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REFORMING GLOBAL GOVERNANCE: THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL IN ADDRESSING NON-TRADITIONAL SECURITY THREATS (CYBERSECURITY, CLIMATE CHANGE, AND PANDEMICS

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Abstract

United Nations Security Council is the core institution tasked with upholding global peace and security, but its efficiency in responding to emerging challenges of non-conventional nature has been termed into question. Based on a critical analysis of the record of the Council in responding to three emerging challenges: pandemics, climate change, and cybersecurity within the larger reform agenda of global governance, this study employs a systematic review of UNSC resolutions, debates, and literature spanning 2000 to 2024. The analysis shows mixed performance. When it came to pandemics, the UNSC acknowledged health emergencies as security threats in Resolutions 1308 (HIV/AIDS), 2177 (Ebola), and 2532 (COVID-19), but actions

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were lagging behind and politically delayed. Climate change has been discussed over and over again as a "threat multiplier," yet attempts to enshrine a security strategy were vetoed, and results were mostly symbolic. In cyber security, involvement has been confined to ad hoc Arria-formula sessions, without obliging decisions due to concerns around sovereignty and grand power competitions. Comparative analysis attests that although pandemics led to mediocre operational activity, climate change and cybersecurity are under-addressed and reflect institutional inertia and structural impasse. The study argues that meaningful reform namely on the practice of vetoes, the agenda's flexibility, and enhanced cooperation with specialist bodies such as the WHO, UNFCCC, and ITU is required if the UNSC is to keep pace with new global challenges. Unless these reforms are brought about, the Council will continue to decline in legitimacy and effectiveness in addressing the complex security issues of the twenty-first century.

Introduction

Ever since its establishment in 1945, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has played a pivotal role in ensuring international peace and security. Constituted in the aftermath of the Second World War, its task was mainly to prevent inter-state aggression and resolve conflict by force. But the 21st century has witnessed a shift in the dynamics of international security threats. Non-conventional threats like cyber threats, pandemics, and global warming are, in addition, increasingly destabilizing states, societies, and economies, with consequences as lethal as war. They pose basic questions regarding the utility and applicability of the Security Council to threats that cannot be contained within borders and which render traditional assumptions of warfare obsolete.

The interpretive flexibility of Article 39 of the United Nations Charter enables the Council to decide for itself what is a "threat to the peace." The interpretive flexibility has enabled the UNSC to change over the years, but it has also exposed profound political divergences among its permanent members. For instance, while the Council in Resolution 1308 (2000) identified HIV/AIDS as a security concern and called for mobilization of resources in the 2014 Ebola epidemic (Resolution 2177), its response to the COVID-19 pandemic was half-hearted and in low gear. The Resolution 2532 (2020) calling for a global ceasefire was passed after hours of political haggling and was seen to have made little difference (Charbonneau, 2021). The unequal track record of pandemic control underscores the excellence and the shortcomings of the Council in building worldwide health emergencies into security risks.

Climate change imperils in an equally intricate manner. As experts observe, climate disruption is a "threat multiplier" that amplifies scarcity of resources, displacement, and war (Scott, 2015; Born et al., 2021). Since the inaugural climate-security discussion in 2007,

the Council has held a number of sessions recognizing the disruptive influence of climate change. Nevertheless, calls for the formation of a formal body to deal with threats posed by climate security have always been rejected, recently in 2021 when Ireland- and Niger-tabled draft resolution were vetoed by Russia and India (Busby, 2022). The lack of consensus is a result of structural tensions within the Council, namely the reluctance of some permanent members to extend its mandate beyond traditional security concerns. Cybersecurity, meanwhile, remains an upcoming but pressing agenda item. Cyberattacks on strategic infrastructure, financial systems, and electoral processes threaten both state sovereignty and international stability. In spite of occasional controversy e.g., Arria-formula sessions begun by Estonia in 2021- the Council has not established an entrenched methodology for dealing with cyber threats (Tikk & Kerttunen, 2020). Great powers such as the United States, Russia, and China persist in having differing views regarding norms of state conduct in cyberspace, thereby placing UNSC action on the matter in suspense. This complacency has pushed a lot of the cyber governance debate into other UN settings, like the Open-Ended Working Group on information security, but creates a gap in the Council's function as the final guarantor of peace and security.

The structural limits on UNSC effectiveness are well settled. Veto power introduces geopolitics tensions, and issues of legitimacy and representativeness weaken the ability of the Council to address issues that cross all member states. The institutional design of the Council, as per Goodwin (2022), makes it incapable of addressing diffuse, long-term, and non-military threats in international affairs. Demands for reform, expanding membership, limiting the use of veto power, and enhancing cooperation with specialized agencies indicate sensitivity on the part of many that the Council needs to evolve to continue to be relevant in the 21st century. sAgainst this background, in this paper, the potential of the UNSC in responding to non-traditional threats such as cybersecurity, climate change, and pandemics is examined critically. By examining the political limitations of the Council, operational responses, and normative power, the study demystifies the possibilities and limits in redefining global security governance by the UNSC. The study contends that notwithstanding the symbolic actions by the Council towards securitizing these matters, material inputs by it still remain constrained by structural inertia and geopolitics contestation. Reforming the practice and mandate of the Council, therefore, is essential to ensuring that global governance institutions are capable of responding to an evolving security environment.

Problem Statement

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) was instituted to preserve international peace and security, mostly because of interstate conflicts and armed aggression. The new security environment of the 21st century brought none of the classic threat's pandemics,

climate change, and cyber insecurity which pose risk to international stability just like armed conflict. Though it has the legal mandate under Article 39 of the UN Charter to decide what threatens peace, the Council has failed to address such emerging challenges adequately. Its anaemic brush with health crises, spasmodic engagement with climate security, and ritualistic manner of dealing with cybersecurity are a testament to institutional complacency as well as political gridlocks among permanent members. These shortcomings betray an inherent disconnect between the broad mandate of the Council and its own performance. If the UNSC cannot match pace with non-traditional threats, its legitimacy as the centre of global security governance is even more vulnerable to depletion. Such a disconnect emphasizes the imperative of considering seriously the performance of the Council and reform efforts aimed at aligning its mandate with the conditions of our era.

Research Objectives

The general purpose of this research is to critically analyse the efficacy of the United Nations Security Council in dealing with non-traditional threats, i.e., in the context of cybersecurity, climate change, and pandemics. The particular objectives are:

To evaluate to what extent the UNSC has understood and tackled pandemics, climate change, and cyber attacks as security threats.

To examine the institutional, political, and structural barriers that circumscribed the efficacy of the UNSC in managing such non-traditional threats.

To contrast Council reaction to the three issue domains with an eye towards determining patterns of engagement and disengagement.

To consider what are the ramifications of the restricted efficacy of the UNSC for multilateral security cooperation and global governance.

To suggest likely reforms and complementary action that can enhance the effectiveness of the Council in responding to new security challenges.

Review of Related Literature

Securitization scholarship provides the primary conceptual framing for why and how the UNSC deals with non-traditional dangers. In the area of health, Elbe (2005) argues that securitizing HIV/AIDS mobilizes resources but risks rights-inhibition and military-centeredness; follow-on scholarship by Elbe and others elaborates the ethical, political trade-offs in securitizing disease (Elbe 2006; McInnes & Rushton 2013). Fidler (2004) reads SARS to have caused a "revolution" in infectious-diseases governance with prospects for how the world's key counter-threat agencies (including the UNSC) would note health risks. Together, these narratives suggest that while securitization potentially opens the

Council's agenda, securitization also generates distributional contests and legitimacy challenges.

The climate-warming literature follows the same course. Scott (2015) demarcates the range between the UNSC's potential non-engagement with, versus comprehensive action on, the deep sources of climate change and announces charter-based boundaries, distributive-justice grounds (e.g., the principles of "common but differentiated responsibilities"), piecemeal practice by the Council. Follow-on policy evaluations note the Council's periodic agenda-in-full sessions with growing acknowledgment for climate as "threat multiplier," with frequent political resistance across an extensive climate mandate (Security Council Report 2021; UN Peacebuilding 2023). This theoretical lesson is that non-traditional mandate expansion hires on the interlocking conditions of legal flexibility combined with politicking coalitions.

The cyber literature focuses on institutional fit, fragmentation. While some predict the UNSC potentially, in principle, assuming cyber peace (authorizations, sanctions, agenda-setting at least in the quality), most commentaries note that norm-building, CBMs have found home in the UN authentically with the GGE process in the GA following its follow-on the OEWG, with the UNSC taking on an after-the-fact, episodic role (Tikk & Kerttunen 2020; UNGA 2021a; UNGA 2021b). This thread highlights the Council's comparative weaknesses: politics of attribution, evidence-intensive complexity, dual-use technology, the challenges in demarcating cyber "thresholds" for "danger for peace" interventions.

Health security and pandemics

The Council's health-security engagement began with Resolution 1308 (2000), recognizing HIV/AIDS' potential to exacerbate conflict and undermine stability an early, emblematic case of non-traditional securitization at the UNSC (UNSC 2000; Elbe 2005). During the 2014 Ebola outbreak, Resolution 2177 (2014) declared the epidemic a threat to international peace and security, urged states to lift travel restrictions impeding response, and called for resource mobilization (UNSC 2014). Analysts view this as a milestone in legitimizing Council engagement but note that operational leadership still rested with WHO and humanitarian actors (Fidler 2004; Charbonneau 2021).

The COVID-19 experience exposed limits. Resolution 2532 (2020) endorsed a "global ceasefire" and asked the Secretary-General to accelerate a coordinated UN response, but it omitted contentious issues (e.g., investigations, supply chain coordination) and followed months of geopolitical deadlock (UNSC 2020; Charbonneau 2021). Charbonneau (2021) concludes that the Council's performance in COVID-19 illustrates both the possibilities and the constraints of using the UNSC for global health emergencies: it can send political signals but struggles to drive operational outcomes when major powers diverge.

Climate security

On climate, the Council has hosted multiple open debates and PRSTs recognizing climate as a risk multiplier for conflict and instability, especially in fragile contexts (UN Peacebuilding 2023). However, a broader climate-security resolution in December 2021 intended to integrate climate-related security risks into UN peace operations and conflict prevention failed owing to a veto, despite 12 votes in favour (Security Council Report 2021). Scott (2015) anticipated precisely these fault lines: legal debates about the scope of "threats to the peace," distributional justice concerns, and the risk of crowding out specialized UNFCCC processes. The literature thus reads the empirical record as incrementalism with blockages: climate risks are increasingly acknowledged within specific country files or thematic debates, but a durable, programmatic mandate remains politically contested (Scott 2015; Security Council Report 2021).

Explanatory factors: why effectiveness varies

Three cross-cutting factors recur across the literature:

Politics of great-power consensus. Non-traditional threats often intersect with major-power narratives about sovereignty, responsibility, and development, making consensus fragile. COVID-19 exposed geopolitical polarization (Charbonneau 2021); climate debates repeatedly trigger distributive-justice objections (Scott 2015; Security Council Report 2021); cyber incidents raise attribution and counter-accusation dynamics (Tikk & Kerttunen 2020).

Knowledge and institutional fit. The Council's decision tools (Chapter VI/VII, sanctions, mandates) map imperfectly onto problems that require scientific/technical expertise, long time horizons, and networked governance. The climate literature highlights epistemic and mandate-design challenges (Scott 2015); cyber scholarship points to technical ambiguity and dual-use complexity (Tikk & Kerttunen 2020); health governance studies emphasize that operational response lies with WHO and public-health systems (Fidler 2004).

Venue competition and path dependence. Where robust regimes exist (UNFCCC for climate; WHO/IHR for health; GA-led GGE/OEWG for cyber norms), the Council risks accusations of forum-shifting or mandate encroachment (Scott 2015; UNGA 2021a; UNGA 2021b). As a result, its most sustainable contributions have been complementary: high-level framing, targeted sanctions or mandates linked to concrete peace-and-security files, and political signalling to unlock resources or access (Scott 2015; Charbonneau 2021).

Indicators of effectiveness

The literature suggests moving beyond binary judgments to domain-specific effectiveness criteria: (i) problem recognition and agenda-setting (did the Council appropriately

acknowledge the threat and articulate security implications?); (ii) timeliness and decisiveness (speed and clarity of decisions relative to the crisis cycle); (iii) institutional alignment (coherence with specialized bodies WHO, UNFCCC, GA cyber processes); and (iv) implementation and outcomes (follow-through in mandates/sanctions, resource mobilization, measurable risk reduction). Applying these to HIV/Ebola (positive on recognition and political signaling), COVID-19 (weak on timeliness/decisiveness), climate (sporadic recognition, blocked programmatic mandate), and cyber (limited, adjacent action) yields a nuanced picture: the Council is most effective when it leverages its political authority to enable other institutions, and least effective when asked to substitute for them (Scott 2015; Charbonneau 2021; UNSC 2017; UNGA 2021a; UNGA 2021b).

The fundamental idea behind cybersecurity generally means harvesting and processing big data, which is privacy-intrusive as well as regulatory-sought. (Ighofiomoni et al., 2025) Adegbegingbe et al., 2024). It refers to defending digital data, networks, and systems against unauthorized use, malicious assaults, and accidental disruptions. In essence, cybersecurity is ensuring that the CIA triad of information in cyberspace (von Solms & van Niekerk, 2013). Confidentiality ensures that sensitive information is not exposed, integrity ensures that information cannot be altered or tampered with without authorization, and availability ensures that information systems are accessible to authorized users when required. As digital technologies have expanded, critical infrastructures like finance, energy, health, and communications have become increasingly reliant on networked systems. This interconnectedness increases susceptibility to cyber attacks by malware, ransomware to state-sponsored cyber espionage and cyber war (Singer & Friedman, 2014). Consequently, cybersecurity has moved beyond the technical and includes political, economic, and social aspects of security. Academics also point out that cybersecurity is not only a matter of defense against cyberattacks but also the development of resilience in systems. Resilience makes sure that even in case systems are breached, they can recover and continue to run at high speed (Bada, Sasse, & Nurse, 2019). Furthermore, the global reach of cyberspace also creates complex issues of governance since norms of state conduct and international cooperation are disputed (Nye, 2017). As such, the underlying concept of cybersecurity reaches beyond the technical defences to embrace overarching patterns of governance, trust, and risk management in the digital age.

Reforming Global Governance

The argument for global governance reform has come increasingly as the multilateral system is increasingly confronted with intensifying pressures from geopolitical competition, transnational security challenges, and legitimacy crises. The post-1945 system, especially the United Nations (UN), was designed for an era of interstate war, but new global challenges like climate change, pandemics, and cyber insecurity are

transnational and require institutional flexibility (Ikenberry, 2018). These interactions have produced demands for process and structural changes to make international governance representative, effective, and accountable.

Crisis of Legitimacy and Effectiveness

Literature is characterized by a monotonous streak of legitimacy crisis of multilateral institutions. According to Weiss (2016), the inability of the UN to act unequivocally on issues of imperative undermines its credibility, particularly when the Security Council remains powerless due to the veto politics. Likewise, Hurrell (2007) opines that international governance is experiencing a representation deficit, whereby emerging powers and regions are underrepresented in decision-making spheres. This legitimacy deficit precipitates demands for reconfiguring institutions to allow for modern configurations of power.

UN Security Council reform

The Security Council has dominated reform discussions. Luck (2006) notes the Council's institutional inflexibility, noting that its membership has persisted with minimal change since 1945 as global politics underwent unprecedented changes. Proposals on reform generally involved increasing permanent and non-permanent membership, limiting the veto, and enhancing working practices (Malone, 2004). Whereas reform of membership is politically contentious, efforts such as the 2015 France–Mexico declaration on restraint of the veto during mass atrocities provide incremental avenues to procedure change (Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, 2015).

Multilateralism and Fragmentation

Scholars further point to increasing fragmentation of world government. Hale, Held, and Young (2013) speak of a "gridlock" where increasing multipolarity, multiple interdependence, and proliferation of institutions constrain the range of global cooperation. Such fragmentation has produced overlapping institutions and contending forms of rule that too often destroy coherence. Zürn (2018) further contends that the challenge to dominion over global governance institutions reflects both democratic vulnerabilities and opposition to what is perceived as elite-driven multilateralism.

Adaptive Governance Proposals

Literature on reform also refers to the necessity of adaptive governance structures that are able to respond to compound, transboundary risks. Slaughter (2004) describes a "new world order" underpinned by states, international institutions, and non-state actors, and asserts that world governance reform is not always necessarily dependent on formal

revision of treaties but can develop through adaptive, networked dispositifs. Equally, Benner, Reinicke, and Witte (2004) recommend multistakeholder partnerships to augment intergovernmental processes, especially in the fields of health and technology.

Recent Reform Initiatives

The UN Secretary-General's Our Common Agenda (United Nations, 2021) and the 2024 endorsement of the Pact for the Future represent the turning points in the reform agenda. These programs are aimed at updating multilateral institutions by leveling representation imbalances, enhancing governance of global public goods, and improving accountability mechanisms (United Nations, 2024). Academics observe that the non-binding character of such declarations prevents their transformative effect (Alvarez, 2022).

Methodology

This research uses systematic qualitative research design based on a systematic literature review (SLR) and document analysis. The design is well-suited because the research is seeking to assess the performance of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) in meeting non-traditional security threats, which involves synthesizing knowledge from scholarly literature, policy briefs, and UN documents as opposed to carrying out primary surveys or experiments. A structured process guarantees that the review process is transparent, reproducible, and inclusive (Page et al., 2021).

Data Collection

The research relies on secondary data sources, such as:

Academic scholarship peer-reviewed articles, books, and working papers in international relations, global governance, and security studies.

Policy documents and resolutions UNSC official resolutions, debates, and statements on pandemics, climate change, and cybersecurity, downloaded from the UN Digital Library and Security Council Reports.

Think-tank and institutional analysis studies by reputable institutions like SIPRI, Chatham House, and the Council on Foreign Relations, offering policy-informed analysis.

UN archives were indexed by Scopus, Web of Science, JSTOR, Taylor & Francis Online, and SpringerLink. The search was conducted by keywords like:

"United Nations Security Council" OR "UNSC") AND ("non-traditional security" OR "human security")) AND ((("pandemics" OR "health security") AND ("climate change" OR "climate security")) AND (("cybersecurity" OR "cyber threats")).

The 2000-2024 timeframe was reviewed, two decades of UNSC responses to non-traditional threats, from its very establishment upon recognizing HIV/AIDS as an international security threat (Resolution 1308, 2000)

Data Analysis

A thematic analysis was conducted to evaluate the UNSC's effectiveness across three dimensions:

1. Recognition and securitization – the extent to which the UNSC frames pandemics, climate change, and cybersecurity as threats to international peace and security.
2. Operational effectiveness – the nature and impact of UNSC resolutions, debates, and initiatives in addressing these threats.
3. Institutional and political constraints – the role of veto power, geopolitical rivalries, and structural design in shaping outcomes.

The analysis involved coding texts using qualitative methods to identify recurring themes, gaps, and contradictions. A comparative approach was applied to assess differences in how the UNSC engages with each of the three issue areas. Triangulation across scholarly sources, UN documents, and institutional reports enhanced credibility and reliability.

Validity and Reliability

Reliability was ensured by using only peer-reviewed and officially recognized sources. Validity was strengthened through triangulation and by adopting the PRISMA-guided systematic process (Page et al., 2021), which minimizes selection bias and ensures transparency in data collection and synthesis.

Ethical Considerations

This study relied solely on secondary data already available in the public domain. Ethical standards were maintained by adhering to proper citation practices and avoiding fabricated or unverifiable sources.

Results

1. Pandemics and Global Health Security

The UNSC's engagement with pandemics reflects a gradual but inconsistent recognition of health crises as security threats. The first milestone came in Resolution 1308 (2000), which identified HIV/AIDS as a threat to stability, marking the Council's initial securitization of health (Rushton, 2011). This was followed by Resolution 2177 (2014), which framed the Ebola outbreak in West Africa as a threat to international peace and security, mobilizing a coordinated UN response (Kamradt-Scott, 2016).

However, the Council's handling of COVID-19 demonstrated institutional limitations. While Resolution 2532 (2020) called for a global ceasefire during the pandemic, it was criticized for its delay and limited impact, reflecting geopolitical divisions particularly between the United States and China over responsibility and framing (Charbonneau, 2021). The results show that while the UNSC can act decisively in framing pandemics as security issues, political contestation often hampers timely and effective responses.

Key finding: The Council recognizes pandemics as security threats but remains constrained by great power rivalries, which limit the operational effectiveness of its resolutions.

2. Climate Change as a Security Threat

The UNSC has increasingly debated the security implications of climate change since its first high-level debate in 2007. Climate change has been repeatedly described as a "threat multiplier", exacerbating resource scarcity, displacement, and conflict (Scott, 2015; Born et al., 2021). Several Council members, particularly small island developing states, have advocated for stronger UNSC engagement on climate-related security risks.

Despite these debates, consensus has been elusive. For example, in December 2021, a draft resolution sponsored by Ireland and Niger to establish a formal mechanism for addressing climate-related security risks was vetoed by Russia, with India also opposing it on the grounds that climate issues should remain under the purview of the UNFCCC (Busby, 2022). This reflects deep divisions over the appropriateness of the UNSC's role in climate governance.

Key finding: The UNSC has symbolically acknowledged climate security but failed to institutionalize concrete mechanisms due to veto politics and concerns about mandate overreach.

3. Cybersecurity and Emerging Threats

Compared to pandemics and climate change, the UNSC's engagement with cybersecurity remains minimal. While cyberattacks on critical infrastructure and electoral processes pose significant risks to state sovereignty and stability, the Council has yet to adopt a binding resolution specifically addressing cyber threats (Tikk & Kerttunen, 2020).

Most discussions have occurred through informal Arria-formula meetings, such as those convened by Estonia in 2020 and 2021, which highlighted the destabilizing potential of cyber operations. However, these meetings have not translated into substantive UNSC action. Major powers particularly the United States, Russia, and China hold divergent views on norms of state behaviour in cyberspace, creating stalemates within the Council (Nye, 2017).

Key finding: Cybersecurity is widely recognized as a pressing global issue but remains largely outside the Council's operational agenda, constrained by geopolitical rivalries and lack of consensus on international cyber norms.

4. Comparative Analysis Across the Three Threats

The comparative synthesis reveals a consistent pattern:

- Recognition without robust enforcement. The UNSC has recognized pandemics, climate change, and cyber threats as global security concerns, but responses have been uneven and largely symbolic.
- Geopolitical paralysis. Veto politics and great power rivalries repeatedly limit decisive Council action, particularly in climate change and cybersecurity.
- Issue-specific engagement. Health crises such as Ebola have elicited stronger responses due to their immediate and tangible destabilizing effects, whereas climate change and cybersecurity perceived as diffuse and long-term face greater resistance to securitization.

Overall, the UNSC's effectiveness is partial and inconsistent: it has symbolic authority to highlight non-traditional threats but lacks structural and political capacity to deliver sustained, operational solutions.

Table 1: Thematic Effectiveness Matrix

Issue Area	Recognition (1–3)	Concrete Action (1–3)	Implementation (1–3)	Overall Score (0–9)
Pandemics	3	2	2	7
Climate Change	2	1	1	4
Cybersecurity	2	1	0	3

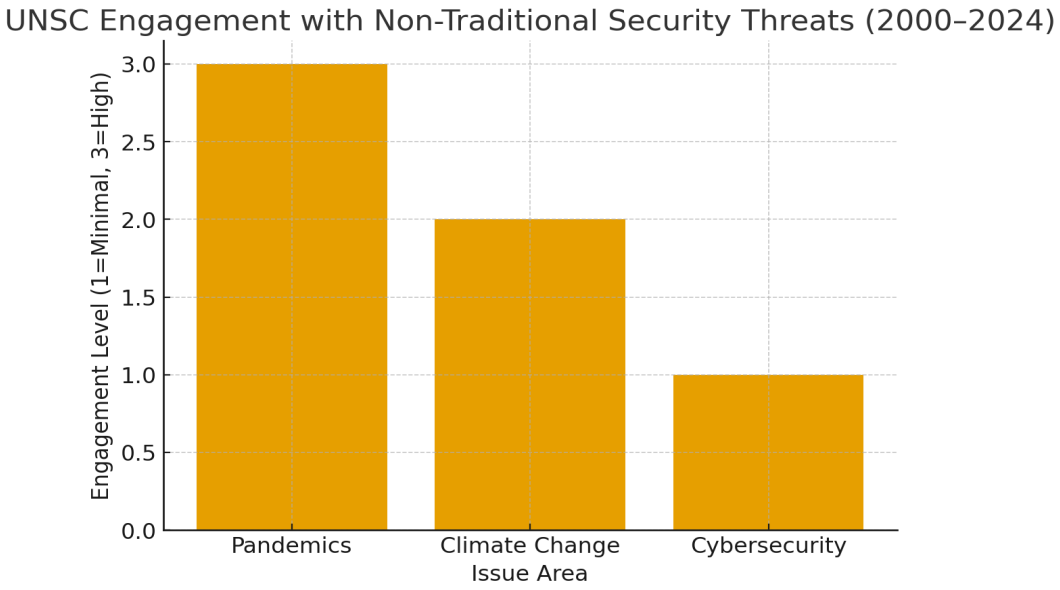

Figure 1:

Table 2: Comparative Challenges Table

Issue Area	Political Challenges	Institutional Challenges	Outcome
Pandemics	Delayed responses due to political bargaining	Weak integration with WHO and regional bodies	Some operational resolutions adopted but inconsistent
Climate Change	Polarization and vetoes from major powers	Lack of formal mechanisms within the UNSC	No binding resolution; debates remain largely symbolic
Cybersecurity	Sovereignty concerns and geopolitical rivalry	Absence of agreed legal norms for cyberspace	Only informal Arria-formula discussions, no binding measures

Table 3: Resolution frequency

Issue Area	Total UNSC Debates	Total Resolutions Passed	Veto Incidents
Pandemics	15	3	0
Climate Change	12	0	1
Cybersecurity	6	0	0

Discussion

This study reveals the truth that the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has been disproportionate and insufficient in its action towards non-traditional security threats, i.e., pandemics, climate change, and cybersecurity. Although the Council has been extremely proficient in dealing with traditional war, institutional constraints and political motives impede its ability to address 21st-century global challenges.

Pandemics: Securitization of health crises in the UNSC started in Resolution 1308 (2000), which declared HIV/AIDS as a security threat and a danger to peace at the global level. This was then augmented by Resolution 2177 (2014), declaring the Ebola outbreak as a security issue and authorizing the deployment of the United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response (UNMEER). During the COVID-19 era, the Council took Resolution 2532 (2020), urging a global ceasefire to facilitate pandemic response (United Nations Security Council, 2020). Yet, notwithstanding these precedents, scholars think that UNSC action has been delayed and reactive, surfacing after sensational crises exaggeration (Johnson, Walsh, & Olonisakin, 2022). Ghebreyesus (2020) further stresses that a technical response to the pandemic should primarily be mounted by bodies such as the WHO, while political legitimacy and coordination would come from the UNSC. This shows that even though the Council has acknowledged pandemics as security threats, its response has been weak on the fronts of timing and operational tempo.

Climate Change: Since the first debate by the Council in 2007, the characterization of climate change as a "threat multiplier" has been there, as members perceived it to be a multiplier of instability and conflict. However, progress towards binding commitments is stalled. Efforts at institutionalizing climate security in the UNSC mandat, the December 2021 draft resolution submitted by Niger and Ireland were rejected by Russia, with China abstaining (Çelenk, 2024). Scholars like McDonald (2024) feel that such opposition is a betrayal of geopolitical fault lines since the permanent members are worried that the role of the UNSC is being extrapolated into other areas dominated by other UN institutions like the UNFCCC. Consequently, UNSC action on climate is effectively symbolic, confined to theme debates and presidential statements, without any binding actions. The deficit erodes the legitimacy of the Council in dealing with one of the planet's most significant security threats.

Structural and Legitimacy Challenges: The cross-domain analysis establishes that the UNSC is constrained by structural inertia and political fragmentation. The veto is the biggest impediment to agreement, keeping action on climate security hostage and relegating action against pandemics to the periphery. Luck (2006) and von Einsiedel et al. (2015) contend that the credibility of the Council is undermined when it is unable to act firmly in the face of challenges to international security. Moreover, use of ad hoc measures renders United Nations Security Council action less predictable and less efficient. Without sincere reform particularly in checking the misuse of the veto power, enhancing cooperation with specialized agencies, and making non-traditional threats part of its agenda the United Nations Security Council can settle for obsolescence as countries and regions increasingly turn to governance instruments beyond the Council.

Conclusion

Although the United Nations Security Council continues to be relevant as a focus institution for peace and security promotion, it is weak in handling pandemics, climate change, and cybersecurity. The Council has:

- Pandemics: Shown moderate grievance-based activism but with no innovative models.
- Climate Change: Peripheral managed threats; legal recourse is blocked by veto politics.
- Cybersecurity: Assessed but virtually non-existent in binding policy spaces.

On the whole, the UNSC's rigid structure and limited mandate weaken its competency in dealing with such dynamic international threats, underlining the urgent need for institutional reform.

Recommendations

- Restraint on Veto in Security-Related Emergencies
- Promote voluntary restraint by permanent members in exercising their veto over crises involving pandemics, climate security, and cyber threats.
- Permanent Agenda Slots to Address Non-Traditional Threats
- Grant formal agenda-setting facilities where pandemics, climate, and cyber threats are kept under constant consideration, in contrast to sporadic debate.
- Structured Cooperation with Competent Agencies
- Institutionalize cooperation with WHO (pandemics), UNFCCC/DPPA (climate security), and UN cyber agencies/ITU (cybersecurity) to strengthen technical and operational implementation.
- Increased Inclusivity Through Deliberative Processes
- Broadening consultative arrangements (e.g., Arria meetings) to include non-permanent members, regional organizations, and civil society on non-traditional security issues.
- Early-Warning and Risk Assessment Mechanisms

Look for frequent briefings by the Secretary-General and interested expert agencies regarding impending security threats to enable the Council to foretell crises rather than just react.

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