas in Gaza, and the launch of a multi-year reconstruction process. Though the resolution stated that Israel had accepted the ceasefire proposal, Russia abstained partly because uncertainties persisted regarding the extent and clarity of this acceptance. Moscow criticized the resolution for being constructed outside transparent multilateral negotiations, with Ambassador Nebenzia noting that “the sponsors have not informed the Security Council of the details of the agreements” and that members were being asked to endorse a text whose final parameters remained “unknown to all, except perhaps the mediators themselves.” Russia viewed the process as rushed and lacking the consensus-building characteristic of prior resolutions, objecting to what it called a “pig in a poke” approach that undermined the Council’s credibility (*UN Security Council 9650th Meeting*, p. 10). In its view, the resolution’s failure to guarantee a “clear demand for an immediate and permanent ceasefire” (*UN Security Council 9650th Meeting*, p. 10) further weakened its substance and reinforced the perception that the Council was endorsing a vague and potentially unenforceable framework.

Although the United States described the resolution as a crucial step toward peace, it carefully avoided language that would bind Israel to an unconditional halt in hostilities. Instead, the ceasefire was embedded within a phased and conditional sequence, with each step contingent on mutual implementation and continued negotiations. This structure allowed Washington to present itself as responsive to international humanitarian concern, while simultaneously protecting Israel’s strategic room for maneuver. In this way, Resolution 2735 reflected less a break with past U.S. behavior than a recalibration. It signaled a rhetorical accommodation to global pressure while maintaining the underlying political logic that had shaped previous US interventions, namely the effort to shield Israel from binding constraints and to shift the blame to Hamas for the failure to achieve an immediate cessation of violence.

Table 1: Excerpts from Statements by UNSC Permanent Members on Gaza Resolutions (October 2023–January 2025)

Outcome	USA	UK	France	Russia	China
Res. 2712 Adopted – USA, UK, Russia ab- stained	“could not vote yes on a text that did not condemn Hamas”	“regrets that the first reso- lution ... could not clearly condemn the Hamas terror- ist attacks”	“humanitar- ian situa- tion in Gaza is already catastroph- ic”	“humanitar- ian pauses are not a replacement for a cease- fire”	“welcome any initia- tive condu- cive to the protection of civilians”
Res. 2720 Adopted – USA, Russia abstained	“deeply dis- appointed ... not able to condemn Hamas’s terrorist attack”	“welcomes the adoption of resolution”, “Our commit- ment to Israel’s security is firm”	“welcomes the adop- tion today of a resolu- tion”	“unprincipled blackmail and open scorn on the part of Wash- ington”	“welcome the adop- tion of reso- lution”
Res. 2728 Adopted – USA ab- stained	“non-bind- ing resolu- tion”	“a clear and united message on the need for international humanitarian law”	“Security Council’s silence on Gaza was becoming deafening”	“The word “permanent” would have been more precise”	“Security Council res- olutions are binding”
Res. 2735 Adopted – Russia ab- stained	“a clear message to Hamas: accept the ceasefire deal on the table”	“a sustainable peace must also include Hamas no longer being in control of Gaza”		“essentially being offered a pig in a poke”	“many am- biguities remain”

Findings and Discussion

The analysis of the thirteen Gaza-related draft resolutions debated in the UNSC between October 2023 and January 2025 illustrates a persistent and structural paralysis, largely driven by the strategic calculations of the per-

manent members. Among them, the U.S. played the most decisive role in obstructing collective action, consistently using its veto power or political leverage to block or dilute initiatives aimed at achieving an immediate and unconditional ceasefire.

Over this period, the U.S. cast six vetoes, more than any other permanent member. Across different drafts, whether proposed by Russia, Brazil, Algeria, or the United Arab Emirates, the U.S. consistently set shifting conditions for its support: from demanding explicit condemnations of Hamas, to requiring the affirmation of Israel's right to self-defense, and ultimately rejecting any language that implied an unconditional cessation of hostilities. Even drafts that addressed American concerns, such as Brazil's S/2023/773, which condemned Hamas and called for humanitarian protection, were vetoed because they did not explicitly affirm Israel's security narrative to Washington's satisfaction. This pattern demonstrated that U.S. opposition was not merely about balancing humanitarian concerns but fundamentally about safeguarding Israel's strategic interests.

The U.S. delegation's rhetorical justifications for opposing ceasefire drafts were consistently framed within a legalistic and security-oriented discourse. Central to this framing was the invocation of Israel's "right of self-defense" under Article 51 of the UN Charter. This narrative served to legitimize ongoing Israeli military operations by reframing calls for an unconditional ceasefire as potential threats to Israeli sovereignty. Such a discourse was deployed repeatedly during debates on resolutions S/2023/773, S/2023/970, and S/2024/173, enabling the U.S. to position its vetoes not as obstructionist actions but as measures ostensibly necessary to uphold international law. This approach, however, has been subject to critique by critical scholars who argue that such selective and instrumental applications of international legal principles reinforce perceptions of double standards within the UN Security Council. Scholars like Mälksoo (2010) and Balci (2024) contend that this pattern of privileging certain states over others undermines the Council's credibility and its purported commitment to impartiality. By framing opposition to ceasefire resolutions in terms of legal and security imperatives, the U.S. effectively shifted the narrative away from humanitarian concerns, thereby complicating efforts to address the broader implications of the conflict. These dynamic highlights the intersection of legal rhetoric, geopolitical strategy, and the contested nature of international law in the context of the Security Council's decision-making processes.

Importantly, while Russia and China also exercised their veto powers, their interventions largely aimed to counterbalance what they perceived as U.S.-led efforts to shield Israel from accountability. Their vetoes, notably against U.S.-drafted resolutions such as S/2023/792 and S/2024/239, were less about blocking humanitarian action per se and more about rejecting drafts seen as structurally favoring one side of the conflict. Russia, for instance, adapted its own proposals after early criticisms by explicitly condemning Hamas in later drafts like S/2023/795. China repeatedly emphasized that drafts needed to meet the “minimum requirements of humanity” by calling for genuine ceasefires rather than merely humanitarian pauses. Thus, while vetoes from Russia and China contributed to the deadlock, their use of this power in the Gaza case reflected a reactive dynamic rather than primary obstruction.

The behavior of other key Council members further illuminated the fault lines. The United Kingdom demonstrated a strong tendency to align with the United States, often abstaining rather than opposing American vetoes and echoing demands for resolutions to emphasize Israel’s right to self-defense. In votes on the Brazilian and Emirati drafts, the U.K. cited perceived imbalances—specifically the insufficient acknowledgment of Israel’s security concerns—as reasons for abstention or withholding support. France, while occasionally supporting resolutions opposed by the U.S., such as S/2023/970, also showed caution. French representatives often stressed the need to condemn Hamas alongside calls for civilian protection, reflecting a more independent yet still calibrated approach compared to London’s more reflexive alignment with Washington.

The four resolutions eventually adopted—Resolutions 2712, 2720, 2728, and 2735—were products of intense negotiations and repeated dilution. Notably, none of the resolutions demanded an immediate and unconditional ceasefire in unequivocal terms. For instance, Resolution 2728, despite being hailed as a breakthrough for calling for a ceasefire during Ramadan, was stripped of the word “permanent” at U.S. insistence, and Washington sought to frame it as “non-binding.” This reinterpretation directly challenged the established legal principle that Security Council resolutions, especially those under Chapter VI or VII of the UN Charter, are binding unless explicitly stated otherwise. Other Council members, including China and Mozambique, openly rejected this reinterpretation, yet the U.S. narrative prevailed in public discourse, once again diluting the normative power of the Council’s decisions.

The negotiation processes surrounding the adoption of the four resolutions revealed a significant structural weakness within the UN Security Council: the disproportionate influence wielded by the P5 members in shaping the language and outcomes of resolutions. Despite their numerical majority, this dynamic often marginalized the elected members (E10). This pattern underscores the limited agency of non-permanent members in shaping substantive outcomes, even when they achieve a degree of unity, as demonstrated during the drafting of Resolution 2728. Despite such collaborative efforts, the structural veto power of the P5 and their narrative dominance effectively constrained the E10's ability to influence the Council's decisions. This structural disparity highlights a broader critique of the Security Council's governance framework, where the entrenched privileges of the P5 often undermine the democratic representation and equitable participation of the broader UN membership. The resulting imbalance perpetuates a system in which the strategic priorities of the P5 frequently override the collective will of the international community, particularly on contentious issues where P5 interests are directly implicated.

The structural dysfunctions revealed during this period were not incidental but intrinsic to the institutional design of the UNSC. The veto power, originally intended as a safeguard against great power conflict, has repeatedly been weaponized to paralyze the Council in the face of large-scale civilian suffering. The Gaza case starkly demonstrated how the strategic interests of one or two permanent members could override overwhelming international consensus. Despite the support of a significant majority—often 13 or 14 members—for drafts calling for humanitarian ceasefires or civilian protection, the political will of a few proved sufficient to block action. This experience underscores an urgent and growing demand for Security Council reform. The repeated use of the veto to obstruct humanitarian action, especially in cases of mass civilian casualties, raises fundamental questions about the Council's legitimacy and relevance.

Ultimately, the Gaza deadlock resulted from a highly asymmetrical use of institutional mechanisms. While all permanent members exercised their veto rights during this period, the consistent pattern of American obstruction, supported in part by the United Kingdom and occasionally tempered by France, was the primary barrier to decisive multilateral action. Even when adopted, the resulting resolutions reflected a deep tension between humanitarian imperatives and geopolitical loyalties, leaving the Council's capacity to protect

civilians severely compromised. Addressing these structural flaws, particularly by curbing the abuse of the veto in cases involving mass atrocity crimes, must be central to any meaningful reform of the United Nations system.

Conclusion

This paper examines the structural dysfunction of the UNSC by analyzing its response to the Gaza War between October 2023 and January 2025. Focusing on the thirteen draft resolutions proposed during this period, the study explores how the Council's decision-making processes, particularly using permanent members' vetoes, have undermined its ability to uphold its mandate of maintaining international peace and security. Drawing on official UN records and recent scholarly literature, the paper situates the Gaza case within broader debates on the UNSC's legitimacy, effectiveness, and the urgent need for institutional reform. This paper argued that the primary source of the Council's paralysis is the veto power, which, rather than serving its intended purpose of preventing great-power conflict, has been systematically instrumentalized to advance national interests at the expense of humanitarian imperatives.

The case of the United States' repeated vetoes, particularly its obstruction of ceasefire resolutions, highlighted how strategic alliances, notably with Israel, consistently overrode the urgency of protecting civilians. Furthermore, the analysis demonstrated that the structural privilege of the permanent members not only distorts the Council's decision-making but also entrenches a profound imbalance within the international system.

This paper found that, despite overwhelming support from non-permanent members and the broader UN membership for humanitarian ceasefires, the UNSC remained unable to act decisively due to entrenched veto practices. Even when resolutions were adopted, they were often weakened through extensive negotiation and denial, reflecting the overwhelming influence of great powers on shaping Council outcomes. The Gaza War, thus, serves as a timely reminder that, without substantive reform, particularly curtailing or redefining the use of the veto, the UNSC risks further erosion of its legitimacy and relevance. Addressing these structural deficiencies remains crucial to restoring the Council's capacity to effectively guarantee international peace and security.

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- Security Council Seventy-eighth year 9479th meeting Wednesday, 15 November 2023, 3 p.m. New York*. (n.d.).
- Security Council Seventy-eighth year 9499th meeting Friday, 8 December 2023, 3.30 p.m. New York*. (n.d.).

- Security Council Seventy-eighth year 9520th meeting Friday, 22 December 2023, 11.30 a.m. New York.* (n.d.).
- Security Council Seventy-ninth year 9552nd meeting Tuesday, 20 February 2024, 10 a.m. New York.* (n.d.).
- Security Council Seventy-ninth year 9586th meeting Monday, 25 March 2024, 10 a.m. New York.* (n.d.).
- Security Council Seventy-ninth year 9609th meeting Thursday, 18 April 2024, 5 p.m. New York.* (n.d.).
- Security Council Seventy-ninth year 9650th meeting Monday, 10 June 2024, 3.25 p.m. New York.* (n.d.).
- Security Council Seventy-ninth year 9790th meeting Wednesday, 20 November 2024, 10 a.m. New York.* (n.d.).
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