

The New Agenda for Peace from the Global South: Rebuilding Multilateral Security Governance

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ABSTRACT

This paper develops the concept of a Global South Security Governance Deficit — the structural mismatch between where contemporary security risks are concentrated and where authority to define, prevent, govern and evaluate international security responses is located. Using primary United Nations, African Union, state and regional-organisation documents and a historically bounded qualitative documentary analysis, it advances a four-pillar model: Representation, Prevention, Regional Agency and Accountability. The paper shifts the analytical focus from representation to agency and uses the UN Secretary-General's July 2023 A New Agenda for Peace as an important reference point rather than as its intellectual framework. It compares principal Security Council reform positions and examines cases including Sudan, the Sahel, eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, Myanmar and Ukraine. The framework distinguishes between normatively desirable, institutionally feasible, Charter-requiring and existing-practice reforms.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction: From Representation to Agency	3	2
2. Background: The Global South and the Multilateral Security Order		2
2.1 Defining the Global South		2
2.2 The Global South Is Not Homogeneous		2
2.3 The Multilateral Security Order, 1945–2023		2
3. Literature Review and Research Gap		2
3.1 Three Bodies of Scholarship		2
3.2 Preventive Diplomacy, Peacebuilding and Multi-Level Governance		2
3.3 The Research Gap		2
4. Methodology		2
5. Theoretical Contribution: The Global South Security Governance Deficit		2
5.1 Conceptualising the Deficit		2
5.2 From Representation to Agency		2
5.3 The Four Pillars as a Unified Architecture		2
6. The Four Pillars: Representation, Prevention, Regional Agency, Accountability		2
6.1 Pillar One: Representation		2
6.2 Pillar Two: Prevention		2
6.3 Pillar Three: Regional Agency		2
6.4 Pillar Four: Accountability		2
7. Security Council Reform: A Comparative Analysis of Global South Positions		2
7.1 The Reform Process and Interacting Institutional Constraints		2
7.2 The African Common Position: Ezulwini Consensus and Sirte Declaration		2
7.3 The G4: Brazil, Germany, India, Japan		2
7.4 Uniting for Consensus (UFC): The Coffee Club Position		2
7.5 The L.69 Group and CARICOM		2
7.6 Veto Restraint Initiatives: ACT and the French-Mexican Initiative		2
7.7 Legitimacy, Feasibility, and the Limits of Council Reform		2
8. Comparative Evidence: The Deficit in Practice		2
8.1 Sudan, April 2023: The Prevention Gap		2
8.2 The Sahel Coups, 2020–2023: Regional Agency and Its Limits		2
8.3 Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo: Multi-Level Coordination Failures		2
8.4 Myanmar: ASEAN and the Limits of Consensus-Based Regional Governance		2
8.5 Ukraine, 2022–2023: The Veto and the Limits of the Charter Order		2
8.6 Haiti: The Local-Global Gap		2
9. Counterarguments		2

9.1 Will Greater Representation Produce Better Security Outcomes?	3
9.2 Is Charter Reform Politically Feasible?	3
9.3 Do Global South Divisions Undermine the Argument?	3
9.4 Are Regional Organisations Capable of Sustained Agency?	3
9.5 Is the Deficit Framework Itself Original?	3
10. Policy Framework: From Deficit to Architecture	3
10.1 Representation: A Two-Track Reform Programme	3
10.2 Prevention: Rebalancing Finance and Authority	3
10.3 Regional Agency: Multi-Level Authority and Predictable Financing	3
10.4 Accountability: Veto Restraint and Operational Evaluation	3
10.5 Integration: The Four Pillars as a Single Programme	3
11. Conclusion: The New Agenda from the Global South	3
References	3

The New Agenda for Peace from the Global South:

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1. Introduction: From Representation to Agency

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In July 2023, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres released a policy brief entitled A New Agenda for Peace, the ninth in the Our Common Agenda series prepared as inputs to the Summit of the Future. The brief opens with a stark admission: the multilateral peace and security architecture, designed in 1945 and incrementally modified since, no longer matches the geography of contemporary risk. Tensions between and within states, Guterres observed, “have sown distrust in the potential of multilateral solutions to improve lives and have amplified calls for new forms of isolationism,” while conflicts have become “more complex, deadly, and harder to resolve” (United Nations, 2023a, p. 2). The brief is framed around three principles — trust, solidarity, and universality — and proposes a substantial programme of recommendations on prevention, peacekeeping, peacebuilding finance, disarmament, and the governance of new domains such as cyber, outer space and artificial intelligence.

This paper takes *A New Agenda for Peace* as an important reference point, but not as its intellectual framework. Its purpose is different. Rather than offer a commentary on the Secretary-General's brief, the paper develops an original analytical lens — the Global South Security Governance Deficit — and uses it to ask a question that the New Agenda itself only partially confronts: who, in the multilateral system as it actually functions, holds the authority to define security priorities, set agendas, prevent crises, shape responses, influence implementation, and evaluate outcomes? The argument advanced here is that the dominant academic and policy debate on Security Council reform has been excessively consumed by the question of representation — who sits in the chamber — and insufficiently attentive to the question of agency — who, in practice, exercises authority across the security policy cycle. Representation and agency are related but not identical: a state may be present in a forum without possessing agenda-setting power, and a state outside the chamber may exercise decisive influence through regional leadership, norm entrepreneurship, or implementation capacity.

The research question that organises this paper is therefore the following: how should multilateral peace and security governance be rebuilt such that the authority to define, prevent, govern and evaluate international security responses is distributed in a manner that better matches the geography of contemporary risk, while remaining institutionally feasible within, and capable of progressive transformation of, the existing Charter-based order? The thesis is that the deficit facing the multilateral security system is not principally a representational one — although representation matters — but an agency deficit, and that closing it requires an integrated reform programme structured around four mutually reinforcing pillars: Representation, Prevention, Regional Agency and Accountability. Each pillar addresses a distinct dimension of the agency problem and none is reducible to the others.

The paper makes four principal contributions. First, it offers a precise conceptualisation of the Global South Security Governance Deficit, distinguishing it from related but distinct concepts in the literature on democratic deficits, governance gaps and legitimacy deficits. Second, it advances an analytical shift from representation to agency, drawing on constructivist, postcolonial and structural-power scholarship to demonstrate that the locus of authority in the multilateral security system extends well beyond the Security Council chamber. Third, it provides a systematic comparison of the principal Security Council reform positions — the African Common Position (Ezulwini Consensus), the G4, Uniting for Consensus, the L.69 Group, CARICOM and others — evaluating each on both legitimacy and political feasibility grounds, and demonstrating why reform of the Council is necessary but insufficient. Fourth, it develops a four-pillar policy architecture that distinguishes between what is normatively desirable, what is institutionally feasible, what requires Charter reform, and what can be achieved through existing institutions and practices — including, crucially, regional arrangements under Chapter VIII of the Charter.

The historical scope of the paper is deliberately bounded. The knowledge cutoff is 5 September 2023. Material, events, statistics, institutional decisions, votes, or other substantive developments occurring after that date are not cited, used, or relied upon, and the paper contains no retrospective judgement of events that, on 5 September 2023, were unresolved. This methodological discipline is essential: it ensures that the analysis is grounded in the information genuinely available to policymakers and analysts at the moment of writing, and it disciplines the claims the paper can make about feasibility and trajectory. Where the paper refers to ongoing processes — the war in Sudan that began on 15 April 2023, the ECOWAS standoff with the Niger junta that intensified after the 26 July 2023 coup, the Intergovernmental Negotiations on Security Council reform, the AU–UN financing discussions — it does so on the basis of what was known and adjudicated by that date.

The structure of the paper is as follows. Section 2 sets out the conceptual background: a precise definition of the Global South, an account of the historical evolution of the multilateral security system since 1945, and an

explicit demarcation of the paper's scope. Section 3 reviews the relevant scholarly and policy literature, identifies the research gap, and locates the paper's contribution within it. Section 4 sets out the methodology. Section 5 develops the theoretical contribution — the Global South Security Governance Deficit — in detail. Section 6 sets out the four-pillar analytical model, examining Representation, Prevention, Regional Agency and Accountability in turn. Section 7 compares the principal Security Council reform positions. Section 8 presents comparative evidence from six cases. Section 9 addresses counterarguments. Section 10 sets out the policy framework. Section 11 concludes.

2. Background: The Global South and the Multilateral Security Order

2.1 Defining the Global South

The term “Global South” is widely used in contemporary diplomatic and scholarly discourse but is rarely defined with precision. Its lineage is reasonably well established. The American writer Carl Oglesby is generally credited with the earliest sustained use, in a 1969 essay in *Commonweal*, in which he described the structural dominance of the North over the South as a consequence of a particular configuration of global economic and political power (Oglesby, 1969). The term gained wider currency after the Brandt Commission's reports of 1980 and 1983, which used “North-South” as their organising geographical and developmental axis (Independent Commission on International Development Issues, 1980). By the end of the Cold War it had largely displaced earlier terms — “Third World,” “developing countries,” “underdeveloped” — that carried either Cold War bloc connotations or hierarchical developmental assumptions that the post-1989 order rendered anachronistic.

For the purposes of this paper, the Global South is treated as a relational analytical category rather than a fixed geographical membership list. It refers principally to states and political communities that have experienced historical and/or continuing asymmetries of voice, authority and institutional influence within the post-1945 international order, especially in relation to developing-country coalitions and institutions. The category is heterogeneous and context-dependent; the paper does not assume that all states commonly described as part of the Global South share a single security-policy position.

This relational definition is consistent with established scholarly usage. Medie and Kang (2018, p. 38) describe countries of the Global South in terms of historical marginalisation in the international political and economic system. The paper therefore uses the term as an analytical device rather than as a claim that membership can be determined by a single objective test.

2.2 The Global South Is Not Homogeneous

Any analytical framework that treats the Global South as a single actor is likely to obscure the heterogeneity of the Global South. The South is internally differentiated along multiple axes that bear directly on security governance: economic structure, regime type, regional position, conflict exposure, and geopolitical alignment. BRICS states and other developing-country coalitions differ sharply from least-developed countries (LDCs), small island developing states (SIDS), and landlocked developing countries (LLDCs). Middle-income emerging powers such as Brazil, India, South Africa and Indonesia possess diplomatic, financial and operational capacities that fragile or conflict-affected states — Mali, Yemen, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sudan, Myanmar — do not. The security interests of regional powers, which may include the projection of coercive capacity into neighbouring states, are not the same as those of small states whose principal security concern is the protection of sovereignty from external intervention.

Cleavages within the South are not only economic. India and China are locked in a strategic rivalry that includes an unresolved Himalayan border dispute, competitive naval posturing in the Indian Ocean, and contestation over infrastructure and influence across the Global South itself. Saudi Arabia and Iran, despite their 2023 Beijing-brokered normalisation, occupy opposite poles of the Gulf security order. Regional powers have at times pursued competing leadership roles and policy priorities within their respective regions. Within regional organisations, divergent national positions produce collective-action problems that are structural rather than incidental: ECOWAS's response to the 2023 Niger coup was contested by Mali and Burkina Faso, both led by juntas that signalled solidarity with Niamey; ASEAN's Five-Point Consensus on Myanmar was undermined by the dissenting position of Cambodia under Hun Sen in 2021–2022.

Divergent positions on intervention, sovereignty and the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) further fracture the South. Some Global South states — Brazil, South Africa, Indonesia — have historically been supportive of robust peace operations and have contributed substantial personnel; others — some states that emphasise host-state consent and non-interference — have emphasised host-state consent and non-interference. The Libyan intervention of 2011, authorised by Security Council Resolution 1973, generated a durable cleavage within the South: Brazil, China, Germany, India and the Russian Federation abstained, while several African states later argued that the operation had exceeded its mandate and contributed to state collapse. The 2022 vote on the Russian invasion of Ukraine exposed further division: General Assembly Resolution ES-11/1 of 2 March 2022 (United Nations General Assembly, 2022) was supported by 141 states, opposed by 5 (including Russia), and abstained by 35, of which a substantial number were Global South states including India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Algeria, Mozambique, Angola, South Africa, Senegal, Uganda, Mali, Burkina Faso, the Central African Republic, Cuba, Nicaragua and others.

These cleavages are not a weakness to be lamented but a structural feature to be theorised. The four-pillar model proposed in this paper takes the heterogeneity of the Global South as a constitutive assumption. It does not propose a unified “Global South position” on security governance; it proposes a framework within which different South positions can be accommodated, contested, and reconciled through institutional design. The framework is itself a contribution to managing, not abolishing, that heterogeneity.

2.3 The Multilateral Security Order, 1945–2023

The Charter of the United Nations, signed at San Francisco on 26 June 1945 and entering into force on 24 October 1945, established the Security Council as the principal organ bearing “primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security” (Article 24). The Council's composition — five permanent members (China, France, the Soviet Union/Russia, the United Kingdom, the United States) with the veto under Article 27(3), and six non-permanent members — reflected the distribution of power at the end of the Second World War and the founding coalition's calculation of the great-power consensus required to sustain collective security. The only formal amendment to Council composition was achieved in 1963, when General Assembly Resolution 1991A (XVIII) expanded non-permanent membership from six to ten, with the amendment entering into force on 31 August 1965 after ratification by all five permanent members under Article 108.

The post-1965 Council has been the subject of repeated reform pressure. The first sustained campaign was initiated by the delegation of India in 1979, joined by a small group of developing-country states, demanding enlargement of the Council to reflect decolonisation. The campaign stalled until the end of the Cold War, when the unblocking of Council action between 1990 and 1992 (on Kuwait, Iraq, the former Yugoslavia, Somalia, El Salvador and Mozambique) generated an expectation — embodied in Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali's 1992 Agenda for Peace (United Nations, 1992) — that the Council could now function as the Charter's founders had intended. That expectation proved short-lived. The failures of Somalia (1993), Rwanda (1994) and Srebrenica (1995) drove a second wave of reformism, culminating in the 2005 World Summit —

which produced, on Security Council reform, only a vague commitment to “early reform” in the World Summit Outcome document (United Nations, 2005, paras. 152–159), and which on peacebuilding produced the Peacebuilding Commission (United Nations, 2005, paras. 97–105).

Between 2005 and 2023 the multilateral security order was transformed by three intersecting dynamics. First, the Council's paralysis on Syria (2011–present), Crimea (2014), and Ukraine (2022–present) — all involving the veto or threatened veto of a permanent member — exposed the structural limits of the Charter's great-power unanimity assumption. Second, the rise of new regional security actors — the African Union Peace and Security Architecture, ECOWAS, ASEAN, SADC — created operational capacity outside the Council that the Charter's Chapter VIII framework anticipated but had not previously been called upon to such an extent. Third, the proliferation of new domains of security competition — cyber, outer space, autonomous systems, artificial intelligence, climate as a security threat multiplier — placed demands on multilateral governance that the 1945 settlement could not have anticipated. The Secretary-General's 2023 New Agenda for Peace was a response to all three dynamics simultaneously. It is in this context that the Global South Security Governance Deficit must be understood.

3. Literature Review and Research Gap

3.1 Three Bodies of Scholarship

Three bodies of scholarship are directly relevant to this paper. The first concerns Security Council reform and the institutional design of the UN system. The second concerns the concept and political agency of the Global South. The third concerns preventive diplomacy, peacebuilding and the architecture of multi-level security governance.

On Security Council reform, the literature is extensive but largely convergent in approach. David Malone's *The UN Security Council: From the Cold War to the 21st Century* (2004) remains a foundational reference, providing historical and institutional context for the reform debate. Thomas Weiss's work on UN reform (Weiss, 2009; 2016) frames the question in terms of the tension between managerial efficiency and democratic legitimacy. Bardo Fassbender's *The United Nations Security Council and the Right of Veto* (1998) and his UN Charter reform treatise (Fassbender, 2009) provide the legal-constitutional lens through which Article 108 amendment is typically analysed. Edward Luck's *Mixed Messages* (2006) offers a practitioner-historian's account of the Council's institutional evolution. Sebastian von Einsiedel, David Malone and Bruno Stagno Ugarte (2015) provide a mid-2010s assessment of reform prospects that remains broadly valid. Richard Gowan's analyses for the International Crisis Group (Gowan, 2022; 2023) bring the practitioner-scholar perspective to recent reform discussions, including the 2023 New Agenda. The literature has produced robust accounts of the procedural obstacles to reform — the requirements of Article 108, the two-thirds threshold of General Assembly Resolution 53/30 (1998), and the consensus-oriented practice of the IGN — as well as of the substantive cleavages among reform positions. What it has not produced is a sustained analytical framework that links Security Council reform to a broader account of security governance authority that extends beyond the Council itself.

On the Global South as a political and analytical category, the literature has developed rapidly since the late 1990s. Amitav Acharya's constructivist work on “regional worlds” (Acharya, 2014) and on “multilateralism 2.0” (Acharya, 2017) reframes the agency of Southern actors as constitutive of, rather than supplementary to, the international order. Mohammed Ayoob's “subaltern realism” (Ayoob, 1995; 2002) placed the security concerns of post-colonial states — internal consolidation, regime survival, the management of external intervention — at the centre of Third World security studies, against the universalising assumptions of mainstream IR. Andrew Hurrell's *On Global Order* (2007) and his work on emerging powers (Hurrell, 2013;

2018) examines the conditions under which the Global South may rewrite the rules of multilateralism. Oliver Stuenkel's *Post-Western World* (2016) and Chris Alden's work on China in Africa (Alden, 2007; Alden and Large, 2019) track the diffusion of agency across the South. Jorge Heine's work on "active non-alignment" (Fortin, Heine, and Ominami, 2023) provides a Latin American account of contemporary Global South strategy. Postcolonial IR theory — Said (1993), Barkawi (2006), Grovogui (2006), Krishna (2001) — has provided the conceptual resources for thinking through the historical formation of the South's structural exclusion.

3.2 Preventive Diplomacy, Peacebuilding and Multi-Level Governance

On preventive diplomacy and peacebuilding, the literature has matured through three generations of scholarship. The first generation — Boutros-Ghali's *Agenda for Peace* (1992), the Brahimi Report (United Nations, 2000), and the early peacebuilding literature (Paris, 2004; Doyle and Sambanis, 2006) — established the conceptual foundations of multi-dimensional UN peace operations. The second generation — the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO) report (United Nations, 2015), the Sustaining Peace resolutions (United Nations General Assembly and Security Council, 2016), and the literature on "local peace" (Mac Ginty, 2014; Paffenholz, 2015) — reframed the agenda around the primacy of politics, the necessity of nationally led prevention, and the limits of externally imposed models. The third generation — Autesserre's *The Frontlines of Peace* (2021), the work of Oliver Richmond on peace formation (Richmond, 2016), and the critical scholarship on the "preventive gap" — has emphasised the institutional, ideological and operational pathologies of UN peace operations and the structural under-resourcing of prevention.

On multi-level governance, the regionalism scholarship is particularly relevant. Acharya and Johnston (2007) on comparative regionalism, Adekeye Adebajo on UN–AU relations (Adebajo, 2010), Paul Williams on African peace operations (Williams, 2021), and Muthiah Alagappa (2003) on Asian security governance provide the conceptual scaffolding for thinking about the relationship between global, regional, national and local security governance. The literature on regional governance and the limits of Chapter VIII operationalisation (Tardy, 2014) is particularly pertinent to the Regional Agency pillar developed in this paper. The paper also draws on the UN–regional arrangements literature and policy work surrounding the 2023 New Agenda for Peace.

On the concept of "deficits," the literature is more fragmented but instructive. The democratic deficit literature (Held and McGrew, 2002; Patomäki and Teivainen, 2004) frames deficits in terms of the structural mismatch between the globalisation of decision-making and the localisation of accountability. The governance gap literature — exemplified by the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS, 2001) and the R2P framework — identifies specific gaps (the protection gap, the implementation gap) that are intended to be closed by institutional innovation. The legitimacy deficit literature (Hurrell, 2007; Ikenberry, 2011) frames the deficit as the gap between the substantive rules of the international order and the procedural legitimacy of the institutions that generate and enforce them.

3.3 The Research Gap

The intersection of these three bodies of scholarship — Security Council reform, Global South agency, and preventive multi-level governance — remains analytically underdeveloped. The Council reform literature largely brackets the agency problem: it counts seats and assesses feasibility, but treats representation as a sufficient condition for influence. The Global South agency literature largely brackets the institutional design problem: it tracks Southern diplomatic practice and norm entrepreneurship but does not link them to a concrete architecture for the redistribution of authority within the multilateral system. The preventive governance literature largely brackets the South's structural position in the system: it analyses what the UN

should do, what regional organisations can do, and what states must do, but does not theorise the agency asymmetries that determine whose priorities shape each of these layers.

The research gap this paper addresses is therefore three-fold. First, there is no sustained, primary-source-grounded analysis that integrates the four dimensions of agency — agenda-setting, prevention, response-shaping, implementation, and evaluation — into a single analytical framework for assessing multilateral security governance from a Global South perspective. Second, the literature does not offer a clear, falsifiable conceptualisation of the “deficit” that links the representational debate to the agency problem in a way that supports policy prescription. Third, the literature does not adequately distinguish, in its reform proposals, between what is normatively desirable, what is institutionally feasible, what requires Charter amendment, and what can be achieved within existing institutions and practices — even though this distinction is essential for any policy architecture that wishes to be both aspirational and operational.

A New Agenda for Peace goes some way toward recognising these gaps — its emphasis on “national infrastructures for peace”, on regional financial support, on the need for “urgent progress” on Security Council reform, and on the elevation of the Peacebuilding Commission — but it does not theorise the agency problem, and its recommendations are largely framed within existing institutional channels rather than against a normative architecture that distinguishes desirable, feasible, and Charter-requiring changes. This paper takes the New Agenda's questions seriously but answers them through a different analytical lens. It does not claim novelty for individual observations — the four pillars draw on established literatures — but does claim an original synthesis: a single integrated framework for thinking about the Global South Security Governance Deficit and its closure.

4. Methodology

This paper employs a historically bounded qualitative, documentary, comparative and normative policy analysis. The historical bound is 5 September 2023: material published after that date is not cited or relied upon. The unit of analysis is the multilateral security governance system, examined at four levels — global (UN), regional (AU, ECOWAS, SADC, ASEAN, OAS and others), national (state-level prevention and policy capacity), and local (community-level peace infrastructures where relevant). The empirical scope covers the period from the 1945 San Francisco settlement to 5 September 2023, with primary analytical attention to the post-Cold War period (1990–2023) and to the period since the 2005 World Summit.

The methodology is documentary in that it relies principally on primary documents: the UN Charter and other constitutive instruments; Security Council and General Assembly resolutions and decisions; the AU Constitutive Act and Peace and Security Council Protocol; the constitutive instruments and key protocols of ECOWAS, SADC, ASEAN and the OAS; the Ezulwini Consensus and Sirte Declaration; the G4, Uniting for Consensus, L.69 and other reform-position documents; the Secretary-General's 2023 New Agenda for Peace and related Our Common Agenda briefs; and selected state and regional-organisation statements before the General Assembly, the Security Council, and the Intergovernmental Negotiations. Where secondary scholarship is used, it is drawn from peer-reviewed and authoritative policy research, and is used for interpretive and contextual purposes rather than for empirical claims that should be sourced to primary materials.

The methodology is comparative in three respects. First, it compares the principal reform positions on the Security Council — the Ezulwini Consensus, the G4, the UFC, the L.69 Group, CARICOM, and others — on both legitimacy and political-feasibility grounds. Second, it compares regional organisations' preventive architectures and operational records — the AU, ECOWAS, SADC, ASEAN and the OAS — against the standard of their own mandates and against the standard of the deficit framework. Third, it compares six

contemporary cases — the 2023 Sudan conflict, the Sahel coups, the eastern DRC, Myanmar, Ukraine, and Haiti — as illustrations of how the deficit manifests across the security policy cycle. The case selection is not random but theoretically informed: cases are chosen for their variance on the dimensions of the four pillars and for their contemporaneous salience as of 5 September 2023.

The methodology is normative-policy-analytical in that it develops, on the basis of the empirical and comparative analysis, a policy framework that distinguishes between four categories of recommendation: what is normatively desirable (the standard the system should meet if it were to close the deficit fully); what is institutionally feasible within the existing Charter and institutional architecture; what requires Charter reform (and is therefore subject to the requirements of Article 108); and what can be achieved through existing institutions and practices through reform of their working methods, financing, and inter-institutional relationships. This four-fold distinction is essential for a paper that wishes to be both analytically rigorous and policy-relevant.

Three methodological limitations are acknowledged. First, the paper does not present new empirical data; its evidentiary basis is documentary and depends on the integrity and completeness of the primary and secondary sources cited. Second, the historical cutoff of 5 September 2023 means that subsequent developments — including any later Council authorisations, regional deployments, summit outcomes, or institutional decisions that may occur after that date — are out of scope and not analysed; the paper deliberately confines itself to the information and institutional state of affairs available as of the cutoff. Third, the paper's normative commitments are explicit and not neutral: it treats the Global South Security Governance Deficit as a problem to be addressed, not merely described. The discipline this imposes is that the paper's normative claims must be grounded in evidence and must be defended against counterarguments — a discipline that Section 9 attempts to meet in full.

5. Theoretical Contribution: The Global South Security Governance Deficit

5.1 Conceptualising the Deficit

The Global South Security Governance Deficit is defined here as the structural mismatch between where contemporary security risks are experienced and where the authority to define, prevent, govern and evaluate international security responses is concentrated. Three features of this definition are worth foregrounding. First, the deficit is structural: it inheres in the design and operation of the multilateral system rather than in any particular agent's preferences or behaviours, although it is reproduced through both. Second, it is a mismatch between two distributions — the distribution of risk and the distribution of authority — and is therefore measurable in principle through the comparative analysis of those distributions, even though the present paper offers a qualitative rather than quantitative account. Third, the deficit is multi-stage: it concerns not only the authority to make binding decisions (the focus of the Council reform literature) but also the authority to define what counts as a security problem, to prevent crises from becoming conflicts, to shape the character of responses once crises have erupted, to influence the implementation of those responses, and to evaluate their outcomes.

The concept is related to, but distinct from, several adjacent concepts in the literature. It differs from the “democratic deficit” of global governance (Held and McGrew, 2002; Patomäki and Teivainen, 2004) in that the latter is concerned with the accountability of global institutions to publics, while the former is concerned with the distribution of authority within the system of states and institutions themselves. It differs from the “governance gap” of the Responsibility to Protect framework (ICISS, 2001) in that the latter identifies a

specific functional gap (the protection of civilians from atrocity crimes) to be filled by specific institutional innovation, while the former diagnoses a generalised deficit that requires redistribution rather than supplementation. It differs from the “implementation gap” in peacebuilding (Paris, 2010; Autesserre, 2021) in that the latter concerns the divergence between policy intention and operational practice, while the former concerns the upstream question of whose intentions are encoded in policy in the first place.

What makes the deficit specifically a Global South deficit is its geographic and political asymmetry. Contemporary security risks — armed conflict, mass atrocity, climate-security stress, food and energy insecurity, transnational organised crime, terrorist violence, displacement, and the destabilising effects of external intervention — are concentrated disproportionately in the Global South. The Council's substantive agenda reflects this: a substantial majority of the items on the Council's monthly programme of work concerns Africa and the Middle East, with Asia, the Americas and Europe making up the remainder. The authority to act on this agenda is concentrated disproportionately in the five permanent members of the Council and, beyond the Council, in the donor community that finances multilateral peace operations, humanitarian response, and peacebuilding. This institutional distribution is distinct from the distribution of affected populations and operational responsibilities, which are often concentrated in states and regions of the Global South.

The deficit is therefore not only an under-representation of Southern states in the Council chamber — though it is also that — but a broader condition in which Southern states and societies are systematically positioned as the recipients of security governance rather than as its authors. The Council's debates are framed by the agendas of its permanent members; the UN's preventive capacity is shaped by the funding priorities of a small number of donors; the evaluation of multilateral interventions is dominated by external assessors; the lessons-learned processes of peace operations are conducted primarily in New York and Geneva rather than in the conflict-affected societies themselves. Each of these is a manifestation of the deficit, and each requires its own remediation.

5.2 From Representation to Agency

The analytical shift that this paper proposes is from representation to agency. The representation frame, dominant in the Security Council reform literature, asks: which states sit in the chamber, and is the composition of the chamber proportionate to the distribution of global population, regional membership, and contemporary power? This is an important question, and Section 7 of the paper treats it seriously. But it is not the whole question. A state that sits in the chamber without agenda-setting capacity, without the ability to convene coalitions, without the operational resources to inform its positions, and without the institutional infrastructure to evaluate outcomes, is not in the same agency position as a state that possesses all of these. Conversely, a state outside the chamber — a regional power with significant peace operations capacity, a major troop contributor, a state with leverage over a conflict party — may exercise substantial agency through channels other than the formal vote.

Agency, in the sense developed here, is the capacity to act effectively within and upon the multilateral security system across the security policy cycle. The cycle has five analytically distinct stages: agenda-setting (which issues reach the Council and how they are framed); prevention (what is done to prevent crises from escalating); response-shaping (how the Council and its partners respond once a crisis has erupted, including the choice of instruments, mandate, force configuration, and lead entity); implementation (who delivers the response on the ground, under what authority, with what resources, and with what degree of discretion); and evaluation (how outcomes are assessed, by whom, and with what consequences for institutional learning). Each of these stages is governed by particular authority relations, and the distribution of authority at each stage is different. The representation frame, by focusing on the Council's composition, examines only the

formal decision moment within the response-shaping stage. The agency frame, by examining all five stages, exposes a richer and more accurate picture of where authority actually lies.

Three intellectual traditions support this shift. The first is constructivist IR, which has long emphasised that the power of international institutions lies not only in their formal decision rules but in their authority to define legitimate knowledge, set agendas, and shape normative expectations. Michael Barnett and Martha Finnemore's *Rules for the World* (2004) demonstrated that international bureaucracies exercise "bureaucratic authority" — the authority to classify, fix meanings, and diffuse norms — that operates independently of state preferences. The UN Secretariat's authority to frame a conflict as a "threat to international peace and security", to categorise a situation as one requiring "preventive diplomacy" rather than "peace enforcement", or to assess a government's commitment to peace is a form of agency that the representation frame cannot capture. When the Secretariat's interpretive frameworks are drawn predominantly from one geopolitical tradition — as critics have argued of the post-Cold War period (Mazower, 2012; Orford, 2016) — the deficit operates through bureaucratic authority rather than through the formal vote.

The second tradition is postcolonial IR. Edward Said (1993), Siba Grovogui (2006), Sankaran Krishna (2001), and Tarak Barkawi (2006) have variously shown that the international order's foundational concepts — sovereignty, development, security, civilisation — were formed in the colonial encounter and continue to carry its residues. The agency frame takes seriously the claim that the structure of authority in the multilateral system is not merely a contingent feature of post-1945 bargaining but a continuation of a longer colonial pattern in which the South is positioned as the object of governance. This is not a claim about intention — it is not necessary to attribute malign intent to the Council's permanent members — but about structure. The structure persists even as personnel change, and it shapes what is conceivable for actors located within it.

The third tradition is structural power theory. Susan Strange (1988) distinguished between relational power (the ability to compel A to do what B wants) and structural power (the ability to shape the framework within which A and B relate). The multilateral security system is a structure of structural power: its rules, financing arrangements, knowledge hierarchies, and evaluation protocols collectively determine what counts as a security problem, what responses are available, and what counts as success. To ask who exercises structural power in this system is to ask a question that the representation frame cannot answer. It is to ask who shapes the framework, not merely who acts within it. The agency frame asks both questions, and the four pillars set out in the next section are organised to address each dimension of the agency problem.

5.3 The Four Pillars as a Unified Architecture

The four pillars — Representation, Prevention, Regional Agency and Accountability — are not a list of separate reform priorities. They are a unified analytical architecture for the deficit. Each pillar corresponds to a distinct dimension of the agency problem, and each is necessary for closure of the deficit but none is sufficient. Representation addresses the formal decision moment in the response-shaping stage. Prevention addresses the upstream agenda-setting and prevention stages, where the deficit is most acute and the literature most critical. Regional Agency addresses the implementation stage and the question of where operational authority should be located. Accountability addresses the evaluation stage and the structural question of to whom and by what standards the system's agents are answerable.

The pillars are mutually reinforcing in two respects. First, progress on one pillar creates the conditions for progress on others: greater representational diversity in the Council widens the range of preventive priorities that reach its agenda; stronger regional agency increases the implementation capacity that prevention requires; more robust accountability disciplines all three. Second, partial progress on one pillar without the others can entrench the deficit rather than close it: an enlarged Council that operates within an unchanged preventive architecture, an unchanged donor-financed operational model, and an unchanged evaluation

regime would simply reproduce the deficit with a larger chamber. The integration of the pillars is therefore not a rhetorical flourish but a substantive analytical claim, and the policy framework in Section 10 is organised around the integration rather than around the pillars individually.

This four-pillar framing is the paper's principal original contribution. It does not claim that the constituent pillars are novel — each draws on existing literatures and reform proposals — but that their integration into a single framework, organised around the conceptual shift from representation to agency and applied to a historically bounded analysis of the multilateral security system as of September 2023, is original. The next section develops each pillar in detail. Section 7 then examines the representational pillar through the lens of the principal Security Council reform positions, before returning to the integration of the pillars in the comparative evidence (Section 8) and the policy framework (Section 10).

Pillar	Core problem identified in the paper	Direction of reform
Representation	Mismatch between contemporary security interests and formal decision-making representation.	Broaden representation and strengthen elected-member influence.
Prevention	Warning signs and preventive needs are not matched by sufficient authority or predictable financing.	Strengthen preventive diplomacy, early warning, mediation and peacebuilding capacity.
Regional agency	Regional actors have proximity and legitimacy but face authority, coordination and financing constraints.	Provide clearer institutional roles, coordination and predictable support.
Accountability	Power, including veto power and operational authority, can escape effective accountability.	Strengthen veto restraint, evaluation and accountability mechanisms.

Table 1. The four pillars and the deficit each addresses

6. The Four Pillars: Representation, Prevention, Regional Agency, Accountability

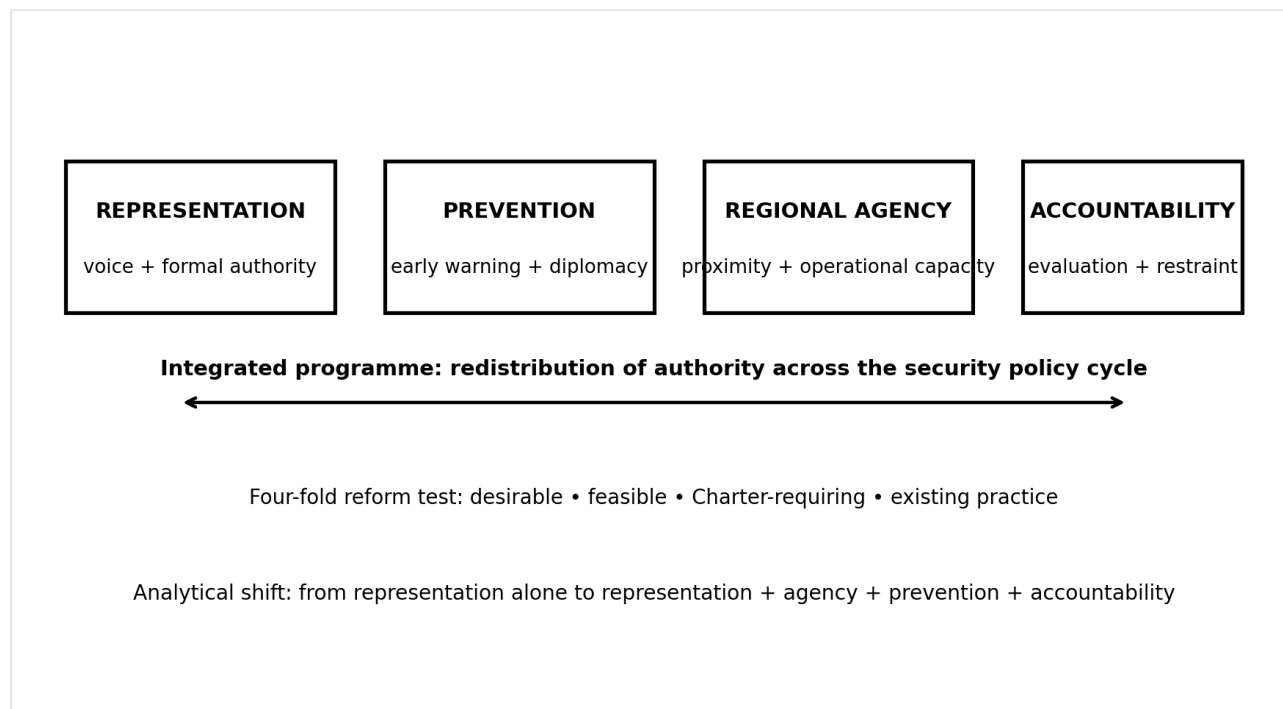


Figure 1. Four-pillar architecture reconstructed from the paper's own framework; no new substantive data are introduced.

6.1 Pillar One: Representation

Representation is the dimension of the deficit most thoroughly analysed in the existing literature and the one most easily reduced to a counting exercise. The paper does not commit this reduction. Representation, in the agency frame, is the formal allocation of seats and votes in the principal decision-making organ of the multilateral security system. It matters for two reasons that the representation frame alone can capture, and for a third that requires the agency frame. First, the composition of the Security Council confers symbolic authority: decisions taken by a body whose composition is widely perceived as legitimate acquire a legitimacy that decisions taken by a body whose composition is widely perceived as illegitimate do not. Second, the composition confers procedural authority: a state in the chamber has the ability to introduce draft resolutions, request meetings under the provisional rules of procedure, convene Arria-formula meetings, and shape the chamber's working methods. Third, and most importantly for the agency frame, the composition shapes the range of options that are conceivable in the chamber: a Council with no African permanent member systematically under-weights African perspectives on African crises; a Council with no Latin American permanent member systematically under-weights Latin American perspectives on Latin American crises; a Council with no small-state permanent member systematically under-weights the security concerns of states that disproportionately bear the consequences of Council-mandated action.

The representational deficit is widely discussed in the literature and policy debate, although its remedy is contested. As of 5 September 2023, the Council comprised five permanent members (China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, the United States) and ten elected non-permanent members. None of the five permanent members is from Africa, Latin America or the Middle East. Africa, with 54 of 193 UN member states (28 per cent of the membership), has no permanent seat on the Council. The Council's programme of work has historically contained a substantial concentration of items concerning Africa and the Middle East,

but the paper does not treat an unverified percentage of agenda items as a quantitative finding. Latin America and the Caribbean, with 33 states, has no permanent seat. The Arab Group, with 22 states and a substantial share of the Council's agenda, has no permanent seat. The non-permanent category, while providing periodic representation, is structurally limited: terms of two years and the Charter's restriction on immediate re-election mean that even frequently elected states cannot sustain continuous presence in the Council.

The representational deficit is also a generational one. The 1945 settlement reflected the power distribution at the end of the Second World War: a Council of five permanent and six non-permanent members, with the victor powers of 1945 permanently seated. The 1963 amendment, which expanded non-permanent membership from six to ten, accommodated the wave of decolonisation but did not disturb the permanent category. Since 1965, the world's population has roughly doubled, the UN's membership has grown from 117 to 193, the global economy has been transformed, and the geography of conflict and security risk has shifted decisively toward the Global South — yet the permanent category has not changed. The Council of 2023 retains the same five permanent members as the Council after the 1965 expansion, despite major changes in UN membership, population, economic structures and the geography of conflict and security risk. The representational pillar is frequently highlighted in debates on Council reform and, as Section 7 will show, presents particularly difficult institutional obstacles because changes to permanent membership require action under Article 108.

Three features of the representational pillar deserve emphasis from the agency frame. First, the representational deficit is not a single deficit but a set of deficits: the under-representation of Africa, of Latin America and the Caribbean, of the Arab world, and of small island developing states are distinct deficits with different remedies. The African Common Position (Ezulwini Consensus) seeks permanent African seats with the veto; CARICOM seeks a rotating non-permanent seat for SIDS; the G4 seeks permanent seats for its four candidates; the UFC seeks expansion in the non-permanent category only. Each addresses a different facet of the representational deficit, and a coherent reform programme must engage all four. Second, the representational deficit is partially compensable through informal mechanisms — sustained elected-member coalitions (the A3 in the Council, the LDCs group, the SIDS coalition), agenda-setting by elected members, and the role of the President of the General Assembly — but these compensations are partial, temporary, and structurally inferior to formal representation. Third, the representational deficit interacts with the other pillars: a more representative Council may contribute to addressing prevention and accountability deficits, but representation alone would not resolve those deficits without complementary reforms to prevention, regional agency and accountability.

6.2 Pillar Two: Prevention

Prevention is the dimension of the deficit most under-analysed in the Council reform literature and the one that most directly concerns the upstream stages of the security policy cycle. The preventive deficit is the chronic under-performance of the multilateral system in identifying, prioritising and acting upon emerging security risks before they escalate to armed conflict or mass atrocity. It has three constitutive features: a prevention gap (the gap between what is known about emerging risks and what is done about them); a financing asymmetry (prevention is structurally under-funded relative to reactive response); and an authority asymmetry (the authority to prevent is often located at levels — global — that lack the access, trust and operational proximity required for effective preventive diplomacy, while the levels at which preventive capacity is most developed — regional, national, local — lack the resources and political standing to deploy it at scale).

The prevention gap is the most studied of these. It refers to the recurring pattern in which the multilateral system possesses early-warning information about an impending crisis — through the Secretary-General's

good offices, the Secretariat's horizon-scanning briefings, regional-organisation reporting, civil-society early warning, and increasingly open-source data — but fails to act on it in time. The Rwanda genocide of 1994 is the foundational case: the Secretariat had substantial information about the preparation of the genocide, including the notorious 11 January 1994 cable from General Roméo Dallaire, but the Council did not act. The Srebrenica massacre of 1995 is a second case: the Council was aware of the vulnerability of the safe areas and of the Bosnian Serb threat, but did not reinforce the protection. The Sri Lankan end-game of 2009, in which the Council did not act on substantial early warning of mass civilian harm, is a third. More recently, the failure to prevent the 15 April 2023 outbreak of armed conflict in Sudan, despite years of warnings about the structural fault line between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), is a fourth. Each case illustrates the gap between warning and response, and each is instructive for the design of a more preventive system.

The financing asymmetry is the second constitutive feature. The UN's preventive architecture — the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA), the Peacebuilding Commission (established 2005 by General Assembly Resolution 60/180 and Security Council Resolution 1645 (United Nations Security Council, 2005)), the Peacebuilding Fund (established 2006), the Mediation Support Unit (established 2006) — is funded principally through voluntary contributions, while the UN's peacekeeping operations are funded through assessed contributions. The asymmetry is structural: assessed contributions provide predictable, multi-year, politically committed funding that allows long-term planning; voluntary contributions are volatile, donor-directed, and shorter-term. In practice, the Peacebuilding Fund has been chronically under-resourced relative to demand, and donor governments have repeatedly called for greater reliance on assessed contributions — a call that has not been heeded. The 2023 New Agenda for Peace makes this point implicitly by calling for the elevation of the Peacebuilding Commission and the strengthening of peacebuilding finance, but does not propose a specific financing reform.

The authority asymmetry is the third constitutive feature, and the one most relevant to the agency frame. The authority to prevent is distributed across several UN and regional actors. The Security Council can adopt binding measures under Chapter VII; the Secretary-General exercises good offices and other preventive-diplomacy functions; and regional, national and other actors can undertake preventive diplomacy and prevention within their respective mandates. The structural problem identified here is therefore not that prevention authority exists only at the Council, but that decision-making authority, operational proximity, political legitimacy and financing are distributed unevenly across levels. Yet the operational capacity for prevention is increasingly located at the regional level — the AU's Continental Early Warning System (CEWS), ECOWAS's ECOWARN, the OSCE's early-warning system — and at the national level — national peace infrastructures, national dialogues, and locally-led peace processes. The mismatch is that those with the constitutional authority to act (the Council) often lack the operational proximity to act, while those with the operational proximity (regional and national actors) often lack the political standing and resources to act decisively. The closure of the preventive deficit therefore requires not only better early warning or more funding but a redistribution of authority: greater scope for regional and national actors to act preventively within frameworks authorised by the Council, and greater accountability of the Council for acting on the warnings it receives.

Three specific dimensions of the preventive deficit warrant emphasis. First, the practice of “horizon-scanning” briefings to the Council — informal briefings by the Department of Political Affairs (now DPPA) on emerging situations — has varied over time and has not been consistently institutionalised as a standing mechanism for considering potential crises that have not yet reached the Council's formal agenda. Second, the Secretary-General's good offices — an irreplaceable instrument of preventive diplomacy — are deployed unevenly and depend on the willingness of conflict parties to engage, on the Council's political support, and on donor financing; the structural fragility of this instrument is a chronic problem. Third, the Sustaining Peace

resolutions (United Nations General Assembly and Security Council, 2016) reframed prevention as a continuous activity across the conflict cycle, but their implementation has been partial, and the political resistance of certain member states to what they perceive as “prevention as a cloak for intervention” (United Nations, 2023a, p. 11) remains a real constraint on what the system can do.

6.3 Pillar Three: Regional Agency

Regional agency is the dimension of the deficit that addresses the implementation stage of the security policy cycle and the question of where operational authority should be located. The Charter of the United Nations, in Chapter VIII (Articles 52–54), anticipated that regional arrangements would play a role in the maintenance of international peace and security, subject to Council authorisation for enforcement action. The Charter did not, however, anticipate the scale and sophistication of the regional security architectures that have developed since the 1990s, particularly across the Global South. The African Union Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), ECOWAS, SADC, ASEAN, the OAS, and the League of Arab States each represent substantial investments in regional security capacity, and each operates in a distinctive relationship with the UN system.

The African Union Peace and Security Architecture is among the most developed regional security architectures in the Global South. The AU Constitutive Act of 2000, in Article 4(h), granted the Union “the right to intervene in a Member State pursuant to a decision of the Assembly in respect of grave circumstances, namely war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity” — a significant departure from the OAU's earlier non-interference doctrine and one of the earliest regional codifications of what would become the Responsibility to Protect. The 2002 Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council (in force 26 December 2003) established the African Peace and Security Architecture as a set of interlocking institutions: the 15-member Peace and Security Council (no permanent members; ten two-year and five three-year seats); the African Standby Force (declared operational in 2015, though political decision-making and rapid-deployment remained bottlenecks); the Continental Early Warning System (Article 12); the Panel of the Wise (Article 11, inaugurated December 2007); and the Peace Fund (Article 21, reformed 2016 with the 25 per cent AU financing target for peace support operations by 2020). The AU's operational record — AMIS (Sudan, 2004–2007), AMISOM/ATMIS (Somalia, 2007–2022 and continuing), UNAMID (the hybrid AU–UN operation in Darfur, 2007–2020), and the AU Mission in Burundi (AMIB, 2003–2004) — is the most substantial of any regional organisation and has placed the AU at the centre of African security governance.

ECOWAS, founded in 1975 and operating as a security actor since the 1990 ECOMOG intervention in Liberia, has developed a substantial regional security toolkit. The 1999 Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security, and the 2001 Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance, codified a regional security doctrine combining preventive diplomacy, early warning, peacekeeping, and conditional engagement with democratic governance. ECOWAS's response to the Gambia crisis in 2017 — including the deployment of ECOMIG following the regional decision to use force if necessary — provides an important case of coercive preventive diplomacy. The 2023 standoff with the Niger junta, in which ECOWAS ordered the deployment of its standby force on 10 August 2023 but had not executed the order as of 5 September 2023, illustrates both the bloc's coercive ambitions and the operational and political constraints on regional intervention.

ASEAN's security architecture operates on a different principle: the “ASEAN Way” of non-interference, consensus, and quiet diplomacy, formalised in the 1976 Treaty of Amity and Cooperation and the 2007 ASEAN Charter. The ASEAN Regional Forum (1994), the ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation (2012), and the Five-Point Consensus on Myanmar (April 2021) represent the bloc's preventive instruments. The Five-Point Consensus, however, has been widely judged ineffective in the face of the Myanmar junta's refusal to

implement its provisions, exposing the structural limits of consensus-based regional preventive governance. SADC's Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation (restructured 2001), the OAS's Inter-American Democratic Charter (2001), and the League of Arab States' limited preventive capacity (illustrated by the failure of its 2011–2012 Syria observer mission) complete the Global South regional landscape.

The regional agency pillar of the deficit concerns three issues. First, financing: AU-led peace support operations authorised by the Security Council are financed principally by the EU and bilateral donors (notably through the EU's African Peace Facility and its successor, the European Peace Facility), with the AU's own 25 per cent contribution target not met by 2023 and the unresolved question of UN-assessed contributions for AU-led operations remaining a chronic point of Council debate (Joint AU–UN Framework, 16 June 2017). The financing asymmetry places regional security actors in structural dependence on external donors, with implications for the agenda-setting independence that the agency frame identifies as constitutive. Second, the operational relationship between the Council and regional arrangements under Chapter VIII: while the Charter anticipates that regional action will be authorised by the Council, the practice has been uneven — the Council authorised AMISOM and UNAMID, but has been more reluctant to authorise other regional operations, and the procedural relationship between the Council and the AU Peace and Security Council remains under-institutionalised. Third, the question of evaluation: regional operations are evaluated principally through UN and donor mechanisms rather than through arrangements that combine regional, host-state and community-level assessment, with the consequence that the lessons learned are skewed toward the priorities of the evaluators rather than the affected populations.

The regional agency pillar, properly understood, is not an argument for the wholesale relocation of authority from the UN to regional organisations. It is an argument for the redistribution of authority within a multi-level system in which the global level retains its constitutional role (in authorising enforcement action, in setting universal normative standards, in providing predictable financing for regional operations) but in which the regional, national and local levels acquire greater authority over the design, implementation, and evaluation of preventive and operational responses. This redistribution is consistent with the Charter's Chapter VIII and with the Sustaining Peace agenda, and is the institutional innovation that the New Agenda for Peace gestures toward but does not develop.

6.4 Pillar Four: Accountability

Accountability is the dimension of the deficit that addresses the evaluation stage of the security policy cycle and the structural question of to whom and by what standards the multilateral security system is answerable. The accountability deficit is the chronic asymmetry between the costs imposed by multilateral security action — on populations, on host states, on regional organisations, on contributing states, and on the credibility of the multilateral system itself — and the mechanisms available to hold the system's agents accountable for those costs. It has four constitutive features: an accountability gap for the use of the veto; a gap for the conduct and outcomes of Council-mandated operations; a gap for the financing decisions of donors; and a gap for the implementation behaviour of host states and conflict parties.

The veto accountability gap is particularly visible. Article 27(3) of the Charter provides that a party to a dispute shall abstain from voting in decisions under Chapter VI and under Article 52, paragraph 3, but this provision has been effectively unenforceable since the 1946 ICJ-style interpretation controversy and the practice of the permanent members has been to treat abstentions as non-blocking. The veto has been exercised on critical conflicts — including the Russian vetoes on Syria (2011–2023), on Crimea (2014), and on Ukraine (2022–2023), and the American vetoes on Israel-Palestine — without any formal mechanism of accountability for the consequences. The French-Mexican initiative on veto restraint in cases of mass atrocity (2013 onwards) and the ACT (Accountability, Coherence, Transparency) Code of Conduct (launched 23 October 2015, with over 100 member-state endorsements by 2023, including France and the United Kingdom

but not Russia, China, or the United States) are partial, voluntary mechanisms that seek to impose reputational accountability on veto use. They are necessary but insufficient: a permanent member that violates the Code faces no formal consequence, and the absence of Russia, China and the United States from the ACT Code limits its potential application in cases involving those permanent members, including Syria and Ukraine.

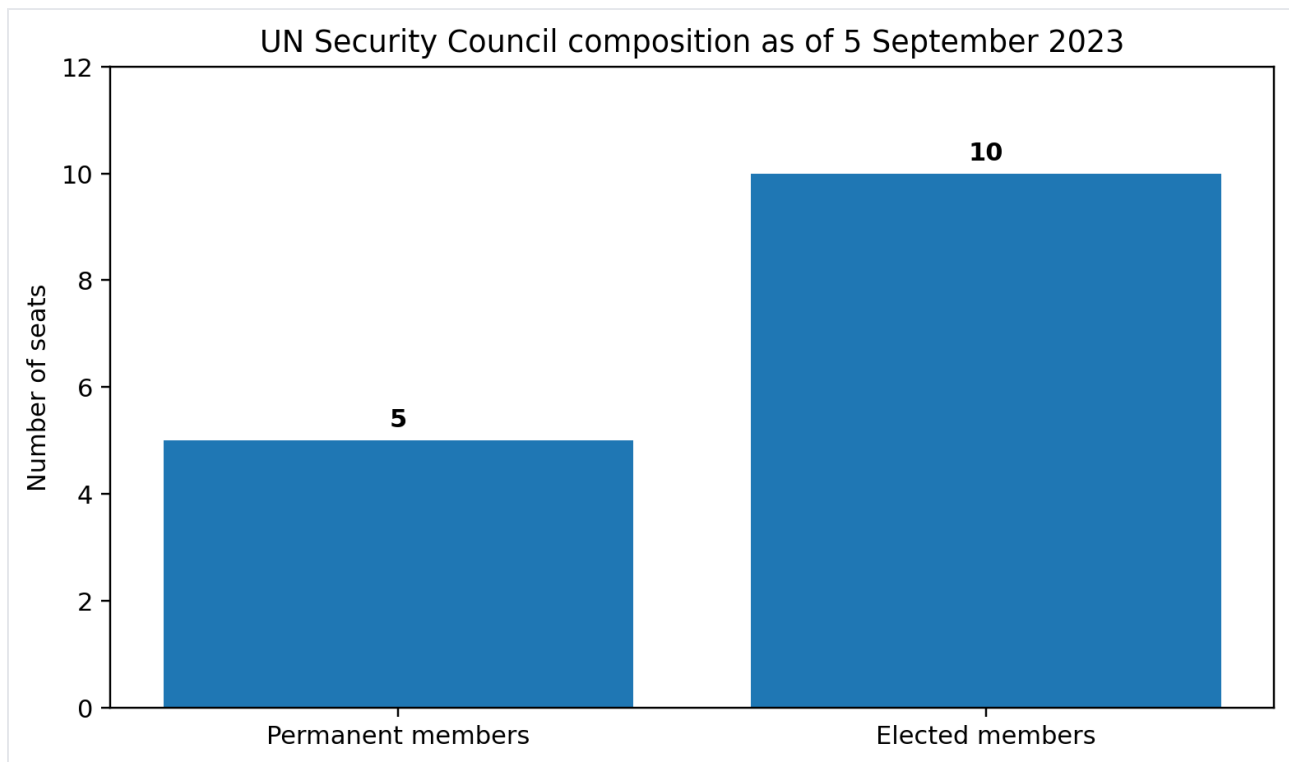
The operational accountability gap concerns the conduct and outcomes of Council-mandated operations. The UN's own accountability mechanisms — the Independent Special Enquiry (modelled on the 1999 Carlsson Inquiry on Rwanda and the 2005 “Zeid Report” on sexual exploitation and abuse), the Office of Internal Oversight Services, and the Boards of Inquiry — provide internal accountability for specific incidents. They do not, however, provide systematic accountability for the strategic outcomes of operations, including the question of whether an operation has achieved its mandate, at what cost, with what lessons for future operations. The 2023 termination and drawdown of MINUSMA (United Nations Security Council, 2023) illustrates the asymmetry: the transitional Government of Mali requested the Mission's immediate withdrawal in June 2023, after which the Security Council adopted Resolution 2690 (2023) on 30 June 2023, terminating the mandate and initiating an orderly drawdown and withdrawal. The case illustrates the importance of evaluating mission performance, mandate design, host-state consent and transition arrangements before and during drawdown. The accountability for the consequences of the Libyan intervention of 2011 — the regime change, the state collapse, the regional destabilisation — has been similarly absent, with the consequence that the intervention's lessons have been contested rather than internalised.

The donor-financing accountability gap concerns the structural dependence of the UN's preventive and peacebuilding architecture on voluntary contributions from a small number of donors. The Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, the Peacebuilding Fund, and much of the UN's mediation, good offices, and prevention work are financed through voluntary contributions, which are by their nature subject to donor prioritisation. The consequence is that the UN's preventive agenda is shaped by donor priorities rather than by the priorities of the populations and states most affected by conflict — a structural feature that the agency frame identifies as constitutive of the deficit. Donor accountability for the consequences of their financing decisions, including the consequences of withdrawing financing from particular contexts, is largely absent.

The host-state and conflict-party accountability gap concerns the absence of effective accountability for the behaviour of host states in implementing Council-mandated operations, and of conflict parties in complying with Council resolutions. The UN's human rights mechanisms, the International Criminal Court (for states parties), and ad hoc and hybrid tribunals provide accountability for atrocity crimes, but the broader question of accountability for non-compliance with Council mandates, for obstruction of humanitarian access, for the targeting of peacekeepers, and for the diversion of resources from peace operations is only partially addressed. The Council's enforcement of its own resolutions is uneven and selective, with consequences for the credibility of the system.

The accountability pillar, in the agency frame, requires three things. First, the formal accountability of the veto: a Charter-amendment solution would require the Article 108 process; an intermediate option is to strengthen the procedural accountability associated with the French-Mexican and ACT initiatives through a Council decision or General Assembly resolution. Second, the systematic evaluation of Council-mandated operations through independent commissions of inquiry that combine external, host-state, regional, and affected-community assessment — a model that goes beyond existing enquiry arrangements. Third, the rebalancing of financing from voluntary toward more predictable assessed contributions for the UN's preventive and peacebuilding architecture, with corresponding accountability to the broader membership. Each measure would require political agreement and, where applicable, action under the Charter.

Figure 2. Security Council seat composition as of 5 September 2023, using the figures already stated in the paper.



7. Security Council Reform: A Comparative Analysis of Global South Positions

7.1 The Reform Process and Interacting Institutional Constraints

The formal reform of the Security Council's composition has been on the General Assembly's agenda since 1979, when a small group of developing-country states led by India demanded enlargement to reflect decolonisation. The post-Cold War period saw the creation of the Open-ended Working Group on Security Council Reform (1993), which reported to the General Assembly, and — after the failure of the 2005 reform effort — the launch of the Intergovernmental Negotiations (IGN) framework through General Assembly decision 62/557 of 15 September 2008, with the first IGN round held during the sixty-third session. The IGN has met annually since then, producing successive decisions and negotiating texts, but no substantive reform. By 5 September 2023, the General Assembly had adopted the annual rollover decisions from 63/565 B through 77/559; decision 77/559, adopted on 29 June 2023, continued the IGN into the seventy-eighth session. The process had produced successive framework and elements documents, including the single consolidated text and revised iterations, without producing an agreed Charter-amendment outcome.

The reform process has been characterised by three interacting institutional constraints. The first is Article 108 of the Charter, which requires a Charter amendment to be adopted by a two-thirds vote of the General Assembly and ratified in accordance with national constitutional processes by two thirds of the UN membership, including all five permanent members. The second is General Assembly Resolution 53/30 (23 November 1998), under which decisions on Security Council reform require a two-thirds majority of the General Assembly; this raises the political threshold for any comprehensive reform proposal. The third is the consensus practice that has characterised the Intergovernmental Negotiations, under which Member States

have generally sought broadly agreed negotiating texts before moving toward formal decisions. These constraints interact, but they should not be described as three equivalent legal vetoes: only the P5 ratification requirement in Article 108 is a Charter-level legal requirement.

Within this constrained process, the substantive positions of the principal Global South reform coalitions have remained broadly stable since 2005. The African Common Position, the G4, Uniting for Consensus, the L.69 Group, CARICOM, and the various regional positions of the Arab Group, CELAC, and ASEAN — each was articulated in essentially its current form by 2005–2007 and has been defended consistently since then. The stability is partly related to these institutional constraints and to the difficulty of reconciling competing reform positions; comprehensive Council reform has not yet produced an agreed outcome. It is also a function of the substantive cleavages among the positions, which are not easily bridgeable. The next subsections analyse each position on both legitimacy and feasibility grounds.

7.2 The African Common Position: Ezulwini Consensus and Sirte Declaration

The African Common Position on UN reform was negotiated at an African Union ministerial meeting at Ezulwini, Swaziland (now Eswatini), on 7–8 March 2005, in the lead-up to the September 2005 UN World Summit. The text — formally titled “The Common African Position on the Proposed UN Reform” and known as the Ezulwini Consensus (AU Doc. EXT/AU/EXP/FR/II) — was endorsed by the AU Assembly at its fifth Ordinary Session in Sirte, Libya (4–5 July 2005), in the Sirte Declaration on the Reform of the United Nations. The Consensus has been repeatedly reaffirmed by AU Assembly decisions and operationalised through the AU Committee of Ten Heads of State and Government (C-10), established to advocate the African position in the IGN.

On legitimacy, the African Common Position is grounded in a clearly articulated claim of historical and contemporary under-representation. Africa has 54 of the 193 UN Member States as of 5 September 2023 and has no permanent Security Council seat. The Ezulwini Consensus calls for “not less than two” permanent seats for Africa with the same prerogatives and privileges as existing permanent members, including the veto while it exists; five non-permanent seats; and the right of the African Union to select Africa’s representatives. These demands reflect the African Group’s stated position that Council reform should address both representation and the historical circumstances of Africa’s exclusion from the 1945 settlement. The AU’s insistence on regional selection also differs from the G4 approach, which proposed designated regional allocations while leaving elections to the General Assembly.

On feasibility, the African Common Position presents a particularly demanding Charter-reform package because it combines additional permanent seats, the extension of existing permanent-member prerogatives, and regional control over candidate selection. The veto question is therefore a central unresolved issue. The G4, by contrast, proposed that its new permanent members should not exercise the veto until a review conference had considered the matter. The African position has nevertheless remained the collective AU reference position, repeatedly reaffirmed through the C-10 process. The paper therefore treats the African Common Position as normatively significant while distinguishing its stated objectives from the procedural and political requirements for achieving them under Article 108.

The C-10, meeting at heads-of-state level repeatedly between 2005 and 2023, maintained the Ezulwini Consensus as the AU’s collective reference position. The 36th Ordinary Session of the AU Assembly in February 2023 reaffirmed the Consensus and called for accelerated engagement in the IGN ahead of the Summit of the Future preparatory process. African Group statements in the IGN continued to emphasise the Common African Position. The paper treats this sustained position as evidence of institutional continuity rather than as evidence that the proposal is either inherently feasible or infeasible.

7.3 The G4: Brazil, Germany, India, Japan

The Group of Four (G4) coalesced in 2004 when Brazil, Germany, India, and Japan — four states that had long declared their interest in permanent Security Council seats — agreed to coordinate their campaigns and lobby jointly for expansion of the Council in both the permanent and non-permanent categories. The G4's founding logic was that four mutually-endorsing candidacies, drawn from each of the major unrepresented or under-represented regional groups, would maximise the prospect of mustering the required two-thirds GA majority for a Charter amendment. On 6 July 2005, the G4 tabled its draft resolution (document A/59/L.64), which proposed to expand the Council from 15 to 25 members, add six new permanent seats (two for Africa, two for Asia, one for Latin America and the Caribbean, one for Western Europe and Other States), add four new non-permanent seats, defer the veto question, and provide for a review conference. The G4 strategy in 2005 was to call for a vote by September 2005, in time to incorporate the result into the World Summit Outcome document. The African Group declined to endorse the G4 text because it did not explicitly grant the veto to new African permanent members, and the Uniting for Consensus group counter-tabled its own draft (A/59/L.68). The three competing 2005 draft resolutions (A/59/L.64, A/59/L.67 and A/59/L.68) did not produce an agreed reform outcome; the General Assembly subsequently deferred the question and the proposals did not become Charter amendments.

The G4 has continued to function as a coordination mechanism since 2005, meeting annually at foreign-minister level on the margins of the General Assembly's general debate. Joint statements in 2011, 2015, 2017, 2021, 2022 (hosted by Japan) and a March 2023 IGN statement have reaffirmed the position and called for “decisive movement” toward text-based negotiations. The substance of the G4 position — expansion in both categories, deferral of the veto, a 25-member Council, parallel working-methods reform — has not changed.

On legitimacy, the G4 position rests on a combination of contemporary power, economic weight, diplomatic capacity, troop contributions, and claims to more representative permanent membership. It is not itself a Global South coalition because Germany and Japan are members of the OECD, while Brazil and India are developing-country members. Its candidacies also intersect with regional rivalries and competing reform models. The paper therefore treats the G4 as one important reform coalition rather than as a proxy for a single Global South position.

On feasibility, the G4 model faces several unresolved issues: the selection of permanent members; regional acceptance of particular candidacies; the position of the African Group on veto rights; the position of the P5; and the Article 108 ratification requirement. Its 2005 draft proposed six additional permanent seats and four additional non-permanent seats, while deferring the question of extending the veto to new permanent members. These design choices distinguish the G4 model from the African Common Position but do not remove the need for broad General Assembly support and subsequent Charter ratification.

7.4 Uniting for Consensus (UFC): The Coffee Club Position

Uniting for Consensus originated in the so-called “Coffee Club” that emerged in the mid-1990s under the leadership of Italy, Pakistan, Mexico, Canada and others who opposed the creation of new permanent seats. The group was associated with the adoption of General Assembly Resolution 53/30 in 1998, which established the two-thirds threshold for decisions on Security Council reform. By 2005, the coalition was known as Uniting for Consensus. On 21 July 2005, it tabled draft resolution A/59/L.68. The proposal would have expanded the Council to 25 members while retaining the existing five permanent members and creating 20 elected non-permanent seats. The elected members would serve two-year terms and could be immediately re-elected subject to the decision of their regional groups. The model did not create new permanent seats or new veto holders.

The UFC argument is that new permanent members could entrench contemporary power distributions rather than create a more accountable and representative Council. Its 2005 model sought to increase elected representation while retaining rotation and the possibility of re-election through regional groups. The proposal therefore represented a different institutional approach from the G4 and the African Common Position: it sought expansion without creating additional permanent members.

On legitimacy, the UFC position can be assessed against several criteria. Its model would expand elected representation without adding new permanent members or veto holders, while retaining periodic elections. At the same time, it would leave the existing permanent category and its veto privileges unchanged. The paper therefore treats the UFC model as addressing some representational and accountability concerns while leaving other structural questions unresolved.

On feasibility, the UFC model avoids the specific question of extending the veto to new permanent members and does not require agreement on which additional states would receive permanent status. However, it would still require Charter amendment if implemented as the 2005 draft proposed, and therefore remains subject to Article 108. Resolution 53/30 also raises the General Assembly voting threshold for reform decisions. The paper characterises the group's position as an important procedural and substantive constraint on proposals for new permanent seats.

7.5 The L.69 Group and CARICOM

The L.69 Group is a cross-regional coalition of developing-country UN Member States formed in 2007 to push for a concrete outcome on Security Council reform. The group's name derives from draft resolution A/61/L.69/Rev.1 (United Nations General Assembly, 2007) of September 2007. The proposal did not itself launch the IGN. General Assembly decision 61/561 of 17 September 2007 continued consideration of Security Council reform and the work of the Open-ended Working Group; decision 62/557 of 15 September 2008 subsequently decided to commence intergovernmental negotiations in informal plenary during the sixty-third session. L.69 has advocated expansion in both permanent and non-permanent categories and a text-based negotiating process. Its membership has included states from Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and small island developing states, and it overlaps with other reform coalitions on particular issues.

L.69's substantive position has consistently supported expansion of the Council in both permanent and non-permanent categories, a 25–27-member Council, new permanent seats for Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean (with selection to be determined by regional groups), improved working methods, and a negotiated text-based outcome within the IGN. L.69 has been a principal procedural driver of the IGN, repeatedly calling for the production of a single consolidated negotiating text, often delivered by India on behalf of the group. L.69 overlaps with the G4 (Brazil and India are members of both), with the African Group's reformist wing, and with CARICOM (several Caribbean SIDS in L.69 are also CARICOM members). The group's existence testifies to the fact that, while Global South states disagree on whether to seek permanent seats, they broadly agree on the principle of an expanded and more representative Council.

CARICOM — the Caribbean Community, comprising 15 full members in 2023 — has a distinctive position within the L.69 coalition. Its UN reform agenda reflects the interests of small island developing states (SIDS) and other Caribbean developing countries, including concerns about the representation and participation of small states. CARICOM states argue that the Council's working methods and composition systematically marginalise small states, even though SIDS disproportionately bear the consequences of Council-mandated action (sanctions, peace operations, climate-security linkages). At the July 2015 Security Council open debate on "Peace and security challenges facing small island developing States" (S/PV.7499, 30 July 2015), the Bahamas' Foreign Minister Fred Mitchell articulated the CARICOM position: "the reform of the Council is long

overdue” and should include “a rotating seat for the small island developing states.” CARICOM has continued to support expansion in both categories, with the caveat that any reform must enhance the representation of small states, and has opposed any reform outcome that would lock small states out of Council membership in perpetuity by creating a new tier of large-state permanent members. CARICOM's most distinctive contribution — the proposal for a rotating SIDS non-permanent seat — has not been incorporated into the G4 or L.69 model, and remains an under-developed element of the Global South reform agenda.

Other Global South positions of note include the Arab Group's historical pursuit of a permanent Arab seat, justified by the region's disproportionate presence on the Council's agenda (the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Libya); CELAC's repeated calls for “comprehensive reform” constrained by its internal division between permanent-seat aspirants (Brazil) and UFC-aligned states (Mexico, Colombia, Costa Rica, Panama, Chile); and ASEAN, which does not maintain a single, formal collective position but whose members occupy different positions (Indonesia's periodic interest in permanent or longer-term seats; Vietnam, Thailand, the Philippines and Malaysia's general favour for expansion in the non-permanent category; Singapore's active IGN participation aligned with the L.69 group).

7.6 Veto Restraint Initiatives: ACT and the French-Mexican Initiative

Parallel to the membership-reform process, two initiatives on the use of the veto have developed since 2013, both supported principally by small and middle states including many Global South members. The French-Mexican initiative on veto restraint in cases of mass atrocity, launched in 2013–2014 by France and Mexico, calls on the five permanent members to voluntarily and collectively suspend their use of the veto in cases involving mass atrocity crimes. The initiative has been endorsed by over 100 member states by 2023, including two P5 members (France and the United Kingdom), but not by Russia, China, or the United States. The ACT (Accountability, Coherence, Transparency) group, formed in 2013 and led by Switzerland, Liechtenstein, and a small group of small and middle states, tabled a Code of Conduct regarding Security Council action against genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes, launched on 23 October 2015. The Code, which similarly calls for voluntary veto restraint in atrocity cases, has attracted 121 member-state endorsements by 2022, including France and the United Kingdom as P5 signatories, but not Russia, China, or the United States.

These initiatives are significant because they have generated cross-regional endorsement and have placed veto restraint and accountability within the broader reform debate. They remain voluntary and non-binding: a permanent member that does not observe a voluntary commitment faces no Charter-based penalty for doing so. Their limited participation by some permanent members also constrains their application to cases in which those members might otherwise consider using the veto. The initiatives therefore provide a basis for discussing stronger accountability without constituting a substitute for Charter reform.

7.7 Legitimacy, Feasibility, and the Limits of Council Reform

The comparative analysis supports five conclusions. First, the legitimacy claims of the reform positions are differently grounded: the African Common Position emphasises historical exclusion and equal permanent-member prerogatives; the G4 emphasises contemporary power and permanent representation; UFC emphasises elected representation and rotation; and CARICOM emphasises small-state and SIDS representation. These are different criteria rather than a single scale on which one proposal can be ranked overall. Second, the positions also differ in the institutional changes they require, particularly concerning permanent seats, veto rights, regional selection, and elected-seat design. Third, no single coalition can be treated as representing the Global South as a whole, given the documented diversity of positions within the South.

The feasibility question is similarly multidimensional. Proposals that would create new permanent seats with veto rights require a more extensive Charter settlement than proposals that retain the existing permanent category and expand elected membership. All comprehensive Charter-based models remain subject to the requirements of Article 108, while proposals that can be implemented through working methods or voluntary commitments face different legal and political constraints. The stalemate is therefore better explained by the interaction of substantive disagreement, the high amendment threshold, competing regional claims, and the need for P5 ratification than by attributing responsibility to any single reform coalition.

Third, as of 5 September 2023 the reform process had not produced a comprehensive outcome. The combination of the Article 108 amendment requirements, the two-thirds General Assembly threshold under Resolution 53/30, substantive disagreement over membership categories and veto rights, and the consensus-oriented practice of the IGN had contributed to the persistence of the status quo. The evidence available at the cutoff date did not establish a settled pathway to a comprehensive compromise. The paper therefore distinguishes between incremental measures that can be pursued within the existing architecture and longer-term Charter reform. It also identifies, as a possible area for further negotiation, models combining expanded elected representation with longer-term renewable seats without a new veto, while noting that the evidence available as of 5 September 2023 did not show agreement among the principal reform coalitions on such a model.

Fourth, the partial reform outcomes that are achievable — the veto-restraint initiatives, working-methods reforms, the elevation of the Peacebuilding Commission, the strengthening of peacekeeping finance — are all addressed by the four-pillar framework and represent the achievable component of the deficit's closure within the existing Charter architecture.

Fifth, Security Council reform is necessary but insufficient to close the Global South Security Governance Deficit. Even an enlarged Council with additional permanent or elected members would not, on its own, address deficiencies in prevention, regional agency, or accountability. The deficit is a multi-stage, multi-dimensional phenomenon that requires a multi-pillar response. Council reform addresses the formal decision moment in the response-shaping stage; the other pillars address other stages of the security policy cycle. The integration of the four pillars is therefore the paper's principal analytical synthesis.

8. Comparative Evidence: The Deficit in Practice

8.1 Sudan, April 2023: The Prevention Gap

The outbreak of armed conflict in Sudan on 15 April 2023, when fighting erupted between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) under General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) under General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo (Hemedti), is the most consequential recent case of the prevention gap. The structural fault line between the SAF and the RSF was well documented in the years preceding the conflict. The RSF, originally an offshoot of the Janjaweed militias that operated in Darfur from 2003, had been formally incorporated into the Sudanese security apparatus in 2013 and had grown into a paramilitary force of an estimated 100,000–150,000 personnel with substantial autonomy, financial independence (notably through gold-mining operations and mercenary deployments in Libya and Yemen), and a separate command structure. The political framework produced by the October 2021 coup, which had brought al-Burhan and Hemedti together in a precarious alliance that overthrew the civilian transitional government, was understood by observers to be transitional and unstable, with the question of the integration of the RSF into the SAF identified as the principal unresolved issue.

The international response — through the UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS, established by Security Council Resolution 2524 of 3 June 2020 (United Nations Security Council, 2020)), the AU, IGAD, and the Trilateral Mechanism (UN, AU, IGAD) — engaged the question but did not prevent the escalation. Multiple warning signs were present throughout late 2022 and early 2023, including the failure of the December 2022 framework agreement to specify the timeline and modalities of security-sector reform, the public disagreements between al-Burhan and Hemedti on the integration question, and the RSF's deployment of additional forces to Khartoum in early April 2023. The Jeddah talks, hosted by the United States and Saudi Arabia from early May 2023, produced a series of humanitarian commitments (the Jeddah Declaration of Commitment to Protect Civilians, 11 May 2023, and subsequent iterations) but did not produce a sustainable ceasefire. As of 5 September 2023, the conflict had produced an estimated 5 million displaced persons, large-scale destruction in Khartoum and Darfur, and the spread of severe violence, including ethnically targeted violence reported in Darfur.

The Sudan case illustrates the three constitutive features of the preventive deficit. The prevention gap is demonstrated by the absence of effective multilateral action despite the well-documented structural fault line and the multiple warning signs in the months preceding the conflict. The financing asymmetry is demonstrated by the chronic under-resourcing of UNITAMS and the Trilateral Mechanism relative to the scale of the preventive task, and the dependence of mediation efforts on ad hoc donor support. The authority asymmetry is demonstrated by the location of the principal mediation efforts outside the UN–AU framework — the Jeddah process is US-Saudi-led, the IGAD process is sub-regional, and the UN's role has been supportive rather than central — with civilian participation remaining limited relative to the role of state and regional mediators.

8.2 The Sahel Coups, 2020–2023: Regional Agency and Its Limits

The wave of coups in the central Sahel — Mali (August 2020 and May 2021), Guinea (September 2021), Burkina Faso (January 2022 and September 2022), and Niger (July 2023) — provides the most consequential recent case of regional agency and its limits. ECOWAS, a regional organisation with an established security and sanctions toolkit, responded to each coup with suspension, sanctions, and — in the case of Niger — the 10 August 2023 order to deploy its standby force to restore constitutional order. The response was robust on paper but limited in effect: the military authorities in Mali, Guinea, Burkina Faso, and Niger remained in power, and as of 5 September 2023 had not returned to constitutional rule. Mali and Burkina Faso signalled solidarity with Niger in the wake of the July 2023 coup, signalling the emergence of a coordinated bloc of putschist states that would resist ECOWAS coercion through mutual political support and the availability of alternative external security partners. The Russian Wagner Group, present in Mali from late 2021, provided an alternative security partner to the French and UN operations that the juntas had expelled or refused.

The Sahel case illustrates three features of the regional agency pillar. First, regional organisations can act: ECOWAS did order the deployment of its standby force, and the African Union Peace and Security Council, alongside ECOWAS, suspended the offending member states. The architecture of regional agency exists. Second, regional organisations act under structural constraints: the absence of UN-assessed financing for AU- and ECOWAS-led operations, the political divisions within the region (with Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger breaking ranks), and the availability of alternative external partners (Wagner) limit the coercive capacity of regional actors. Third, regional agency is not a sufficient condition for the closure of the deficit: even successful regional coercion, if it could be mounted, would not address the structural conditions (state fragility, security sector dysfunction, the presence of armed groups, climate stress, governance deficits) that produced the coups in the first place. Regional agency must be coupled with prevention, accountability, and representational reform to constitute a deficit-closing programme.

8.3 Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo: Multi-Level Coordination Failures

The eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo has been the site of continuous armed conflict since the 1994 Rwandan genocide, with successive waves of international and regional intervention. The M23 armed group's resurgence in November 2021, with the alleged backing of Rwanda (a charge Kigali has denied), generated a new phase of the conflict that, as of 5 September 2023, had not been resolved. The international response has been multi-layered: the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO), established in 2010 as the successor to MONUC (1999–2010), has been in phased drawdown since 2022 following the Congolese government's request; the East African Community Regional Force (EACRF), deployed in 2022, was being withdrawn in 2023 following Congolese dissatisfaction; and the SADC Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (SAMIDRC), authorised by the SADC Summit of 8 May 2023 in Windhoek (SADC, 2023), was preparing to deploy as of the cutoff date.

The Luanda and Nairobi processes — respectively the Angolan-mediated track between the DRC and Rwanda (the Luanda process, led by President João Lourenço) and the Kenyan-mediated track between the DRC and armed groups (the Nairobi process, led by former Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta) — illustrate the multi-level coordination challenges of contemporary conflict diplomacy. The parallel processes, while each pursuing a relevant track, have not been effectively coordinated, and the principal actors — the DRC, Rwanda, the armed groups, the regional organisations (EAC and SADC), the AU, and the UN — have not converged on a coherent strategy. The result has been the serial withdrawal of one regional intervention (EACRF) and the serial deployment of another (SAMIDRC), with the UN mission (MONUSCO) drawing down in between.

The eastern DRC case illustrates the regional agency pillar's complexity: in a region with multiple overlapping regional organisations (EAC, SADC, ICGLR), competing national interests (DRC, Rwanda, Uganda, Burundi), and a UN presence with a contested mandate, the question of who holds operational authority over the security response has no clear answer. The deficit operates through this uncertainty: the Council retains constitutional authority but lacks operational proximity; the regional organisations have operational proximity but lack coordinated authority; the host state has formal authority but lacks effective control of its territory; and the affected communities have the most direct stake but no formal role in the design of the response. The deficit framework, with its multi-level architecture, is well-suited to diagnose the case and to indicate the redistribution of authority that would be required to close it.

8.4 Myanmar: ASEAN and the Limits of Consensus-Based Regional Governance

The Myanmar coup of 1 February 2021 overthrew the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi and installed a junta (the State Administration Council) that has been characterised by the widespread use of lethal force against civilians, the detention of elected officials, and the systematic reversal of the country's tentative democratic opening. The international response has been bifurcated: the UN General Assembly and Human Rights Council have condemned the coup and called for the restoration of civilian government, but the Security Council, divided on the question (with China, India and the Russian Federation abstaining on Resolution 2669), has been unable to take binding measures beyond Resolution 2669 (21 December 2022), which demanded an end to the violence but stopped short of mandatory enforcement action. ASEAN's Five-Point Consensus, agreed on 24 April 2021 and reviewed by ASEAN leaders on 5 September 2023 (ASEAN, 2023), has been the principal regional framework for the crisis.

The Five-Point Consensus called for: the immediate cessation of violence; constructive dialogue among all parties; the appointment of a special envoy; the provision of humanitarian assistance through ASEAN channels; and a visit by the special envoy to Myanmar to meet with all parties. The Consensus had achieved limited implementation: the ASEAN leadership continued to review implementation, the special-envoy

process faced difficulties in securing broad engagement, and violence continued. ASEAN's exclusion of the junta's political representatives from ASEAN summits from October 2021 onwards has been a notable coercive step, but it has not been accompanied by the broader economic or political measures that would have been required to alter the junta's calculation.

The Myanmar case illustrates the structural limits of consensus-based regional preventive governance. The ASEAN Way — non-interference, consensus, quiet diplomacy — provides the political foundation for ASEAN's regional cooperation but limits its capacity to act decisively when a member state rejects consensus. The Five-Point Consensus represented the principal ASEAN framework adopted for the crisis, but implementation remained limited. The deficit operates through this structural feature: a regional organisation with the right regional legitimacy and operational proximity lacks the institutional capacity to act, while the UN system with the constitutional capacity to act lacks the regional legitimacy and operational proximity to do so effectively. The regional agency pillar's reform — providing regional organisations with both the institutional capacity (including the option of qualified-majority decision-making in defined circumstances) and the UN-assessed financing to support their operations — would address, though not fully resolve, this structural feature.

8.5 Ukraine, 2022–2023: The Veto and the Limits of the Charter Order

The Russian invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022 presented a major test of the multilateral security system. The Security Council was unable to adopt a resolution requiring the withdrawal of Russian forces because of the Russian Federation's veto; the Council nevertheless continued to meet, consider draft resolutions, and address related humanitarian and political questions. The General Assembly, exercising its Uniting for Peace (Resolution 377(V) of 3 November 1950) competence, adopted a series of resolutions (ES-11/1 of 2 March 2022 demanding withdrawal; ES-11/2 of 24 March 2022 on humanitarian access; ES-11/3 of 7 April 2022 on suspension from the Human Rights Council; ES-11/4 of 12 October 2022 on territorial integrity; ES-11/5 of 14 November 2022 on reparations; and ES-11/6 of 23 February 2023 on the principles of the Charter) that condemned the invasion and articulated the political will of the broader membership.

The vote patterns are instructive for the deficit framework. ES-11/1 of 2 March 2022 (United Nations General Assembly, 2022) was supported by 141 states, opposed by 5 (Russia, Belarus, Eritrea, North Korea, Syria), and abstained by 35 — including several Global South states (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Algeria, Angola, Cuba, South Africa, Mozambique, Namibia, Senegal, Uganda, Mali, Burkina Faso, the Central African Republic, Nicaragua, Vietnam, Laos, Mongolia, Iraq, Iran, and others). Subsequent votes showed modest variation but a similar pattern: a substantial number of Global South states abstained on key resolutions. The recorded votes demonstrate divergent national positions; the vote itself does not establish a single common rationale for the abstentions. Explanations offered by individual governments have included differing assessments of sovereignty, non-intervention, the conduct of previous interventions, and the application of international law.

The Ukraine case illustrates the deficit's accountability pillar particularly clearly. The use of the veto by a permanent member that is itself a party to the conflict illustrates a significant accountability gap in the Charter order. The French-Mexican and ACT initiatives are designed precisely for such cases, but the absence of Russia from both initiatives (and the absence of the United States, which has used the veto on Israel-Palestine) limits their effectiveness. The case also illustrates the representational pillar's interaction with the other pillars: the veto demonstrates the limits of collective action when a permanent member that is party to a conflict opposes Council action; changing the composition of the permanent category would itself require Charter amendment and the Article 108 ratification process. The deficit framework's response — a multi-pillar redistribution of authority that gives regional organisations and the General Assembly greater scope for action where the Council is unable to act because of a veto — is one available reform pathway and informs the policy framework's recommendations in Section 10.

8.6 Haiti: The Local-Global Gap

The crisis in Haiti, marked by extreme gang violence in 2022–2023, the breakdown of state institutions, and the assassination of President Jovenel Moïse on 7 July 2021, illustrates the deficit's operation at the local-global interface. The Council's response through Resolution 2653 (21 October 2022) — which established a sanctions regime targeting designated individuals and entities associated with threats to Haiti's peace, security and stability — was followed by the Secretary-General's proposals for a multinational security support mission, the dispatch of a UN assessment team, and the request by the Haitian government for international security assistance. As of 5 September 2023, no multinational security support mission had been authorised. The Kenyan government's expression of interest in leading such a mission, announced in late July 2023, was a significant development within the cutoff.

The Haiti case illustrates the local-global gap: a crisis of state capacity at the national level, manifested in extreme gang violence at the local level, requires a response that the Haitian state cannot provide and that the multilateral system has been slow to organise. The deficit operates through the asymmetry between the urgency of the local need and the slowness of the global response. The reform implications — including the development of a standing rapid-deployment capability for civilian protection (within either the UN system or the regional system), the pre-authorisation of multinational missions for defined categories of crisis, and the reform of the Council's authorisation procedures to expedite response to acute humanitarian emergencies — are addressed in the policy framework in Section 10.

Case	Primary deficit illustrated	Principal governance level(s)	Status at 5 September 2023
Sudan (2023)	Prevention gap	Global / regional / national	Conflict ongoing; preventive and mediation efforts had not produced a sustainable settlement.
Sahel coups (2020–2023)	Regional agency and its limits	Regional / national	Juntas remained in power; ECOWAS coercive response had not restored constitutional rule.
Eastern DRC	Multi-level coordination failure	Global / regional / national / local	Multiple overlapping responses remained insufficiently coordinated.
Myanmar	Limits of consensus-based regional governance	Global / regional / national	Five-Point Consensus remained largely unimplemented; violence continued.
Ukraine (2022–2023)	Veto and accountability gap	Global	Security Council action remained constrained by the Russian veto; General Assembly action continued.

Haiti (2022–2023)	Local-global gap	Global / national / local	No multinational security-support authorization had been adopted by the 5 September 2023 cutoff.
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Table 2. Comparative cases used by the paper

9. Counterarguments

9.1 Will Greater Representation Produce Better Security Outcomes?

The most fundamental objection to the deficit framework is the consequentialist one: even if the representational deficit is real and the agency asymmetry is documented, there is no necessary reason to believe that closing these deficits would produce better security outcomes. A more representative Council might simply be a more divided Council, with new vetoes (if extended to new permanent members) compounding the existing paralysis. A regional agency that is given greater operational authority might produce uneven outcomes, with regional powers pursuing national-interest agendas under the cover of regional legitimacy. An accountability regime that places more constraints on the veto might prevent necessary action by the permanent members in cases where action is needed. The objection is serious and deserves a direct response.

The response is three-fold. First, the deficit framework does not require the immediate creation of new veto holders; it proposes expansion of the non-permanent category and considers intermediate models for longer-term elected seats without a new veto. The extension of the veto to new permanent members remains a contested issue among reform coalitions, and the paper treats it as a matter requiring explicit political and Charter-level resolution rather than as an assumed outcome. The representational reform proposed in the framework is therefore designed to address the objection without assuming that additional veto holders are required.

Second, the deficit framework does not propose the wholesale relocation of operational authority from the UN to regional organisations; it proposes a redistribution within a multi-level system in which the UN retains its constitutional role (in authorising enforcement action, in setting universal normative standards, in providing predictable financing) while regional, national, and local levels acquire greater authority over the design, implementation, and evaluation of preventive and operational responses. The risk of regional abuse of operational authority is real (the 2015 Saudi-led intervention in Yemen, undertaken at the request of President Abd Rabbuh Mansour Hadi but not authorised by an express Security Council decision, is a cautionary case), and the framework's accountability pillar is designed to discipline it. The proposal is not for unchecked regional autonomy but for accountable regional agency.

Third, the consequentialist objection highlights the need to distinguish an analytical diagnosis from an empirical causal claim. The paper notes documented failures of prevention and collective security under the existing architecture, including Rwanda (1994), Srebrenica (1995), Sri Lanka (2009), Syria (2011–2023), Myanmar (2021), Tigray (2020–2022), and Sudan (2023). These cases demonstrate that the existing distribution of authority has not prevented serious failures of protection and conflict prevention. The framework therefore advances a testable proposition: changes that increase representation, strengthen prevention, and give appropriately accountable regional actors greater agency may alter the distribution of responsibility and authority, but their effects should be evaluated empirically rather than assumed.

9.2 Is Charter Reform Politically Feasible?

The second major objection concerns the political feasibility of any reform programme that requires Charter amendment. The combination of Article 108, Resolution 53/30, substantive disagreement among Member States, and the consensus-oriented practice of the IGN creates substantial political and procedural obstacles to comprehensive Charter reform. Any programme that includes Charter amendment therefore needs to distinguish its long-term constitutional component from measures that can be pursued under the existing Charter. Critics may therefore argue that a reform programme that depends on Charter amendment has limited immediate policy utility, particularly where incremental measures can be pursued within the existing architecture.

The objection is well-taken, and the policy framework in Section 10 is organised precisely to respond to it. The framework distinguishes between what is normatively desirable (the standard the system should meet if it were to close the deficit fully), what is institutionally feasible within the existing Charter and institutional architecture, what requires Charter reform, and what can be achieved through existing institutions and practices. The Charter-reform component is identified explicitly as a long-term horizon; the framework's principal recommendations are in the second and fourth categories — what is feasible within existing institutions and what can be achieved through existing practices — and do not require Charter amendment. The framework therefore does not depend on immediate Charter amendment; it combines incremental reform within the existing architecture with a longer-term Charter-reform horizon.

The deeper point is that the infeasibility of Charter amendment is itself a contingent feature of the current political configuration, not a structural feature of the Charter. Article 108 has been used once, for the 1963 amendment. The political configuration that produced that amendment — the convergence of decolonisation, Cold War bipolarity, and a US-Soviet consensus on the desirability of accommodating the new African and Asian members — does not obtain today. But the configuration that will obtain in 2030, 2040, or 2050 is not known. The framework's Charter-reform horizon is designed to be available if and when the political configuration changes, while the framework's incremental-reform recommendations are designed to be implementable in the present configuration.

9.3 Do Global South Divisions Undermine the Argument?

The third major objection concerns the internal divisions within the Global South. If the Global South cannot agree among itself on Security Council reform (the African Common Position vs. the G4 vs. the UFC vs. the L.69 position vs. CARICOM's rotating SIDS seat), on the use of force (the Libya 2011 division vs. the Ukraine 2022 abstentions), on the relative weight of sovereignty versus human rights (the R2P sceptics vs. the R2P supporters), and on the relationship with external powers (the non-aligned vs. the Western-aligned vs. the Russia/China-aligned), then the deficit framework's invocation of a "Global South perspective" is itself problematic. The deficit may be real, but it is not clear that there is a single Global South perspective from which to address it.

The objection is well-taken and is anticipated by the paper's definitional section. Section 2.2 explicitly rejects the treatment of the Global South as homogeneous, and the four-pillar framework is designed to be compatible with the heterogeneity of South positions. The framework does not propose a unified Global South position; it proposes an analytical lens and a reform architecture within which different South positions can be accommodated, contested, and reconciled through institutional design. The representation pillar, for example, accommodates the African Common Position's demand for permanent seats, the UFC's demand for intermediate seats, and CARICOM's demand for a rotating SIDS seat — each addresses a different facet of the representational deficit, and a coherent reform programme could in principle incorporate all three. The regional agency pillar accommodates both the AU's ambition for greater operational autonomy and the

scepticism of states that fear regional hegemony. The accountability pillar accommodates both the R2P supporters' demand for robust intervention and the sovereignty defenders' demand for host-state consent, by distinguishing between accountability for atrocity crimes (which the international system should enforce) and accountability for the use of the veto (which is a separate dimension).

The objection's deeper point is that any reform programme must be coalition-building rather than position-asserting. The four-pillar framework is designed to support coalition-building across the cleavages of the Global South, not to enforce a unified position. This is a political rather than an analytical claim, and the framework is offered as a contribution to that political project.

9.4 Are Regional Organisations Capable of Sustained Agency?

The fourth major objection concerns the operational capacity of regional organisations. The framework's regional agency pillar presumes that regional organisations are capable of sustained, accountable, and effective security governance. The empirical record, on this objection, is mixed. The AU's record in Somalia (AMISOM/ATMIS, 2007–2022 and continuing) is substantial but has depended heavily on EU and bilateral financing and on UN logistical support. ECOWAS's record is uneven: the Gambia 2017 success is counterbalanced by the failure to reverse the Sahel coups. ASEAN has faced substantial implementation constraints in Myanmar; the OAS has faced institutional and political constraints in its regional security role; and the League of Arab States has also faced significant constraints in preventive and conflict-management action. To propose greater regional agency is to propose giving greater authority to organisations whose record does not clearly justify it.

The objection is well-taken and is anticipated by the framework's accountability pillar. The framework does not propose to give regional organisations unchecked authority; it proposes to give them greater operational authority within a multi-level system that retains UN authorisation for enforcement action, that provides UN-assessed financing for regional operations (a reform that addresses the structural dependence on external donors), and that establishes accountability for regional operations through commissions of inquiry combining external, host-state, regional, and community-level assessment. The framework is therefore a *quid pro quo*: regional organisations receive greater authority in exchange for greater accountability and for the establishment of the financing arrangements that would make their independence credible.

The deeper point is that the capacity of regional organisations is itself a function of the institutional and financial context in which they operate. The AU's ASF was declared operational in 2015, but the political decision-making and rapid-deployment bottlenecks that have limited its use are partly a function of the financing asymmetry (the absence of UN-assessed contributions leaves AU operations dependent on external donor decisions and financing arrangements outside the AU's own institutions) and partly a function of the absence of a clear procedural relationship with the Security Council. The framework's reforms address both: the financing reform and the procedural reform together would create the conditions under which regional organisations could develop the sustained capacity the objection correctly identifies as currently limited.

9.5 Is the Deficit Framework Itself Original?

The fifth major objection concerns the originality of the deficit framework. The constituent elements — the representational deficit, the prevention gap, the regional agency question, and the accountability gap — are each well-established in the literature. The framework's claim to originality is the integration of these into a single analytical architecture organised around the shift from representation to agency. The objection is that the integration is a synthesis rather than an original contribution, and that the analytical shift from representation to agency is implicit in much of the existing literature.

The objection has merit and the framework's claim to originality is carefully bounded. The paper does not claim that the constituent elements are novel; it claims that their integration into a single framework, applied to a historically bounded analysis of the multilateral security system as of September 2023, and operationalised in a four-fold policy distinction (normatively desirable / institutionally feasible / Charter-requiring / achievable through existing practices), is original. This is a modest claim but a defensible one. The literature on Security Council reform has not, to the paper's knowledge, integrated the representational question with the preventive, regional-agency, and accountability questions in a single analytical architecture. The literature on preventive governance has not, to the paper's knowledge, integrated the preventive question with the representational, regional-agency, and accountability questions in a single analytical architecture. The integration is the contribution.

The shift from representation to agency is, the paper acknowledges, implicit in much existing scholarship — particularly in constructivist IR (Barnett and Finnemore, 2004), postcolonial IR (Said, 1993; Ayooob, 1995; Grovogui, 2006), and structural power theory (Strange, 1988) — but it has not been systematically applied to the analysis of the multilateral security system as a whole. The paper's claim is that the explicit application of the shift, with the conceptual apparatus of the deficit and the four-pillar architecture, is original. This is a claim that the literature review in Section 3 has supported and that the counterargument here acknowledges as defensible.

Category	Meaning in the paper	Temporal/status discipline
Normatively desirable	The standard required to close the deficit fully.	Analytical benchmark; not necessarily presently feasible.
Institutionally feasible	Reform possible within the existing Charter and institutional architecture.	Short- to medium-term implementation horizon.
Charter-requiring	Reform requiring amendment of the UN Charter.	Long-term horizon under the paper's feasibility analysis.
Achievable through existing practices	Changes possible through existing institutional practices, decisions and cooperation.	Immediate or incremental pathway without Charter amendment.

Table 3. The paper's four-fold reform test

10. Policy Framework: From Deficit to Architecture

The policy framework that follows from the deficit analysis is organised around the four-fold distinction set out in the introduction: what is normatively desirable (the standard the system should meet if it were to close the deficit fully); what is institutionally feasible within the existing Charter and institutional architecture; what requires Charter reform; and what can be achieved through existing institutions and practices. The distinction is essential for a framework that wishes to be both analytically rigorous and policy-relevant. Each pillar is addressed in turn, with recommendations organised under the four categories.

10.1 Representation: A Two-Track Reform Programme

As the paper's normative benchmark, the representational pillar would involve comprehensive enlargement of the Council in both permanent and non-permanent categories, with additional permanent representation for Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia, and the Arab region, alongside a mechanism for sustained representation of small island developing states. This is an analytical benchmark rather than a claim that these elements constitute an agreed reform position. Any Charter-reforming component would require the Article 108 process, including ratification by all five permanent members.

The institutionally feasible reform, achievable within the existing Charter and institutional architecture, is to strengthen and formalise working-methods practices; strengthen the A3 (African three) elected-member coordination mechanism; institutionalise the role of elected members in agenda-setting, including Arria-formula meetings and appropriate informal briefings; and strengthen the Peacebuilding Commission's interaction with the Council. These measures can be pursued through the Council's established working methods and decisions and through General Assembly recommendations or subsidiary arrangements within its Charter functions; they do not by themselves amend the Charter.

The Charter-reforming component, which the framework identifies as a long-term horizon, is comprehensive enlargement of the Council in both categories through an Article 108 amendment. The framework does not prescribe a single formula: the G4, the African Common Position, intermediate or renewable-seat models, and rotating SIDS representation reflect different proposals in the reform debate. Any amendment would require a two-thirds General Assembly vote and ratification in accordance with Article 108, including ratification by all five permanent members. The political configuration required for such an amendment is not established as of the 5 September 2023 cutoff.

The reforms achievable through existing practices include the systematic rotation of elected seats to ensure greater representational diversity, the regularisation of the IGN's text-based negotiations through the production of a single consolidated negotiating text, and the integration of the IGN process with the broader Our Common Agenda preparatory process and the anticipated Summit of the Future. None of these requires Charter amendment; all are achievable through the existing institutional architecture if the political will is mobilised.

10.2 Prevention: Rebalancing Finance and Authority

The normatively desirable reform of the preventive pillar is the establishment of a UN-wide preventive financing facility, funded through assessed contributions, that provides predictable multi-year financing for the UN's preventive, mediation, and peacebuilding work; the re-establishment of the Council's "horizon-scanning" briefings as a regularised practice; the integration of regional-organisation early warning with Council consideration; and the institutionalisation of national peace infrastructures as the foundation of the multilateral preventive architecture. This is the standard the system should meet if the preventive pillar were to be fully closed.

The institutionally feasible reform, achievable within the existing architecture, is the strengthening of the Peacebuilding Fund through voluntary multi-year pledges from donors; the elevation of the Peacebuilding Commission as the principal interlocutor of the Council on prevention; the re-establishment of horizon-scanning briefings as a Council practice under the presidency of elected members; the integration of the AU's CEWS, ECOWAS's ECOWARN, and other regional early-warning systems with the UN's DPPA; and the systematic inclusion of regional-organisation assessments in the Secretary-General's reports to the Council. These reforms are achievable through Council decisions, General Assembly resolutions, and inter-institutional agreements; they do not require Charter amendment.

The proposed assessed preventive-financing facility is a major institutional and political reform rather than a Charter amendment. It would require General Assembly action under Article 17 and agreement on the financing and budgetary arrangements necessary to establish it. The framework identifies this as a normatively desirable option while recognising that its implementation would depend on Member State agreement.

The reforms achievable through existing practices include the Secretary-General's continued use of his good offices, the deployment of special envoys and special representatives, the use of DPPA's Standing Mediation Capacity, the support of regional-organisation preventive diplomacy through existing partnership frameworks (the Joint AU–UN Framework of 16 June 2017, the UN-ASEAN framework, the UN-OSCE framework), and the integration of civil-society early warning with the UN's preventive architecture. The 2023 New Agenda for Peace's call for “national infrastructures for peace” is a useful framing that this framework endorses and operationalises.

10.3 Regional Agency: Multi-Level Authority and Predictable Financing

The normatively desirable reform of the regional agency pillar is the establishment of a Charter-based framework for the predictable UN financing of regionally-led peace support operations authorised by the Security Council, the procedural integration of the AU Peace and Security Council and other regional peace and security organs with the Security Council's deliberations, and the establishment of a standing multi-level evaluation regime for regional operations that combines external, host-state, regional, and community-level assessment. This is the standard the system should meet if the regional agency pillar were to be fully closed.

The institutionally feasible reform is the operationalisation of the Joint AU–UN Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security (16 June 2017), including continued efforts through the Council and General Assembly to establish predictable UN financing for AU-led peace support operations authorised by the Council; the institutionalisation of joint consultations between the Council and the AU Peace and Security Council; the extension of the Joint Framework model to other regional arrangements (ASEAN, ECOWAS, SADC, the OAS); and the establishment of standardised evaluation protocols for regional operations. The framework's principal recommendation in this area is predictable UN financing for AU-led operations authorised by the Council. Such financing requires action through the General Assembly's budgetary authority under Article 17, in conjunction with the Council's peace-and-security responsibilities; it does not, in itself, require Charter amendment.

The long-term constitutional option is to clarify the Charter framework governing regional arrangements, including the relationship between the Council and regional bodies, the financing of regionally led enforcement action, and the role of subsidiarity in the multilateral security architecture. These reforms are currently infeasible but would constitute the constitutional settlement of the multi-level system the framework proposes.

The reforms achievable through existing practices include the systematic use of co-deployment arrangements (the UNAMID hybrid model, the AMISOM/ATMIS model), the deployment of UN logistical support packages for regional operations, the use of the Peacebuilding Fund for regional operations, and the use of Council authorisation under Chapter VII for regionally-led enforcement action. The 2022–2023 ATMIS authorisation (Resolution 2628 of 31 March 2022 and Resolution 2670 of 21 December 2022 (United Nations Security Council, 2022)) is a useful model that the framework endorses.

10.4 Accountability: Veto Restraint and Operational Evaluation

The normatively desirable reform of the accountability pillar is the constitutional abolition of the veto (or its extension to all permanent members on a basis of full equality), the establishment of a standing commission of inquiry mechanism for the strategic evaluation of Council-mandated operations, and the rebalancing of UN preventive and peacebuilding financing from voluntary to assessed contributions with corresponding accountability of the assessed system to the broader membership. This is the standard the system should meet if the accountability pillar were to be fully closed.

The institutionally feasible reform, achievable within the existing architecture, is to formalise the French-Mexican and ACT Code of Conduct initiatives as political or procedural commitments concerning veto use in cases of mass atrocity; establish independent mechanisms for strategic evaluation of Council-mandated operations; and strengthen the Independent Special Enquiry model to include strategic as well as operational evaluations. Such measures would not, by themselves, remove or legally amend the veto power in Article 27.

The Charter-reforming component, identified as a long-term horizon, is abolition or structural limitation of the veto, or the extension of equivalent veto rights to any new permanent members if a future reform model were to provide for that arrangement. Such changes would require an Article 108 amendment. The framework treats this as a long-term constitutional option. The French-Mexican and ACT initiatives can instead be formalised as political or procedural commitments without purporting to alter the Charter's allocation of veto power.

The reforms achievable through existing practices include the continued use of the International Criminal Court for atrocity-accountability where the Council refers situations or where states parties act; the use of ad hoc and hybrid tribunals (the model of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia, the Special Tribunal for Lebanon, the Residual Mechanism for the International Criminal Tribunals); the use of the Universal Periodic Review of the Human Rights Council for accountability on human-rights dimensions of conflict; and the strengthening of the Boards of Inquiry of the UN Secretariat for the evaluation of peacekeeping incidents. The framework endorses these practices and proposes their integration into a more systematic accountability regime.

10.5 Integration: The Four Pillars as a Single Programme

The framework's principal claim is that the four pillars must be pursued as a single integrated programme rather than as separate reform tracks. The integration is substantive, not merely rhetorical: progress on one pillar creates the conditions for progress on others, while partial progress on one pillar without the others can entrench rather than close the deficit. A more representative Council without a reformed preventive architecture would simply reproduce the prevention gap in a larger chamber; a reformed preventive architecture without greater regional agency would remain structurally dependent on the donor community; greater regional agency without greater accountability would risk the regional abuses the counterargument in Section 9.4 identifies; and greater accountability without greater representational diversity would impose accountability on a system whose decisions remain undemocratically made.

The integration is also procedural: the framework's recommendations must be pursued through coordinated action across multiple institutional channels — the Council, the General Assembly, the Secretariat, the regional organisations, the Peacebuilding Commission, the DPPA, the Peacebuilding Fund, and the donor community. The 2023 New Agenda for Peace's call for the elevation of the Peacebuilding Commission is a useful step toward this integration, since the PBC is the principal existing institutional site for multi-stakeholder coordination on prevention and peacebuilding. The framework endorses this step and proposes

its further development through the formalisation of the PBC's role as the integrator of the four-pillar programme.

The integration is finally temporal: the framework distinguishes between the long-term horizon of Charter reform and the short-to-medium-term horizon of incremental reform within the existing architecture. The short-to-medium-term reforms should be designed to prepare the ground for the long-term Charter reforms, not to substitute for them. The incremental reforms are not the deficit-closing reforms themselves; they are the reforms that make the deficit-closing reforms politically conceivable when the configuration changes. This temporal discipline is essential: the framework does not claim that the incremental reforms will close the deficit, only that they will reduce it and prepare the ground for its eventual closure.

11. Conclusion: The New Agenda from the Global South

This paper has developed the concept of a Global South Security Governance Deficit — the structural mismatch between where contemporary security risks are experienced and where the authority to define, prevent, govern and evaluate international security responses is concentrated — and has used it to assess how multilateral peace and security governance should be rebuilt. The analysis has advanced an analytical shift from representation to agency, examined the principal Security Council reform positions on both legitimacy and feasibility grounds, and developed a four-pillar policy architecture organised around Representation, Prevention, Regional Agency and Accountability, distinguishing between what is normatively desirable, what is institutionally feasible, what requires Charter reform, and what can be achieved through existing institutions and practices.

The paper has situated the UN Secretary-General's July 2023 policy brief *A New Agenda for Peace* as an important reference point but not as its intellectual framework. The New Agenda's emphasis on national infrastructures for peace, on regional financial support, on the elevation of the Peacebuilding Commission, and on urgent progress on Security Council reform are all consistent with the deficit framework's analysis, and the framework endorses them as incremental steps toward the closure of the deficit. The framework's distinctive contribution is the analytical lens that links these incremental steps to a broader account of the redistribution of authority across the multilateral security system, and the policy framework that distinguishes the incremental steps from the longer-term Charter-reform horizon.

The paper's principal findings are five. First, the deficit is multi-dimensional: it is not adequately captured by the representational frame alone, and requires attention to prevention, regional agency, and accountability. Second, the deficit is structurally grounded: it inheres in the design of the post-1945 system and in the colonial patterns that the system inherited, not in the preferences of any particular agent. Third, the deficit is closable in principle but only through an integrated multi-pillar programme that pursues the four pillars as a single reform agenda. Fourth, the deficit is closable in practice only through a two-track strategy: incremental reform within the existing architecture (which the framework's institutionally feasible and achievable-through-existing-practices recommendations address) supplemented by the longer-term horizon of Charter reform (which the framework's Charter-reforming component identifies). Fifth, the deficit's closure is not the responsibility of the Global South alone but of the multilateral system as a whole; the framework is offered as a contribution to that system-wide project, not as a Southern particularism.

The paper's principal limitations are three. First, the historical cutoff of 5 September 2023 means that subsequent developments are not analysed; any later Council authorisations, regional deployments, summit outcomes, or institutional decisions fall outside the paper's temporal scope and are not assessed. Second, the framework's normative commitments are explicit and not neutral; the paper treats the deficit as a problem to be addressed, and the framework's recommendations reflect this normative commitment. Third, the

framework's empirical claims are documentary and depend on the integrity of the sources cited; the paper has not presented new primary data, and its originality lies in the synthesis and the analytical lens rather than in new empirical findings.

The agenda this paper proposes is a New Agenda for Peace from the Global South in a precise sense: it takes the questions the Secretary-General's brief placed on the multilateral agenda — the legitimacy of the Council, the financing of regional operations, the strengthening of prevention, and the governance of new domains of conflict — and addresses them through an analytical lens and policy framework that takes the South's structural position seriously. The framework is not a Southern position paper. It is a contribution to debate about how the multilateral security system might become more representative, preventive, regionally grounded, and accountable. Its proposed measures are presented as an analytical and policy framework rather than as a claim that implementation would automatically resolve the diagnosed deficit.

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