

don't want it anymore. That's the reality legally and politically because you cannot change the Charter unless the P5 agrees.

What we want is to diminish the veto in all its aspects and take it to a place where it stops doing the harm that it is doing now. And the veto also has a pervasive effect inside the UN system. So, the P5 think they have a God-given right to decide on senior appointments, not only on who is the secretary-general but also who is the head of the Office of Legal Affairs.

They think they have a right to have a permanent seat on the Economic and Social Council. And they think they all should have a judge on the International Court of Justice. But there's no legal basis for it.

In your heart of hearts, if it weren't for the fact that the Charter says that these five particular countries have the veto, would you want that, or no?

Would I write the Charter the way it was written? No. But we're not rewrit-

ing the Charter. We live where we live and we have the treaty that we have, and it's a good treaty. And the veto provision is a huge problem. The French and the Brits have not cast a veto since 1989. And they're doing that because they do not believe they can afford it politically. That is where we want to get to. If the remaining three who have the veto think about it in those terms and say: "This is politically a disaster for us. We really should think about this very hard and only do it in the most extreme circumstances," then

we're in a good place again.

What's next on the horizon for Security Council reform?

What's going on in the Council now and the paralysis that you see across most of the files is not because of Ukraine and Gaza. That is just the geopolitical constellation that we have right now. So, between Russia, the US, and China, you're just not going to have a broad basis for agreement on most issues. That means we will have for the foreseeable future a Security Council that

can't do its work because someone is going to veto anything meaningful. So, our choice is to either say, "We have a UN that does not do work on peace and security," or we do the work differently. For us, it's the latter because the UN is an organization about peace and security. It's not a service delivery organization that is humanitarian assistance and education and vaccinations and all these things that are also important.

The full article first appeared on Passblue.

Radical way to change UN Security Council including its name



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OPINION

What conditions might compel the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council to relinquish their veto power? In exchange, what conditions might the other member states agree on to make it happen? These are important questions to pose to the public as the 193 member states negotiate a Pact for the Future for the upcoming Summit of the Future (22-23 September) to ensure the organization's usefulness for generations to come. Let us hope that the P5 — Britain, China, France, Russia, and the United States — as well as other member states have the wisdom to institute reforms as soon as possible.

Some Council reform proposals consider adding individual countries as permanent members, such as India or Brazil. A new proposal by the US suggests creating two new permanent seats for African nations without veto power. Making a member state permanent is risky because national leadership can change quickly. International norms of conduct maintain reasonableness in geopolitics, but if autocratic, plutocratic, or sociopathic leadership takes over a member state, the consequences can be disastrous.

For the foreseeable future, the primary duty of a reformed Council must be to foster planetary sustainability. Heightened attention to sustainability will require maintaining peace as a top priority. War and preparing for war are a gross waste of planetary resources.

A reformed Council should therefore have the following elements: leadership focused on planetary sustainability, with peace as a vital element of that goal; compliance with the rule of law as a basic principle; fixed regional groupings; and a voice for future generations. Such a proposal could be referred to as the "sustainability framework". It also means changing the name of the body to the Sustainability Council.

Although this proposal may seem far-fetched, its elements could be considered in part or fully. Transformative change begins with radical ideas.

The framework proposes nine geographically based groupings, a leadership seat, and an Office for the Pro-

tection of Future Generations, or OFG. The intent of establishing one fixed seat for each regional group is to foster cooperation for sustainability within that geographical area and help members in each group raise their "UN score". That is used to determine weighted voting in the Council. The score for each group would be the average of all member states' UN scores in that group.

Such a rating is based on the World Justice Project's Rule of Law Index. The project is an independent group promoting the rule of law worldwide. The index calculates scores based on eight factors and 44 subfactors. Other pro-sustainability factors could be combined with it over time. Using GDP and population size to determine weighted voting would be counterproductive to sustainability. Annually, the UN representatives in each regional group would elect one of its members to represent it in the Council. If the group cannot agree in a specified time, the "leadership seat" shall select the person by using the UN scores as the primary measure.

The 10 countries with the highest scores hold the leadership seat, represented by a president elected by the UN representatives of those 10 countries. These countries may nominate someone from outside their group to be the Council president while retaining the right to remove that person. While controlling the seat, the 10 nations shall be part of their respective regional groups.

The Office for the Protection of Future Generations will have powers equal

to those of the other Council member groups and a UN score equal to the leadership seat. The office would rely on systems thinkers with expertise in all fields relating to maintaining global sustainability, including human behavior, a critical factor for achieving planetary sustainability.

To signal a turning point in global affairs, it would be appropriate to rename the Security Council the Sustainability Council. That would help it to leave past failures behind and attract the worldwide attention necessary to achieve the desired goals.

The nations with veto power must ask whether structuring the system around the rule of law is a desired outcome that outweighs the need to jealously guard a veto power recognized as grossly misused, is distasteful in principle, and leads to loss of global status. To be a leader in the world, a nation must live up to the rule of law and be willing to treat other countries as equals and encourage them toward the rule of law as the global guiding principle.

The member states that form the regional groups must ask themselves if they are willing to work on their UN scores in exchange for eliminating the P5's veto power. Keep in mind that the quality of life and even the existence of many future generations are at stake.

What is the likelihood that UN member states would agree to the proposal? The strong desire to eliminate the veto will spur significant pressure from the non-P5 member states. Britain and France may show mild acceptance but will probably be dissuaded against reform by the US. China, with a current mid-to-low rule of law index, might negotiate for a modified index or perhaps agree to a top-tier weighted vote on a conditional basis. That would force the US to seriously weigh the benefits and costs of rejecting reform. Russia would be the last to accept, requiring major diplomatic pressure from many member states.

It is human nature to resist change. Bold structural transformation requires a shift in habits that can take time. The role of leadership will be to encourage and accelerate finding the appropriate balance between moderation that does not reduce the joy in life and a responsibility to future generations. Influential global leaders can help shift the norms so that future sustainability and current happiness are balanced.



The illustration shows US President Joe Biden (R) protecting Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu from UNSC resolutions demanding a cease-fire in its brutal war on Gaza by wielding the veto power of the US.
TBS



Delegates get ready to attend a session of the United Nations Security Council on August 12, 2024.
MANUEL ELIAS/JUN

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