




## Reforming the United Nations Security Council: cross-country analysis of a G-4 potential permanent membership

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### Key words:

Group of Four, international security, qualified majority voting, UN democracy deficit, veto right

### ABSTRACT

The paper uses methods of historical and comparative analysis and studies the functioning of United Nations Security Council (UNSC) since its establishment. It finds out, that the debate on the institutional performance is characterized by a consensus, i.e. the lack of reforms has led to the lack of its effectiveness. Nowadays, such a finding is even more evident, the aggressive war that one of the permanent members, Russia started against Ukraine, added new arguments of the same logic. The paper draws on secondary data to explore the weaknesses of the UNSC with a particular emphasis on the negative impact of the veto right. It highlights the limits of the UNSC and the attempts of state coalitions to overcome them. It elaborates on criteria for legitimate right to accede to UNSC permanent membership and justifies the relevance of four of them on the grounds of their current appropriateness. Further on, the paper introduces outcomes of a cross-country analysis of a G-4 (Germany, Japan, Brazil and India), the most influential state coalition for UNSC reform. The results of the comparison illustrate legitimate potential of states to become permanent members of the UNSC. The discussion includes policy recommendations for UNSC reforms: adopting criteria for legitimacy of permanent UNSC membership; change in the structure of the permanent UNSC membership; abolition of the veto right and introducing the method of qualified majority voting.

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### 1. Introduction

States, as well as coalitions of states, have periodically claimed needs for reforms of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). The main argument is that it is not effective due to its permanent membership structure and to the veto right. Permanent members of the UNSC have the right to veto non-procedural decisions. This way they possess exclusive power over the non-permanent members and, by extension, over all member states of the United Nations (UN).

The aggressive war that the Russian Federation started against Ukraine in February 2022 has refocused the attention of the international community on the problem. As a UNSC permanent member, Moscow has the right to veto all decisions over issues concerning her military campaign and over the sanctions which the United Nations could impose. Thus, the UNSC is deprived of capacity to act according to the standards of international law.

In such a geopolitical context demands for change, both in the structure of the permanent membership, and in the decision-making method, have become deliberative again. The paper adds value to the current geopolitical debate. It explores the functioning of the UNSC to provide evidence on its strengths and weaknesses with a particular emphasis on the negative impact of the veto right. The paper highlights the limited effectiveness of the UNSC on the grounds of studies of state coalitions for UNSC reform. Criteria for legitimate right to accede to UNSC permanent membership have been studied and the relevance of four of them has been justified

on the grounds of their current topicality and appropriateness. Finally, the paper introduces findings of a cross-country analysis of a G-4 (Germany, Japan, Brazil and India), the most influential state coalition for UNSC reform. The results of the comparison are envisaged to illustrate legitimate potential of states to become permanent members of the UNSC.

## 2. Methods

The paper uses the historical method to analyse (1) the long-lasting debate on the need to reform the structure and the decision-making method of the UNSC since its establishment in 1945; (2) aspirations of state coalitions to overcome the gaps in the effectiveness of the UNSC; (3) criteria for legitimate right to accede to UNSC permanent membership. The historical method is widely used in almost all fields of research. In geopolitics it refers to the influence of the past on the present and future political behaviour of actors as influenced by geographical factors. It includes analysis of both, limitations and opportunities, which are disclosed within decision making (UCLA 2023). By making difference between historic facts and historical interpretations, it analyses the importance of individual actors (states) and the cause and effect of their relationships (in this case between the states in the UNSC). Last but not least, the method will help us evaluate major debates among political leaders and scientists concerning needs for changes.

Comparative analysis (in particular, multi-parameter comparison) is used to correlate G-4 states (Germany, Japan, Brazil and India) with regard to relevant criteria, so that their potential permanent UNSC membership could be identified. This method, first of all, relies on the comparison of entities that are comparable. The G-4 states are all influential at a global scale and they have justified their membership claims, although on different grounds. The comparative method is applied here to answer research questions in regard to similarity and variance among the four units of analysis. The approach is appropriate to explain conditions and/or outcomes among these large-scale units, which are considered the most influential in terms of lobbying activities on UNSC reform. Although the members of this group have developed their common position towards the reform as a common goal, the method will help us to identify specific visions on how to assert this goal. Qualitative comparative analysis, in particular, will be relied upon to cope with complexity and the influence of context. As it is well known, comparative analysis results add value to development of theories of change; identify national/regional/global levels of interest; pinpoint important factors; interpret findings and revise existing theories (INTRAC 2017). As for a theory of change, our study proposes interrelated changes in the UNSC system with regard to the veto right, the structure of the institution, and criteria for future membership. The levels of interest, which we analyse, are the global and the national. On one hand, we regard G-4 as a global political entity, and on the other we focus on the specific national interests of Germany, Brazil, Japan, and India. Further on, we excerpt geopolitically relevant factors out of an existing pool of factors, already developed within previous research. Finally, the paper devises policy recommendations on the type of UNSC reforms on the basis of interpretation of findings.

## 3. Results

UNSC reform research can be placed into several categories, each indicating the degree to which scholars believe in the benefits of either structural or working methods reform. These include topics such as legitimacy and efficiency and the question of (un)equal representation (Winther 2020). According to Langmore and Thakur

(2016), an unchanged and unchangeable membership of UNSC undermines its status and diminishes its authority and legitimacy. They propose that the elected members of the UNSC should be eighteen instead of the current ten seats and should remain in the UNSC for three years instead of the current two (Langmore and Thakur 2016). Mahbubani (2013) points out to the serious need for a structural reform (reform of the UN Charter) that includes expansion of the permanent membership. He stresses that “the continuing efforts of the P5 to retain their absolute dictatorial power amounts to folly”. At the same time, Mahbubani (2013) proposes a new UNSC that consists of seven permanent members, seven semi-permanent members (selected from a group of the same twenty-eight countries every other year), and seven electable members from the rest of the UN membership (Mahbubani 2013).

Next category of proposed reforms is the one for reforming the voting system. Most of the proposed reforms of the voting system can be also qualified as structural reforms because they involve reforming of the UN Charter. When criticising arguments for structural reform, working methods reform advocates mainly focus on the disadvantages of UNSC expansion. The veto system plays a smaller role, yet still factors in as part of what working methods proponents want to change. Caron (1993), Cox (2009) and Nadin (2018) argue for a reform of the veto arrangement through a working methods approach, i.e., without Charter amendments. Cox (2009) and Nadin (2018) both propose that the veto should be changed via informal agreements between the veto powers about the restriction of veto usage. The continuous calls for working methods reform often contains proposals that are more generic than they are precise, e.g., proposals for better corporation with non-governmental organizations, or the mentioned calls for informal agreements that limit the use of the veto (Winther 2020). Moderate working methods reformists generally appreciate that structural changes could benefit the UNSC, yet, moderate calls for working methods contains scepticism towards unproven predictions about the positive consequences of structural reform. Weiss sees Charter reform (i.e., structural reform) as a distraction from the more important discussions about the UNSC, calling for evolutionary change and not revolutionary change (Weiss 2010) and restraint before urgency (Weiss 2011). Luck (2016) thinks that, due to disagreements between the states about the structural reform, working methods must be reformed first, perhaps leading to later structural reforms—for instance, more elected members.

The current paper focuses on the proposal for reform of the G-4 states as well as their chances to qualify for permanent membership. It also analyses the possible solution to the veto right issue by proposing both structural change and change in the working methods of UNSC.

### 3.1. *The United Nations Security Council: development, strengths and weaknesses*

Aware of the weaknesses of the League of Nations – the predecessor of the United Nations, its founders attempted to improve the mechanisms of collective security in the newly established organization in 1945. They did so by giving a decisive role to the principal victors of the Second World War, which became permanent members of the UNSC (USA, USSR, China, UK, France) and were assigned the role of “policemen” within the new international system. The permanent members were also assigned the power to veto decisions of the UNSC. Apart from the 5 permanent members, the primary “version” of the UNSC included 6 non-permanent members whose number was increased to ten in 1966. This is the only reform to the structure of the UNSC done till today.

The UNSC, on which the Big Five have the power of veto, was given “the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security” (Art. 24). In the case of a threat to peace or act of aggression, the UNSC can decide on economic sanctions (Art. 41) or to “take such action by air, sea or land forces as may be necessary to maintain or restore international peace and security” (Art. 42). Without prejudice to the right to individual and collective self-defence in the event of an armed attack (Art. 51), the Charter designates the Council as the sole authority that may legally take military action, through contingents made available by the UN member states, even on a permanent basis (Art. 43), and led by the Military Staff Committee composed of the Chiefs of Staff of the P5 (Art.47) (Charter of the United Nations 1945).

Unlike all other United Nations bodies, the UNSC is the only body whose decisions are legally binding for all the states who would implement them. Thus UNSC has strong legitimizing effect. In spite of this, its legitimacy has been recently put on the agenda anew with the war that Russia started in Ukraine, which triggered the debate that a country which violates the core principle of the United Nations for preserving global peace, is attacking a sovereign state. This is a debate that could be traced back to the period of the Cold War when the Western and the Eastern bloc opposed each other thus bringing the paralysis of the UN and the UNSC. This fact played a significant role in the Korean War (1950-1953), the American intervention (bringing together 17 countries) only being legitimized by the UNSC in the temporary absence of the Soviets (Barkin 2013). For more than forty years, the Cold War made peace-enforcement missions impossible, and peacekeeping became the main UN instrument to ensure peace. From 1945 to 1989, the military contribution of the P5 was therefore rather marginal, and at present the situation has not changed as expected (MacQueen 2011).

Table 1 illustrates the difference in the number of vetoes cast in the period of the Cold War and, respectively - the periods 1991-2003 and 2003-2013. As a result of the end of the East-West confrontation, from 1991 to 1995 the UNSC was able to authorise more peacekeeping operations than in the previous 40 years. Its agenda began to broaden to include issues related to human rights, humanitarian intervention as well as issues such as the fight against HIV and environmental protection, once the prerogative of the General Assembly. The gradual reformulation of the concept of security in terms of multidimensional and human security facilitated this process (Levi 2013).

Currently, after the start of the military campaign of Russia in Ukraine, the UNSC is facing a similar situation like the deadlock during the Cold War: as of May 2022, Russia has used its veto 121 times (to compare, the US has used it 82 times, the UK 29 times, China 17 times, and France 16 times). In September 2022 Russia vetoed a UNSC resolution which described its attempts to unlawfully annex

four regions of Ukraine earlier in the day with a formal ceremony in Moscow, as “a threat to international peace and security”, demanding that the decision be immediately and unconditionally reversed (UN meetings coverage and press releases 2022).

The fact that membership in the UNSC is limited to 15 members gives it the advantage of being able to summon a meeting in very short time from the moment of emerging of a threat. As a result, it is a body that is organised so that it functions continuously (Art. 28), at present it is almost always in session (Puchala et al. 2015). On the other hand, the limited number of permanent members makes whole regions of the world underrepresented or not represented. For instance, Africa (54 members of UN, 0 permanent seat), Asia (54 UN members, 1 permanent seat) and Latin America and Caribbean States (33 UN members, 0 permanent seats). The criterion of equitable geographical distribution was also included in Art. 23 of the UN Charter, and as a result of a gentlemen’s agreement (1946), but it was applied to non-permanent members only. When the UN was founded, it had only 51 members. Today they are 193. This means that the present composition of the UNSC is definitely no longer representative of a world that has seen 142 new countries join the UN since 1945.

### 3.2. Coalitions for change

Three major state coalitions for reform of UNSC stand out with their proposals.

In September 2004, Japan, Brazil, Germany and India launched the G-4 after meeting on the fringes of the UN General Assembly in New York. Its Draft Resolution (A/59/L.64) proposes a UNSC expanded to a total of 25 members, with 6 new permanent seats assigned to Africa (2), Asia (2), Western Europe (1), Latin America and the Caribbean (1) and 4 new non-permanent seats to Africa (1), Asia (1), Eastern Europe (1) and Latin America and the Caribbean (1).

The second bloc is the Uniting for Consensus (UFC) coalition, led by the G-4’s regional rivals (including Argentina, Mexico, Italy, Poland, Pakistan, South Korea, and Türkiye, among others). The UFC advocates expanding the elected membership of the UNSC from ten to twenty—a strategy that would allow more nations to serve on an egalitarian, globally representative UNSC, rather than reinforcing great power hierarchy.

The third major bloc is the African Union (AU). Its fifty-four members remain committed to the 2005 Ezulwini Consensus, which insists that the continent be granted two permanent seats, with full veto rights, as well as at least three additional non-permanent seats (Patrick 2023).

In 2005 the High-Level Panel established by then Secretary General Kofi Annan proposed two models for UNSC reform: Model A, a proposal to establish six new permanent members and

**Table 1.** Veto cast in the UNSC (Vicente 2013).

Permanent member of the SC	1945-1991	1991-2003	2003-2013	Total vetoes cast
USSR/Russia	90	2	7	99
USA	64	7	7	78
China/PRC	0	2	5	7
United Kingdom	29	0	0	29
France	16	0	0	16
Total	199	11	19	229

three new non-permanent members to form a 24-seat Council, and Model B, a proposal for the creation of eight long-term seats with renewable terms of (at least) four years referred to as semi-permanent members along with one new non-permanent member to form a 24-seat Council. The G-4 launched their own draft resolution; meanwhile, member states opposed to the creation of new permanent members formed Uniting for Consensus (UFC) and submitted a proposal based on Model B (Blum 2005).

The G-4's proposal dominated the UFC's proposal and closed in on 110 votes, close to the 128 votes needed for passage of the resolution, but in the end the resolution was not tabled for a vote and the endeavour ended in failure (Shinichi 2023).

Although the G-4 countries have jointly elaborated the proposal for reform and support each other's claims for permanent membership, their individual visions for reform differ slightly. For example, Germany and India insist on obtaining a permanent seat in the UNSC, but their position on the veto system is that it should be abolished since it hampers the effectiveness of the UN system. In its own view, India would serve as an equalizer to increasing Chinese influence. For India, population represents both an expression of the principle of democracy and an element of power. India has argued for an equitable geographical representation and urgent need for mitigating the non-representation and under-representation of some regions in both permanent and non-permanent categories.

India, Brazil and Japan stand for enlargement of the UNSC mainly in the permanent category. Brazil is also part of the L.69 Group, which advocates for the expansion of the UNSC in both categories of membership (Blum 2005). Currently, Asia is underrepresented in UNSC, and South America is not represented at all.

Separate proposal was made by Germany for France to leave its permanent seat in the UNSC and be replaced by the European Union (EU). German chancellor Olaf Scholz said in his speech on the future of Europe that giving the European Union a spot on the UNSC would allow the bloc to speak "with one voice" on the global stage (Financial Times 2023).

The EU has had permanent observer status at the UN since 1974, and has had enhanced participation rights since 2011.

### 3.3. Analysis of a G-4 prospective permanent membership

Permanent membership in the UNSC was granted to five states based on their decisive role for the end of World War II. There were no other criteria for permanent membership in the Charter back then, and they have not been introduced so far. Different authors base their research on different criteria, such as contribution to the UN peacekeeping (considered usually the most important), economic performance, nuclear power potential, etc. Although nuclear power potential was not introduced as a formal criterion, all the five permanent members somewhat coincidentally, are also the five

global nuclear powers (although China and France were veto powers for two decades before they became nuclear powers).

Undertaking literature review on the list of criteria for permanent UNSC membership, we have identified a study by Aderito Vicente (Vicente 2013), who has proposed a comprehensive mix of elements: (1) political and economic power (and potential); 2) military force; 3) ability to undertake peacekeeping contributions at large scale; 4) population (more than 60 million persons); 5) contribution to the UN budget (more than 1.5% of UN's total budget); 6) capacity to contribute for the stability of economic system and power to invest abroad; 7) promotion of human rights (under the strict principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights); 8) ability to contribute to humanitarian assistance; 9) and influence of civilization (as a qualitative element).

Although holistic, this approach is problematic. There are states, which are influential on the global arena, but they do not meet all the criteria. For example, South Africa which is considered one of the most influential countries in Africa and a potential new permanent UNSC member, has a population of slightly above 60 million, but in 2021, the population turned out to be less than 60 million. Some of the qualitative criteria are hard to assess. For example, there is no answer to the question how is influence of civilization to be measured.

If we consider the following criteria: 3) ability to undertake peacekeeping contributions at large scale; 4) population (more than 60 million persons); 5) contribution to the United Nations budget (more than 1.5% of UN's total budget) and analyse relevant quantitative data, we will find out, that not all G-4 correspond to them and may be considered eligible. The Table 2 is indicative of this argument.

The UN spending on peacekeeping operations accounts for 19% of its budget which ranks second (the largest share of the organization's budget, 50%, goes on humanitarian assistance and development assistance).

Each member state is legally obligated to pay their respective share towards peacekeeping which is in accordance with Article 17 of the UN Charter. The General Assembly apportions peacekeeping expenses based on a special scale of assessments under a complex formula that Member States themselves have established. This formula considers, among other things, the relative economic wealth of Member States, with the five permanent members of the UNSC required to pay a larger share because of their special responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.

Germany and Japan are among the 38 member states who have fully paid their peacekeeping assessments. In terms of police and troops contribution, Germany and Japan are in the highest Level A category.

Brazil ranks second after the USA in terms of unpaid assessments in the UN (119 million US dollars in 2020). The same is in terms of unpaid peacekeeping assessments (264 million US dollars in 2020).

**Table 2.** Data about G-4 states compliance to criteria 3), 4) and 5) (United Nations Peacekeeping 2022).

Country	Population (millions)	Contribution to UN peace-keeping budget (%)	Contributions to UN peacekeeping operations by troop, police and other staff (%)
<b>Brazil</b>	216.4	0.5896	0.10
<b>Germany</b>	84.57	6.09	0.79
<b>Japan</b>	125	8.56	0.005
<b>India</b>	1 428.6	0.1668	7.77

India ranks second after Bangladesh in terms of police and troops contribution to the UN. In terms of contribution to the peacekeeping budget, though, India and Brazil fall in level I and level H, respectively (the levels are from A to J, which means that Brazil is in the last category in terms of contribution while India is just a level above).

Japan is the second-largest contributor to the UN budgets among the Member States, bearing 12.5% of the total budget. In addition, Japan supports a wide range of UN activities through voluntary financial contributions, which have been highly valued by the international community. On the other hand, Japan is restricted by Article 9 of its Constitution to provide significant support in terms of troops. Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution is a clause in the national Constitution of Japan outlawing war as a means to settle international disputes involving military power. This clause was enshrined in the Constitution of the country in 1947—immediately after the Second World War – due to Japanese strike of the American naval base at Pearl Harbour in Hawaii (Anand 2022).

The Gulf War in 1990–1991 was an international crisis which touched the core of the Japanese foreign policy. Back then, in the

spirit of long-term security union from the period of the Cold War, the US government asked Japan to send part of its self-defence forces in support of the US-led multinational forces. But because of its constitutional restrictions, the Japanese government could not provide the slightest military support and instead send financial aid. Since then, Japanese diplomacy is often defined as “chequebook diplomacy” describing the fact that the country tends to use money to smoothen its relations with some countries –especially the USA. In fact, these events gave Japan an impulse to redirect its security policies towards human security. In 1992 the United Nations adopted Act for Cooperation in Peacekeeping Operations by which Japan managed to legitimize its right to contribution to the global efforts for maintenance of peace. Thus since 1994 Japan security policies have been directed towards threats to the human survival and human dignity (Kornazheva et al. 2020).

The next quantitative data regard criteria (1) political and economic power (and potential) and 2) military force. Fig. 1 and Fig. 2 represent each country’s performance in terms of gross national income per capita and military expenditure, respectively. The data is valid for the period 2018–2022.

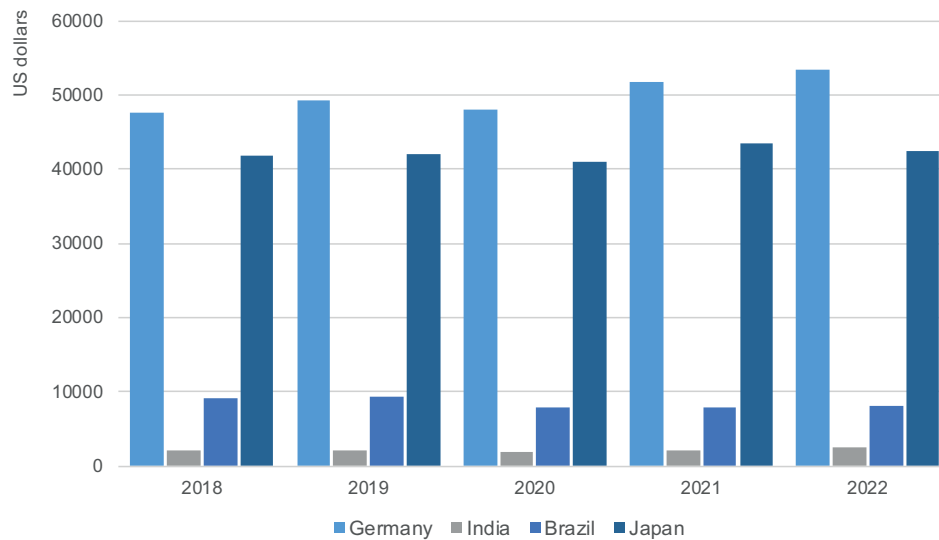


Figure 1. Gross national income per capita—years 2018 to 2022 (World Bank 2023a).

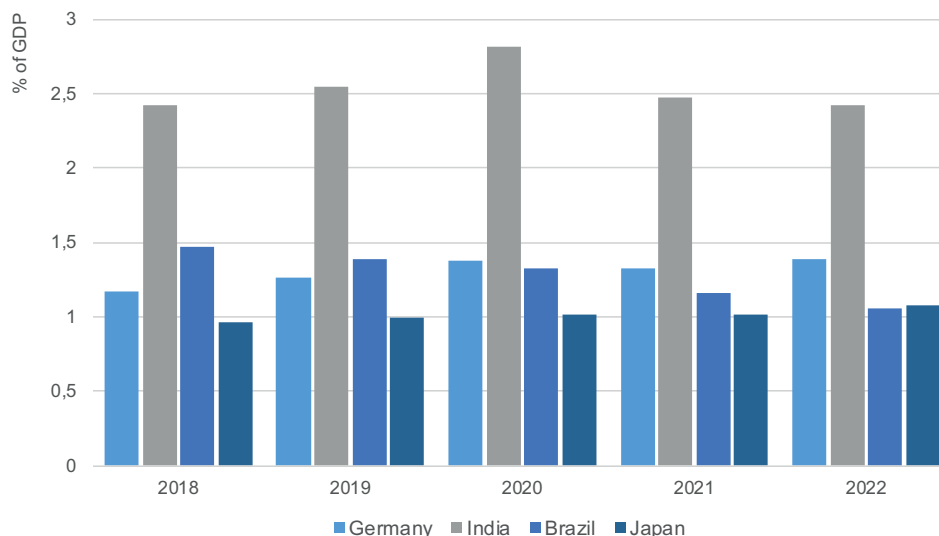


Figure 2. Military expenditure by country (% of GDP)—years 2018 to 2022 (World Bank 2023c).

As seen in Figs. 1, 2, in terms of gross national income per capita, Germany and Japan rank first and second, respectively. Germany has traditionally been an economic leader in the EU, as well. The industrial sector of Germany is traditionally larger than in other larger EU economies.

In terms of military expenditure, though, things are different. Here Japan is prevented by Article 9 from its Constitution from maintaining a strong military capabilities restricting them to purely self-defence forces. Thus Japan spends merely 0.96% to its military. Here the leader is India with 2.42% followed by Brazil—1.47%.

Brazil remains one of the world's most unequal countries. The country is the largest economy in Latin America and accounts for almost 30% of the economic output of the region. In 2016, it overtook Venezuela as the leading producer of crude oil in South America (Roy 2022). Compared to the other three countries, though, it ranks second after India with merely 8140 USD in 2022. In terms of military expenditure, Brazil ranks second after Japan for the years 2018 to 2021 – being even surpassed by Japan in 2022.

According to the World Bank, during the past two decades India has made remarkable progress in reducing extreme poverty and, according to the World Bank, in 2022 the country emerged as one of the fastest growing economies in the world (World Bank 2023b). On the other hand, the country has been performing poorly in socio-economic indicators like the Human Development Index (World Bank 2023b), which might become a consideration factor. The country is a leader among all in terms of military expenditure. Concerning its military power, for 2023, India is ranked 4 of 145 out of the countries considered for the annual Global Firepower review (Global Firepower 2023). The main reason for the maintenance of strong capabilities is the conflict of India with neighbouring Pakistan.

To prevent rude breaches of international peace by usage of nuclear weapons, the Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) was initiated in 1968 and entered into force in 1970. In 1995 the signatories extended exclusively and a total of 191 have joined the Treaty, including the five permanent UNSC members, which are coincidentally also the five nuclear-weapon states. Four states—India, Israel, Pakistan, and South Sudan—have never signed the treaty.

The fact that a country has/has not signed or ratified NPT is taken as a basis for the following classification has been adopted at a global scale as regards the nuclear capacity of the states (Perkovich and Acton 2009):

- NPT-designated nuclear weapon states (China, Russia, USA, United Kingdom, France)
- Other states with nuclear weapons (India, North Korea, Pakistan)
- Other states presumed to have nuclear weapons (Israel)
- NATO or CSTO member nuclear weapons sharing states (Belgium, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Turkey, Belarus)
- States formerly possessing nuclear weapons (Kazakhstan, South Africa, Ukraine)

As seen above, the five veto powers are also the five major nuclear powers. On the other hand, possessing nuclear weapons can be considered a threat by a country to its regional neighbours—as the case of India and its rival state Pakistan, as well as North Korea. Such states are classified within the group of “other states possessing nuclear weapons”.

Unlike the NPT which was signed by the majority of UN member states, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) which was adopted in 2017 to build on NPT, is causing more problems.

As Tytti Erästö (2019) points out, there is no explicit inconsistency between NPT and TPNW. In fact, the TPNW was

drafted to was negotiated with the purpose of strengthening the largely unimplemented disarmament pillar of the 1968 Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Yet the main criticism was on the legal incompatibility between the two.

The TPNW seeks to promote disarmament by delegitimising the continued possession of nuclear weapons by all countries, including the five nuclear-armed members of the NPT. Article 1 of the TPNW prohibits the development, deployment, possession, use and the threat of use of nuclear weapons. Its key prohibitions also include the stationing of nuclear weapons on the territory of states parties, as well as the assistance, encouragement or inducement of any activity prohibited by the treaty (Erästö 2019). These obligations apply equally to all states parties, but they do not bind countries that are outside the treaty. In comparison, in NPT Article II non-nuclear weapon states commit themselves not to acquire nuclear weapons, whereas the five nuclear-armed states parties agree to pursue disarmament in Article VI. More specifically, the latter article requires ‘Each of the Parties to the Treaty... to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control (Ghosh 2006)’.

Although none of the nine nuclear-armed states are likely to join the TPNW in the immediate future, the underlying assumption is that they will ultimately be affected by the strong stigmatization of nuclear weapons in the Treaty. This puts the Treaty at odds with the existing nuclear order (Erästö 2019).

Possessing nuclear weapons is considered a powerful tool for a country to be a member of the “exclusive club” which controls international peace. On the other hand, some nuclear possessing states are viewed a potential threat to their immediate neighbours and, respectively—to global peace. One of these states is India which not only refuses to sign the TPNW but has not signed the NPT either.

Japan is another country which hesitates to align itself with the TPNW. The hesitation of the Prime Minister Kishida is based on the perceived threat by its regional rival states China and North Korea. As the Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi pointed out in an interview, “the TPNW is an important treaty that can be seen as a way toward “a world without nuclear weapons”. However, though the cooperation of nuclear-weapon states is necessary for changing the reality, none of the nuclear-weapon states have participated in the treaty (Yoshimasa 2023).

As seen in Table 3 (ICAN 2023), only Brazil has signed TPNW, although it is not yet ratified. Brazil participated in the negotiation of the TPNW at the United Nations in New York in 2017 and was among 122 states that voted in favour of its adoption.

According to all data so far analysed, we can summarize, that each of the four states meets to a certain extent the five criteria under investigation. But we can not claim, that they all fully respond to those criteria as the range of required data may vary.

**Table 3.** TPNW Signatory states.

State	Signed	Ratified
Brazil	Yes	No
Germany	No	No
India	No	No
Japan	No	No

#### 4. Discussion

The debate for reforming the UNSC has been on the table of the UN since the end of the Cold War—especially the question about its permanent members. Although the number of the UN Member States has nearly quadrupled and the regional composition of the membership has changed, the size and the composition of the UNSC have remained unchanged. Regions like Latin America and Africa remain not represented. The aggressive war of Russia against Ukraine, a sovereign state and a UN member, made the problem even more topical and many scientists and political leaders consider the current permanent membership out-of-date. Within a UNSC session on 20 September 2023 the Russian Federation was accused of committing crimes against humanity on a daily basis. During his speech at the 78th session of the UN General Assembly, the European Council's president Charles Michele called for the urgent need for reform of the UN Charter, including amending veto rights and enhancing the representativeness of the UNSC (Regional Information Centre for Western Europe 2023). The top EU official called the UN system “sclerotic and hobbled”. He also pointed out that being a member of the UNSC gives Russia green light to veto decisions condemning its invasion in Ukraine. Aderito Vicente, political researcher and former UN diplomat, writes about the so called “cascade effect” in the work of the UNSC. By the term he describes the inevitable presence of the five permanent members in almost all UN Agencies, Commissions, and Committees, apart from the UNSC itself (Vicente 2013). According to Butler (2012), even if there is no other formal veto anywhere other than the UNSC, the language of the veto is freely spoken, threatening and very often shapes outcomes in such bodies.

Discussing today's need for reforms in terms of permanent membership, we have to point out that Russian Federation has violated the UN Charter by starting an aggressive war against a sovereign state. This way it has lost its legitimacy to act as a decision maker in the UNSC. Another argument with the same logic has been also put forward: when the United Nations and UNSC were established, it was the USSR in the position of a permanent member. After the fall of the Berlin wall USSR dissolved and the Russian Federation stepped in. Boris Yeltsin, the then president, submitted a letter to the UN Secretary General with claims for the Russian Federation to be considered the successor of USSR. No discussion or justification followed to legitimize the proposal (Institute for War and Peace Reporting 2022).

A very much needed reform is to introduce criteria on legitimacy for permanent UNSC membership. Whether a country possesses or not nuclear weapons would be a controversial criterion. On the one hand, it is normal for countries who possess and develop nuclear energy, to control the global balance. On the other hand, some countries abuse this “privileged” status by threatening their neighbour countries in regional disputes. This is the case of India and Pakistan. Recently, Russia has also threatened Ukraine with use of nuclear weapons. Whether a country has signed a Treaty for non-proliferation or for prohibition of nuclear weapons, has also proven to be problematic and does not resolve the problem either. Whether a country can be defined as “pacifist” would be a more reliable criterion for membership. According to us, the overall criteria could be (1) economic performance, (2) contribution to UN peacekeeping policy and (3) pacifism. What are the chances of each of the G-4 countries to get a permanent seat today, considering the above criteria for membership?

Germany is an economic leader and most industrialized country in the EU accounting for 26.6% of its industrial production (Eurostat 2023) and it is also one of the top contributors to the UN peacekeeping operations ranking in the highest Level A by 6.09%. But, considering

the principle of representativeness, there are already two countries from Europe in the UNSC—France and the United Kingdom. France is also a member of the EU. Some could argue that adding Germany would only make the continent (and the EU) overrepresented.

Japan, just like Germany, stands well in terms of economy and contribution to the peacekeeping budget (Level A, 8.56%). The only reason for its modest contribution to the peacekeeping operations in terms of troops and police (merely 0.005%) are the historic restrictions inherited since the Second World War.

Japan has recently asserted itself as a pacifist country and developed its concept on human security, but because of the support of the USA, some experts think that adding Japan as a permanent member would only give the US another voice on the UNSC and not alter the power dynamic.

Regarding geopolitical balance in the UNSC, India has always considered itself a democratic alternative to authoritarian China. Moreover, that recently it has surpassed China as most populous country in the world (according to the World Bank, for the year 2022 India and China account for 1.417 million and 1.412 million people, respectively). The country is also representative in terms of being a top contributor to peacekeeping operations by troops and police (7.77%) but its rivalry with Pakistan makes it unreliable in terms of the “pacifist country” criterion. Just like the case of Germany and Japan, it is very likely that India's membership will not be backed by China and thus will be left out of the UNSC in its current composition.

Brazil in the UNSC means a better geographical representation—so far no country from South America has been a permanent member. It is also the largest and most influential country in South America, accounting for about half of the continent's population, landmass, and gross domestic product (GDP). It is the fifth-largest country in the world and the sixth most populous, with an estimated 214 million people. After the United States, Brazil has the largest military force in the Western Hemisphere (Roy 2022). Considering pacifism, we could evaluate Brazil as “the most pacifist country” among the G-4—it has historically relied on soft-power strategies to exert its influence. Although none of the G-4 states have signed nor ratified the TPNW, Brazil is the only state among them who has signed the NPT—that is, it has expressed political will to work towards non-proliferation.

Another reform, which we propose is related to the decision-making method of the UNSC. We argue in favour of abolition of the veto system and its replacement by a method of qualified majority, similar to the model of the predecessor of EU, the European Coal and Steel Community. It had 6 members. Each of the states had a voting weight based on its population, as follows: France, Germany and Italy had 4 votes each; Belgium and the Netherlands—2 votes each, and Luxembourg had 1 vote. The voting threshold for a resolution to pass, was 12 votes by at least 4 member states. This method could be applied after estimation of the voting weight of the permanent UNSC members.

#### 5. Conclusion

Questioning the effectiveness of the UNSC has become an issue of the global political agenda since the first years of its functioning. Its structure has not been significantly reformed since 1945, in spite of the fact, that UN member states have increased from 51 to 193. This means, that the institution is problematic in terms of legitimacy and representativeness.

The principle for representation is inherent in the Charter but is applied to non-permanent members only. Nowadays it should be introduced to the permanent UNSC members. The G-4 countries have pursued their permanent membership both collectively and individually. What unites them is the fact that they are some of



the most representative of their own regions—regions which are so far not represented or underrepresented in the UNSC. India is part of South Asia—a region which has the potential to turn into a powerful geopolitical zone, since the country stands well in terms of population, nuclear power potential and, as a member of the United Nations—in terms of contribution to peacekeeping operations. Its relations and territorial disputes with Pakistan, though, make this claim questionable. Germany and Japan, although economically powerful, have been restricted historically to UNSC membership due to their involvement in the World Wars. But, taking into account current developments, could the United Nations keep a permanent member who has started an aggressive war in another UN member and thus, by all means, has violated the fundamentals of the UN Charter? The most current argument about keeping Germany out of the UNSC is that together with France they would make the EU overrepresented. So the most logical reform in this case would be, instead of adding Germany, to replace France by the EU—a reform that Germany itself has proposed.

Replacing Russia by one of the G-4 members will be an essential and very much needed reform. Brazil is part of South America—a continent which is not represented at all in the permanent membership club. It also ranks second from all G-4 states by national military expenditure and at the same time—most pacifist, by its strategies to exert regional influence. This makes it the most eligible country for permanent membership, for the moment.

Secondly, abolition of the veto right, which has so far blocked the work of the UNSC, and introducing the method of qualified majority voting, will make the institution much more effective in situations of military conflicts.

Introducing criteria for permanent membership as a third reform will make it clear who is eligible and thus would allow other states to join in the future. It will be a must, for example, to consider an African country or the African Union a potential permanent member in the future, since the continent is an arena of geopolitical dynamics. Taking into account the complexity of this political issue, we consider a future research question that needs to be answered: what is the evidence for meeting the criteria, i.e. what is the method of measurement.

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### Conflict of interest

The author have declared that no competing interests exist.

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