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Security Council

INTRODUCTION:

- The Security Council is **one of the six main organs** of the United Nations. United Nations+2United Nations+2
- Its **primary responsibility** is maintaining international peace and security. United Nations+1
- Unlike many UN bodies that make *recommendations*, the Security Council can make **decisions that all member states are obligated to carry out** under the UN Charter. United Nations+1

Composition / Membership

- The Council has **15 members** in total. United Nations+1
- There are **5 permanent members**, often called the "P5":
  - China
  - France
  - Russian Federation
  - United Kingdom
  - United States United Nations+2Encyclopedia Britannica+2
- There are **10 non-permanent members**, elected for **two-year terms** by the UN General Assembly. United Nations+1
- The non-permanent seats are distributed based on regional groupings. Wikipedia
- The Security Council's **presidency rotates monthly** among its members. Wikipedia

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Powers and Functions

The Security Council has a range of functions, including:

1. **Conflict Prevention & Mediation**
   - It can investigate disputes that may lead to conflict. United Nations+1
   - It may recommend peaceful solutions, mediation, or appoint envoys. United Nations
2. **Peacekeeping & Enforcement**
   - The Council can authorize *peacekeeping missions*. United Nations
   - It can impose **sanctions** (economic, travel bans, arms embargoes) on states. United Nations
   - In serious cases, it can authorize **collective military action**. United Nations
3. **Arms Control**
   - It can formulate plans to regulate armaments globally. United Nations
4. **Admission & Legal Processes**
   - Recommends admission of new member states to the UN. United Nations
   - Works with the General Assembly to elect judges of the International Court of Justice. United Nations

5. **Atrocity Prevention / "Responsibility to Protect"**
    - Plays a role in preventing mass atrocities. Under the principle of "responsibility to protect," the Council can take action when there are serious threats to civilians. United Nations

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Decision-Making & Voting

- For **substantive decisions**, at least **9 out of the 15 members** must vote in favor — *and* **all 5 permanent members must either vote yes or abstain** (i.e., none of the P5 can veto). Encyclopedia Britannica+1
- The **veto power**: Any of the 5 permanent members can veto *substantive* resolutions, blocking them even if the majority supports them. Encyclopedia Britannica

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Criticisms & Reform Debates

- A common criticism is that the Council is **not representative enough**, especially because only 5 countries are permanent members.
- The **veto power** is also controversial — critics argue it gives too much power to the P5.
- There are ongoing calls for **reform**, such as expanding permanent membership or changing how vetoes work, but major reform is difficult because it requires amending the UN Charter.

Recent/Current Context

- As of now, the **non-permanent members** include countries like Algeria, Denmark, Greece, Guyana, Pakistan, Panama, South Korea, Sierra Leone, Slovenia, and Somalia. United Nations
- These members change every two years through elections in the General Assembly. Wikipedia

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