



Veto and the UN Security Council's Failure to Resolve the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

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Abstract

This study examines the global political dynamics underlying the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) 's failure to enforce resolutions related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The primary focus of the research is how the political interests of permanent members of the UN Security Council, particularly the use of veto, affect the resolution enforcement process and its impact on peace in the region. Using qualitative-descriptive methods and a study of the current literature, the study found that the dominance of national politics and international disagreement has led to stagnation in conflict resolution and prolonged humanitarian crises in Gaza and the West Bank. In addition, the use of vetoes by the United States, as Israel's main ally, has blocked many resolutions that could potentially improve the humanitarian situation, despite international consensus on the protection of civilians. These findings underscore the need to reform the UN Security Council mechanism, emphasizing the importance of fairness and inclusivity in multilateral decision-making. This research also contributes to the understanding of international institutional design, proposing a new approach that is more responsive to global conflicts involving the strategic interests of large countries. Overall, the results of this study provide recommendations for reform of the UNSC veto mechanism and emphasize the urgency of fairer multilateral diplomacy in international law enforcement.

Keywords *UN Security Council, Veto Power, Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, Multilateral Diplomacy, Reform*

INTRODUCTION

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is one of the longest-standing and most complex global humanitarian crises, with its roots stretching back to the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The origins of the conflict can be traced to the issuance of United Nations General Assembly Resolution 181 in 1947, which proposed the division of Palestine into two states (one Jewish and one Arab). This partitioning, with 55% of the land allocated to the Jewish state and 42% to the Arab state, and Jerusalem governed under international administration, ignited widespread Palestinian opposition (Ahmed & Ali, 2024). This division led to decades of violence, displacement, and unresolved territorial disputes, and the issue continues to affect the region's stability profoundly.

In recent years, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has experienced significant escalations. One such escalation occurred in 2023, when Hamas launched a series of missile attacks on southern Israel, resulting in thousands of Israeli civilian casualties and prompting a retaliatory military response from Israel. The violent exchanges between Israel and Gaza continued, with Israeli airstrikes causing over 1,400 deaths in Gaza in just 48 hours, and further violence in 2024 with missile strikes on Palestinian refugee camps (Dewantara et al., 2025). These events have drawn international outrage and have intensified criticism of the United Nations for its perceived inability to impose effective sanctions or facilitate meaningful peace processes.

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC), as the principal global body responsible for maintaining international peace and security, has repeatedly attempted to intervene through resolutions aimed at resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. However, despite issuing 36 draft

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resolutions from 1945 to 2023, the UNSC's efforts have been consistently undermined by the use of veto power, particularly by the United States, which has blocked 34 of these resolutions, while Russia and China each blocked one ([Asrar & Hussein, 2023](#)). This failure to enforce resolutions has perpetuated the violence and humanitarian crisis, raising serious questions about the effectiveness of the UNSC in managing global conflicts.

One of the main factors contributing to the UNSC's ineffectiveness is the global political dynamics shaped by the national interests of its permanent members. The political influence of these nations, primarily through the use of veto power, often leads to strategic decisions that hinder the implementation of Security Council resolutions. As such, the UNSC's inability to effectively resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has spurred debate about the relevance and effectiveness of its structure in addressing such humanitarian crises ([Setiawan, 2025](#)).

This research examines the influence of the UNSC's permanent members' political dominance, particularly their veto power, on the effectiveness of resolution enforcement in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It will investigate how this dynamic has influenced the broader global peace efforts and examine the implications for international governance and conflict resolution. This study aims to provide a deeper understanding of the systemic challenges within the UNSC and its role in addressing one of the world's most intractable conflicts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The UNSC plays a critical role in international peace and security. However, its effectiveness in conflict resolution, especially in the case of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, has been consistently undermined by political interests and the use of veto power. Academic research on the role of the UNSC in this conflict has evolved, with a focus on the dynamics of veto power, the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) principle, and the challenges of multilateralism in conflict resolution.

[Hussein's \(2025\)](#) research examines how the UNSC's decision-making processes frequently reflect geopolitical interests, which hinder effective peace-building efforts. [Hussein's \(2025\)](#) study emphasizes the role of veto power in protecting national interests, particularly the United States' support for Israel, which has been a significant factor in the council's failure to pass resolutions critical of Israel's actions in Palestine. This finding aligns with [Martinali's \(2024\)](#) study, which highlights how the U.S. has used its veto to block 49 resolutions aimed at sanctioning Israel, reflecting the deep-seated influence of national politics over international peace efforts.

The Responsibility to Protect (R2P) principle, often seen as a potential solution to humanitarian crises, has faced significant obstacles in its implementation within the Israeli-Palestinian context. [Aulawi and Sherliana \(2025\)](#) argue that while R2P norms offer a framework for intervening in cases of mass atrocities, their application is often stymied by the UNSC's lack of consensus, particularly due to vetoes cast by permanent members who have strategic interests in the conflict. This finding is echoed in [Yusseff \(2024\)](#) research, which discusses the gap between R2P's theoretical aspirations and its practical application on the ground in Palestine, emphasising the need for a more neutral and responsive intervention framework.

Furthermore, foundational theories of international relations, such as Realism and Liberalism, offer valuable insights into the underlying dynamics of UNSC decision-making. Realist theories, as discussed by [Alcover et al. \(2024\)](#), suggest that state behaviour in the UNSC is primarily driven by national interest, which explains the frequent use of the veto by permanent members, particularly the U.S., to protect strategic allies ([Alcover et al., 2024](#)). This reflects a broader Realist understanding of global politics where power dynamics and state sovereignty are prioritized over collective international action. In contrast, Liberalism provides a counterpoint by advocating for multilateralism and cooperative conflict resolution. Still, the failure of the UNSC to facilitate meaningful interventions in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict suggests that Liberal ideals often fail

when veto power is wielded to block resolutions (Gultom & Miftah, 2024).

In recent years, the institutional constraints of the UNSC have come under increasing scrutiny. Setiawan (2025) offers a critical analysis of these constraints, noting that the Security Council's inability to effectively address issues such as genocide and mass atrocities in Gaza is a result of structural inefficiencies and the political dominance of the P5 members (Setiawan, 2025). In their work, the authors argue that reforms to the UNSC's institutional design are necessary to ensure that resolutions are not blocked by the narrow interests of a few powerful states.

Finally, the comparative conflict resolution literature provides valuable insights into alternative frameworks for resolving entrenched conflicts. As discussed by Waruwu (2025), comparative case studies of other protracted conflicts reveal that the effectiveness of international intervention is often contingent upon the political will of major powers to support multilateral peace processes (Waruwu, 2025). These findings suggest that reforms to the UNSC's veto system could be a crucial step in enhancing its capacity to address complex conflicts, such as the Israeli-Palestinian issue.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study will employ a qualitative research methodology to explore the political dynamics within the UNSC and their impact on enforcing resolutions in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The qualitative approach is chosen because it enables the researcher to understand the underlying factors influencing decision-making processes, particularly the political motives of UNSC permanent members and the implications of their veto power. Qualitative research is appropriate for examining the subjective nature of these political decisions, as it focuses on the meanings and interpretations individuals or groups assign to specific phenomena (Creswell, 2014).

Data Collection Techniques

Data will be collected through a combination of secondary data sources, including academic journals, government publications, official UN resolutions, and news articles from credible sources. These materials will be selected based on their relevance to the research objectives, with an emphasis on documents published within the last 10 years (2014–2024) to ensure the data reflects current political dynamics. The selection criteria will prioritize peer-reviewed articles, official UNSC documents, and reliable news outlets.

The data collection process will involve library research and online archives, particularly focusing on primary sources like UNSC resolutions, voting records, and official statements by member states. Additionally, supplementary materials will be sourced from reports by international organizations and think tanks specializing in global politics and conflict resolution, such as the International Crisis Group and Human Rights Watch.

Data Analysis

For data analysis, thematic analysis will be applied to identify patterns, recurring themes, and key concepts related to the effectiveness of UNSC resolutions and the council's political dynamics. The data will be analyzed using an inductive approach, allowing themes to emerge naturally from the data without imposing predefined categories (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This approach is particularly suited to understanding complex, context-dependent issues such as international diplomacy and conflict resolution. Thematic analysis will involve several steps:

1. Initial readings of all collected materials will be conducted to gain a broad understanding of the content.
2. Important text passages will be coded based on their relevance to the research questions.

3. The researcher will identify key themes that relate to the political influences on the UNSC's actions, focusing on veto usage, member state interests, and their impact on conflict resolution.
4. The themes will be interpreted in existing literature on global governance and international conflict resolution.

Validity and Rigor

To ensure the validity of the findings, triangulation will be used by comparing data from multiple sources, including academic journals, official documents, and news articles. This will help confirm the reliability of the data and reduce potential bias by cross-referencing perspectives from various reliable sources ([Denzin, 1978](#)).

In terms of rigor, the study will adhere to the principles of transparency and reflexivity, as suggested by scholars such as [Maxwell \(2013\)](#), ensuring that the researcher's biases are acknowledged and accounted for in the interpretation of the data. By applying these methods, the study aims to provide a detailed and thorough analysis of the influence of global political dynamics on the failure of UNSC resolutions in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Global Political Dynamics and the UN Security Council

Global political dynamics are continuously evolving, influenced by shifting alliances, national interests, and the pursuit of power by major global players. The United Nations (UN), established after World War II to maintain international peace and security, operates within this complex political landscape. Its structure, with the General Assembly, Security Council, Economic and Social Council, Trusteeship Council, International Court of Justice, and Secretariat, was designed to offer an inclusive space for member states to address global issues ([Nations, 2025](#)).

However, as international relations have progressed, the UN's effectiveness has been undermined by the geopolitical competition between superpowers, particularly the five permanent members of the UN Security Council (P5), the United States, Russia, China, the United Kingdom, and France who hold veto power. This veto power grants them the authority to block resolutions, particularly when their national interests are at stake ([Alcover et al., 2024](#)). The United States, in particular, has consistently used its veto to protect Israel, showcasing the influence of national interests over global peace and security efforts. This phenomenon is exemplified by the recurring failure of resolutions aimed at addressing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, mainly due to U.S. vetoes.

Israeli-Palestinian Conflict and the UN Security Council Veto

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is one of the most complex and protracted geopolitical disputes in modern history, driven by territorial, religious, and ideological factors. The origins of the conflict can be traced back to the 1917 Balfour Declaration and the subsequent establishment of Israel in 1948, which sparked widespread Palestinian resistance ([Gultom & Miftah, 2024](#)). Over the decades, the UN Security Council has made several attempts to resolve the conflict through resolutions. Still, the U.S. repeatedly blocked these efforts using its veto power.

A systematic analysis of U.S. vetoes reveals that since 1970, the U.S. has vetoed 49 resolutions critical of Israel, including attempts to impose sanctions or call for Israel's withdrawal from occupied territories ([MEE Staff, 2024](#)). For example, the U.S. vetoed a 1970 resolution (S/10784) that would have condemned Israeli actions in Palestine, and again in 1982, when a resolution proposed by Morocco, Iran, Jordan, and Uganda sought to compel Israel to comply with the Fourth Geneva Convention ([CNN Indonesia, 2024](#)). Similarly, in 2004 and 2007, the U.S. vetoed ceasefire resolutions amidst escalating violence in Gaza, resulting in thousands of civilian casualties ([Nations,](#)

2025]). These actions highlight the protective role the U.S. plays in shielding Israel from international accountability, reinforcing the notion that the U.S. veto is not merely a tool of diplomatic negotiation but a mechanism for safeguarding Israel's interests on the global stage.

Despite these vetoes, the analysis also highlights a significant shift during the Obama administration in 2016 when the U.S. chose to abstain from a resolution condemning Israel, marking the first time in decades that a U.S.-backed resolution was not blocked (MEE Staff, 2024). This move was seen as a temporary departure from the traditionally unwavering U.S. support for Israel, although the return to vetoing under the Trump administration demonstrated the resilience of U.S.-Israeli relations (Gultom & Miftah, 2024).

Veto Impact Analysis

The systematic impact of the U.S. veto power on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is clear: it protects Israel from international sanctions, impeding any substantial diplomatic efforts to resolve the dispute. This is particularly evident in the case of the International Criminal Court (ICC), which, despite having the mandate to sanction violators of international law, has been unable to take action against Israel due to U.S. opposition (MEE Staff, 2024). This has allowed Israel to continue its policies in Palestine with impunity, resulting in ongoing casualties and human rights violations.

The U.S.'s alignment with Israel has also raised serious concerns about the neutrality of the UN Security Council. Article 24, Paragraph 2 of the UN Charter stipulates that the Security Council should act to maintain international peace and security. However, a permanent member's exercise of veto power in defence of its national interests directly contradicts this mandate (Nations, 2025). This inconsistency undermines the credibility and effectiveness of the UN as a whole, particularly in regions where power politics take precedence over humanitarian concerns.

United Nations Veto Reform

The current system of veto power within the UN Security Council reflects a post-World War II geopolitical order that is increasingly out of touch with the modern global landscape. The dominance of the P5, particularly the U.S., in shaping critical decisions regarding international peace and security has often led to outcomes that prioritize national interests over global peace (Alcover et al., 2024). The failure to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict underscores the need for reform within the UN, particularly in the Security Council.

One proposed reform is to expand the Security Council's permanent membership to better reflect the diversity of global political and economic power. This could include adding representatives from underrepresented regions, such as Africa, Latin America, and Asia. Such reforms would ensure that the decisions made in the Security Council are not dominated by the interests of a few powerful nations (Alcover et al., 2024). Furthermore, modifying the veto power to require greater accountability would ensure that vetoes are not used as a shield for national interests at the expense of global peace efforts. This could involve establishing procedures for the vetoing country to propose alternative solutions or face increased scrutiny and countermeasures.

Comparative Analysis and Novelty of Findings

Compared to existing scholarship on the role of veto power in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, this study builds on the foundational work of previous researchers by providing a more systematic and empirical analysis of U.S. veto patterns and their direct implications for peace efforts. For example, while previous studies have described the U.S. veto as a significant obstacle to peace (Olayiwola, 2024), this research quantifies the extent of this impact through a detailed review of 49 documented vetoes, thereby offering a more comprehensive understanding of the veto's role in shaping the conflict's trajectory.

The novelty of this research lies in its suggestion that the veto power reform, alongside the expansion of the Security Council, could potentially lead to more effective conflict resolution mechanisms, particularly in cases such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, where political paralysis has hindered meaningful progress.

This research highlights the pivotal role of U.S. veto power in maintaining the status quo of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Analyzing the patterns of vetoes and their impact on UN resolutions underscores the need for institutional reforms to address the challenges of global governance in the 21st century. While ambitious, the proposed changes to the Security Council's structure and decision-making processes offer a potential pathway toward a more equitable and effective international organization that can better address complex conflicts and humanitarian crises.

CONCLUSIONS

The political dominance of the permanent members of the UN Security Council, particularly the use of veto power, has significantly undermined the effectiveness of the enforcement of resolutions related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Since its inception in 1945, the United Nations Security Council has been tasked with maintaining international peace and security. However, one of its most contentious features, the veto power held by the five permanent members (the United States, Russia, China, the United Kingdom, and France) has repeatedly obstructed meaningful action on critical global conflicts, especially the Israeli-Palestinian issue.

This research demonstrates how the consistent use of veto power, particularly by the United States in defence of Israel, has led to the failure of numerous UN resolutions aimed at resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The veto power has rendered the UN Security Council ineffective in enforcing resolutions. The inability of the UN Security Council to take decisive action has perpetuated the cycle of violence and political deadlock in the region. Moreover, it has eroded the credibility of the UN as a global peacekeeping institution.

In advancing scholarly understanding, this study provides a novel contribution by systematically analyzing the impact of veto power on the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, particularly by quantifying the frequency of U.S. vetoes and their implications for international peace efforts. This research offers a more comprehensive examination of the strategic motivations behind the veto power and its broader effects on UN decision-making and international diplomacy.

From a practical perspective, this research emphasizes the urgent need for reforms in the UN Security Council's decision-making processes. Key recommendations include expanding the membership of the Security Council to reflect global political realities, thereby reducing the disproportionate influence of the P5. The proposed reforms would enhance the UN's ability to respond more effectively to global conflicts and strengthen its role in promoting peace and security.

LIMITATIONS & FURTHER RESEARCH

This study has several key limitations that should be acknowledged:

1. The study focuses on the U.S. veto power in the UNSC, particularly regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. While crucial, this focus excludes the roles of other UNSC members and broader geopolitical dynamics. Future research could expand to examine the influence of other actors in the UNSC and regional powers.
2. This research is based on secondary sources, which, while valuable, lack direct insights from UNSC diplomats or decision-makers. Incorporating primary data, such as interviews, would provide a more nuanced understanding of the decision-making process surrounding vetoes.

3. The study covers the period from 1945 to 2024, which may not fully account for future developments in UNSC dynamics or conflict resolution. Future research could investigate how evolving global power structures may impact the use of veto power in the future.
4. The geopolitical dynamics discussed in this study primarily focus on the impact of the U.S. veto power in the UNSC. However, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is also shaped by a diverse range of regional actors and international organizations, including the European Union, the Arab League, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The role of these actors is not fully explored in this research, and future studies could incorporate a comparative analysis of the influence of various international and regional players on the conflict.

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