

# Rhetoric Passes, Action Fails: UNSC Response to Mass Atrocity Events

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## **Abstract**

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is the central body tasked with maintaining international peace and security, yet its responses to mass atrocity (MA) events are inconsistent. Existing research typically treats resolution adoption as a single process, yet distinct dynamics shape whether a resolution is proposed compared to if the resolution passes. This article argues that these stages reflect different incentive structures: proposing a resolution is shaped by reputational concerns, political distance from the target state, and international attention. Alternatively, passage requires collective agreement constrained by great-power politics. Using a dataset for 403 UNSC meetings on 17 mass atrocity events (1989-2024) and a two-stage model, I show that the advocacy and political distance drive proposal, while the passage is shaped by great power preferences. Failed resolutions thus function as expressive political acts rather than institutional failure, helping explain why the Council can appear simultaneously active yet ineffective in responding to mass atrocities.

## **1 Introduction**

United Nations Security Council's (UNSC) response to mass atrocity (MA) events remains inconsistent despite its mandate to maintain international peace and security. Since the attacks by Hamas on Israel on October 7th, 2023, numerous international and domestic audiences have called upon the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to pass a resolution calling for a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip. The UNSC first attempted to heed this call on October 16th, 2023 following the displacement of millions of people, the death of four United Nations aid workers, and mounting concerns from other UN bodies about an impending humanitarian catastrophe (Magramo 2024). This ceasefire resolution did not pass, receiving four votes against. The United States vetoed the initial ceasefire resolution, signaling that the severity of the language was too high for the US to allow the resolution to pass.

The next day, Israel conducted an airstrike against a United Nations Relief and Works Agency school.

Sixteen UN staff and hundreds of civilians were injured and killed. The following day, October 18th, 2023, the UNSC proposed a resolution for humanitarian aid in the Gaza Strip. The US vetoed this resolution as well. This cycle repeated with four additional resolutions calling for a ceasefire between December 2023 and December 2024. While the call for a ceasefire did not change, the rhetorical severity of the resolutions did. One might expect that penholders would reduce the rhetorical severity of subsequent resolutions, softening their language to avoid the looming US veto and pass a resolution. Instead, the opposite occurred. As the siege began, the risk of large-scale starvation emerged, and the International community increased its calls for action. States reflected these concerns in the resolutions they proposed within the UNSC forum, increasing their rhetorical severity by utilizing harsher language. Instead of weakening the language of subsequent draft resolutions to accommodate a potential U.S. veto, Council members deliberately escalated their rhetoric, strengthening the language to signal their positions and draw attention to the obstruction of their proposed resolutions. For example, both proposed resolutions, S/2023/772 and S/2023/773, "call[s] for" an immediate humanitarian ceasefire, and both were vetoed by the US. Rather than further softening their language, the next time drafter states proposed a ceasefire, S/2023/970, the resolution "demand[ed]" a ceasefire, a clear escalation in language.

This behavior is puzzling, as existing literature expects the Security Council President (CP) and penholders, states drafting resolutions, to anticipate the voting preferences of UNSC members and draft resolutions accordingly (Allen & Yuen 2022). Yet if the only concern is passage and the only audience catered to are Council members with strong relationships to the target state, the UNSC's repeated and increasingly severe resolutions addressing the crisis in Gaza become puzzling, as states drafted these resolutions while anticipating the US veto. To explain this behavior I propose that the response to mass atrocity events such as the ongoing crisis in Gaza must include reputational costs incurred from inaction as well as action. These failed resolutions sent meaningful signals to international and domestic communities about each state's preferences concerning the crisis. This behavior has broader implications for Council members' international reputations as drafting resolutions signals state leadership on the crisis and forces co-members to state their own positions on the crisis. This article aims to analyze the selective responsiveness of the United Nations bodies to large-scale human rights violations through the rhetorical and actionable severity of UNSC meeting outcomes, specifically the resolutions proposed and passed in the body.

I argue that variation in UNSC response to mass atrocity events stems from the divergent incentives between the decision to propose a resolution, an individual decision a single state can take on, and the rules and incentives at the group level to pass a resolution. The incentives for an individual or coalition of states to propose a resolution stem from their relationship towards the target state and can be influenced by external pressures, like international advocacy calling for action through the UNSC. Proposing a resolution generates

reputational benefits for drafting states, as the decision to pick up the pen places the drafter in a leadership position on the crisis, signaling the state's position and willingness to take further action. When international attention to a crisis is high, these reputational benefits are heightened, increasing the benefit from drafting a resolution. Brazil's behavior illustrates this pattern: responding to calls for action from other states and the broader international community (Louis Charbonneau 2023, International 2025), it proposed the first ceasefire resolution on Gaza (Brazil 2023), using the initiative to signal leadership on the crisis while calling for the release of all hostages and humanitarian pauses for aid delivery. However, these reputational benefits, which states receive regardless of resolution outcome, are not the same considerations for resolution passage, a Council-level decision with the shadow of the veto. At the passage stage, Council members need to decide their collective commitment to the resolution proposed. Council members consider both the content of the resolution, what they are committing to, as well as their relationship with co-members of the Council, with whom they are committing. This is especially pertinent for the permanent members. The more actionably severe the resolution, such as proposing peacekeeping, sanctions, or another type of subsidiary body, the greater collective commitment it is for Council members, making passage less likely. By contrast, rhetorically severe resolutions do not bind co-members in the same way.

As this argument concerns how the Council responds to crises rather than the severity of crises themselves, the analysis restricts the sample to clearly defined mass atrocity events. For this analysis, I define MA events as mass killing events by state forces that result in at least 1,000 civilian deaths per year. This threshold establishes a minimum level of humanitarian severity across cases, allowing the analysis to examine how variation in UNSC response is shaped by political relationships and member-state advocacy, rather than differences in the underlying scale of violence alone. To test my arguments, I construct an original dataset of UNSC meeting outcomes across 24 MA events from 1989 to 2024. 17 of these events received UNSC meeting, which are the focus of this analysis. I find 403 meetings were held on these 17 MA events and collected data on the outcomes of these meetings. I combine this meeting-level data with measures of bilateral relationships between Council members and the target state, as well as measures of international discussion on the given MA event. I utilize a Heckman selection model to analyze the effects at both the proposal (or selection) stage and the passage (or outcome) stage. This model corrects for the non-random selection bias in the resolution sample, as we can only observe the attributes of passed resolutions if they are first proposed.

This analysis shows that the political forces shaping resolution proposal and resolution passage diverge in systematic ways. I find that factors commonly assumed to facilitate passage, such as international attention and political distance from the target state, are impactful at the proposal stage but do not increase the likelihood of resolution passage. Heightened international attention to an MA event increases the likelihood that Council members will draft and introduce resolutions, consistent with reputational incentives at the

proposal stage. By contrast, passage is driven by Council-level bargaining constraints, particularly great-power preference divergence and the identity of the penholder. US-Russia political distance sharply reduces the likelihood of passage while having no discernible effect on proposal behavior, indicating that states do not refrain from proposing resolutions even when passage is unlikely. Together, these findings demonstrate that proposal is not merely a precursor to passage, but a strategic act with independent political value.

## 2 Existing Explanations for UNSC Action

Much scholarship has been dedicated to explaining UNSC action, particularly the deployment of peacekeeping missions (Mullenbach 2005, Beardsley & Schmidt 2012, Binder 2015, Lugg, Lansdale & Carcelli 2024, Scherzinger 2023). These works provide an extensive foundation for understanding how crisis factors and parochial interests shape the UNSC's response to threats to international peace and security. Great focus has been given to the passage of resolutions that create subsidiary bodies to facilitate further action, especially in response to civil conflicts. I contribute to this literature by addressing two underexplored aspects: the conditions that lead to the proposal of resolutions and the passage of rhetorical resolutions.

I will first discuss the resolution proposal process. Resolutions are the vector through which the UNSC authorizes action (Mingst, Karns & Lyon 2022). These legally binding documents are negotiated among Council members before being brought to a vote and thus represent only one form a potential response could take. Thus, understanding under what conditions resolutions are negotiated and proposed allows us to deepen our understanding of selective UNSC response as proposals construct the universe of options the UNSC has to further pursue a response. Put simply, if a resolution is not first proposed, it cannot be passed. However, resolution proposal has rarely been the outcome of interest in the literature.

The decision to “pick up the pen” and draft a resolution addressing a crisis has been described as a courageous one by UNSC diplomats when discussing the topic with me. While the UNSC introduced the penholder system during the 2008-2009 Assembly to distribute the drafting responsibility more evenly among members, only 38 distinct issues have a clear penholder; many of the more sensitive issues discussed by the Council remain unclaimed by a specific penholder (SCR 2025), including the vast majority of MA events. Drafting a resolution demonstrates a commitment to the issue, as the time and human resources required can be substantial; for example, Resolution 2669 condemning the abuses against the Rohingya people and broader civilian populations in Myanmar was negotiated between the UK and China for four years, double the tenure of the elected members. These efforts can also be undertaken by a coalition of states to share the burden of drafting, demonstrating preference alignment, and increasing the likelihood of resolution passage (Knapp 2025).

The rhetorical content of resolutions can also vary widely and is frequently indicative of Council members' biases, though the connection between these biases and passage likelihood has not been examined. The UNSC utilizes a limited dictionary of emotive and action words when drafting resolutions, making word choice especially revealing. When a party to a civil conflict is directly referenced in a passed resolution in a positive manner, and that party subsequently suffers greater losses, the UNSC is more likely to deploy more troops to the conflict (Benson & Kathman 2014). Even the choice of emotive and action words can indicate bias. Gruenberg formalizes a hierarchy of UNSC terms and finds striking patterns of bias in their use (Gruenberg 2009). For example, the Council introduced "censure" into its vocabulary but has only ever applied it in resolutions targeting Israel. Similarly, during the Cold War, "deplore" appeared disproportionately in resolutions addressing Israel and South Africa. These findings suggest that the rhetorical severity of resolutions is shaped not only by the gravity of the crisis but also by the political relationships between Council members and the states targeted by these resolutions.

In addition to works that have addressed the content and authorship of resolutions, most work on UNSC resolutions has focused on external conditions under which the Council authorizes the use of force. Across studies, conflict severity consistently emerges as a major predictor of deployment of peacekeeping missions (Beardsley & Schmidt 2012, Mullenbach 2005, Binder 2015). Outside of civil conflict, worsening physical integrity abuses and increased international attention increases the likelihood of resolution passage (Allen & Bell 2022). Even the invocation of "human rights" in a resolution increases the odds of the Council authorizing force, though this effect does not extend to normatively comparable terms such as "humanitarian crisis" (Scherzinger 2023). However, parochial interests are not inconsequential. Interventions are less likely when the target state is a major power or allied with one (Beardsley & Schmidt 2012, Mullenbach 2005). Though the P5 vary on whether or not they want their interests represented on the UNSC agenda (Lundgren & Klamberg 2023). Thus, while severity has been shown to be the strongest driver of peacekeeping decisions, parochial interests of the Council members still meaningfully shape outcomes.

These dynamics extend beyond peacekeeping to the full range of subsidiary bodies the UNSC can create. Peacekeeping missions are the most resource-intensive and risky bodies, but the Council also authorizes weaker mechanisms such as commissions, committees, and special envoys. Lugg, Lansdale, and Carcelli show that alignment between the U.S. and Russia is critical: when they are aligned, the Council creates stronger bodies, but when their interests diverge, only weaker bodies are likely to pass (Lugg et al. 2024). The veto also provides powerful leverage, allowing the P5 to secure more favorable outcomes by credibly threatening to block Council action when they can pursue alternatives outside the UNSC (Bailey, Strezhenev & Voeten 2017). These dynamics illustrate how the P5 both constrain and enable Council outcomes, determining not only whether the body can act, but also how strong its actions will be.

I build on this body of work by shifting the analytic focus from authorization and passage to the antecedent process of proposal and expressive dimensions of UNSC action. Rather than treating resolution proposal as a forgone step towards passage, I conceptualize it as a consequential political choice in its own right that structures the downstream possibilities of Council responses and signals willingness to engage with a crisis even in the absence of enforceable outcomes. By examining Mass Atrocity events as a distinct set of cases, I extend existing theories beyond civil war and peacekeeping to contexts where intervention would be both normatively and theoretically expected under current severity-driven frameworks, yet Council response is continually unequal in its application. In doing so, I also broaden the outcome space to include rhetorical resolutions, which prior works do not engage with theoretically. This approach allows me to identify the conditions under which Council members choose to “pick up the pen”, how political relationships and crisis characteristics shape proposal behavior, and when rhetorical condemnation is itself a strategic outcome rather than a byproduct of failed enforcement.

### **3 Strategic Signaling and Commitment in the Security Council**

#### **3.1 Strategic Signaling at the Proposal Stage**

The process through which a resolution is passed can be thought of through two stages with distinct incentives and considerations: the proposal stage and the passage stage. During the proposal stage, the decision to act lies with an individual or coalition of states. A state must take the initiative to pick up the pen and invest time and energy into the drafting and negotiation of a resolution. While prior works focus on resolution passage, there are a number of goals states can achieve through proposal of a resolution alone. Even if a resolution fails a vote, through proposing a resolution the drafting state(s); place the crisis on the UNSC agenda, position themselves as an international leader on the crisis, clearly state their own position on the crisis, and compel co-members to state their own position on the crisis through the voting process.

By proposing a resolution, a meeting must be held to discuss the contents and vote upon the resolution, ensuring the crisis space on the UNSC agenda. As the state, or group of states, to propose the resolution, the drafters position themselves as leaders on the crisis, even if the state would not usually be involved in the issue. By demonstrating their willingness to initiate action on a given crisis, drafter states are able to enhance their international reputation and demonstrate their leadership capacity on issues outside of their immediate periphery. Finally, by bringing a proposed resolution to a vote, the drafters compel their co-members to state their own positions on the crisis through public discussion and votes on the proposed resolution. Each of these outcomes, and the benefits they generate for the drafter state, occurs regardless of

resolution passage. Thus, when a state makes the decision to pick up the pen, they are not just considering the likelihood of the resolution passing, but rather the benefits that can be generated by the proposal alone.

States are most likely to pick up the pen when bilateral ties with the target state are weak and international attention to the crisis is high, as the standalone benefits of proposal are greatest under these conditions. Weak bilateral relations limit opportunities for direct engagement, making bilateral action with the drafter state unlikely. In this context, the UNSC becomes the primary available forum for involvement. Drafting a resolution allows the proposing state to publicly state its position while signaling initiative and willingness to lead, positioning itself at the center of Council deliberations despite otherwise constrained bilateral options.

Slovenia's leadership on the Gaza file constitutes a clear example of how an elected member of the UNSC can utilize agenda-setting authority and penholding functions to construct a leadership identity in a crisis where its material leverage is otherwise limited. As a small state without coercive capabilities of veto authority, Slovenia cannot unilaterally shape outcomes on Gaza. Yet through drafting resolutions, requesting votes, convening debates, and speaking on behalf of coalitions of elected members, it has positioned itself as a normative entrepreneur and procedural leader within the Council.

Slovenia's strategy has been explicit. The Slovenian mission framed its signature debate under the title "Leadership for Peace" (Banjo 2024), signaling an intentional effort to brand its tenure as oriented toward conflict resolution and institutional revitalization. Ambassador Samuel Žbogar emphasized that both the Slovenian domestic audience and the broader international community were looking to the Council to deliver "meaningful solutions" to Gaza and other conflicts. His remarks, lamenting the non-implementation of four Council ceasefire resolutions and warning that violations of international humanitarian law in Gaza creates a "sense of impunity", did more than criticize paralysis. Slovenian Foreign Minister Tanja Fajon, in her role as Council President, stated that if dialogue did not translate into action, the Council should prepare to "turn a new page in the tools that it is ready to use" (Ağlarıcı 2024) and demanded an urgent adherence to international law. These statements publicly located Slovenia on the side of legal accountability and Charter principles.

This positioning is further reinforced by Fajon's statement that "dialogue cannot entail only words", coupled with her articulation of four concrete steps for resolving the Gaza crisis: compliance with international law, respect for broader UN membership, courage in advancing a two-state solution, and diplomacy aimed at delivering a ceasefire. By structuring her intervention around operational principles, Fajon framed Slovenia not as a symbolic critic but as an actor advocating procedural and substantive movement. Throughout Slovenia's tenure on the Council, it drafted or sponsored numerous resolutions in line with these concrete steps for resolution, further backing up its words with action. Even after numerous efforts faced vetoes,

Fajon continued to call for "diplomacy of action" and a durable peace. News coverage of Slovenia's efforts placed Slovenia alongside the majority of Council members, urging an end to civilian suffering.

The reputational logic of this behavior becomes especially clear in coverage by Al Jazeera, which framed Slovenia's push to respond to the crisis in Gaza as grounded in a "moral duty" (Cafiero 2024). Slovenian officials tied their advocacy on Gaza to national identity narratives: Slovenia's own quest for self-determination, its lack of colonial legacy, and its self-presentation as a firm believer in multilateral cooperation. The reporting further highlighted Slovenia's continued and increased funding to the UNRWA when other Western governments withdrew support, portraying the country as principled and consistent. Crucially, Slovenia's stance was described as "welcomed" by several nations in the Global South. This positive reception from non-Western states reinforces my argument that reputational benefits accrue when actions are validated by external audiences. Slovenia's advocacy was not interpreted as symbolic posturing, but as an authentic extension of its historical commitment to self-determination and human rights.

The common tone across the coverage of Slovenia's advocacy on Gaza is not skepticism, but recognition. Slovenia is depicted as courageous for advancing ceasefire language, principled for maintaining humanitarian funding, and constructive for proposing concrete diplomatic steps. Media framing frequently situates Slovenia with "the majority" or with Global South states, implicitly praising its responsiveness to widespread international concern. In a highly salient crisis, such as Gaza, where media scrutiny is intense and Council divisions are stark, such framing amplifies the reputational payoff of action. States that take positive, responsive action, such as proposing resolutions, are praised for their behavior, thereby amplifying the reputational benefits of doing so through increased visibility of their actions during the crisis.

A further example of the pointed influence of Human Rights Organizations at the proposal stage can be seen in Human Rights Watch's call on Brazil to respond to the crisis in Gaza. Human Rights Watch called upon Brazil to push for action through the Council during its October 2023 term as president (Shakir & Charbonneau 2023). Five days later, Brazil held a formal meeting to vote on a resolution drafted by Brazil addressing the crisis in Gaza. Frequent international attention on a crisis also increases the benefits for the proposal alone, as not only greater attention is given to the proposal, but also the positions of co-members of the Council, such that if the proposed resolution fails, it is clear which states specifically contributed to the resolution's failure. In the above discussion highlighting the praise Slovenia receives for its attempts to act, the US was nearly equally derided for its blockage of response (Banjo 2024, Cafiero 2024). This illustrates how the negative reputational costs of a failed resolution shifts onto the specific state obstructing passage and further action, further decreasing the potential cost for proposing a resolution that is unlikely to pass.

The case of the UNSC response to Gaza illustrates this dynamic. In the first year of the crisis, nine resolutions were drafted and put up for a vote; five demanded a ceasefire, four others called for humanitarian aid

improvements such as the creation of humanitarian corridors. The US vetoed the five resolutions demanding a ceasefire. Following the veto of draft resolution S/2023/772, the first of these ceasefire resolutions, there was now a clear benchmark of rhetorical and actionable severity, over which the US would veto. Current expectations of UNSC behavior would suggest that subsequent resolutions on this issue would be weakened to try and appease the US and avoid additional vetoes. Instead, subsequent resolutions strengthened their language and continually demanded a ceasefire. This indicated that passage was not the goal of these resolutions, and the benefits from continual drafting and proposal were generated through proposal alone, rather than contingent on passage. The drafters of these resolutions were unwilling to compromise the severity of their resolutions further to appease the US position. This generated reputational benefits for the drafter states while the US suffered reputational costs as the clear obstructor of action.

States are motivated to pick up the pen not just by the potential for the resolution to pass, but by their reputation. The UNSC provides a forum for states to take the initiative and generate reputational benefits for their attempts to act on the crisis, even if those attempts fail. These reputational benefits are amplified when international attention on the crisis is high. At the proposal stage I propose two hypotheses based on these expectations:

**Hypothesis 1:** Greater political distance from the target state increases the likelihood of a proposal.

**Hypothesis 2:** Greater international attention to an MA event increases the likelihood of a proposal.

### 3.2 Collective Commitment Constraints at the Passage Stage

The passage stage has a markedly different set of incentives and considerations that contribute to the likelihood of resolution passage. While the decision to draft and propose a resolution rests with an individual state, the decision to pass a resolution is one made by the Council, with particular power yielded to the permanent five members through their veto power. UNSC resolutions are binding upon UN member states; thus, their passage demonstrates a collective commitment of the members to the content of the resolution. Which commitments the Council can agree to is influenced by both the scale of the commitment and permanent member preferences. The scale of commitment a resolution suggests is tied to the actionable severity of the proposed resolution, meaning the type of further action the Council will pursue regarding the crisis. These actions could be sending a UN representative to the crisis, enacting sanctions on the target state, establishing a peacekeeping mission or utilizing another policy tool. These are large commitments for the UNSC to agree to as they represent both greater resource allocation to the crisis and more agenda space as the Council hears updates from these bodies. When actionable severity is high, the Council is collectively

committing to a longer-term response to the crisis. These long-term high-commitment agreements are more difficult to pass as Council members may be more hesitant to sign on to a resolution with a long shadow of the future and high cost. The reluctance to tie themselves to a costly resolution is especially prevalent among permanent members due to their permanent status on the Council. The US and Russia, particularly, frequently block actionable resolutions when US-Russia tensions are high (Lugg et al. 2024) to prevent further collaboration with their rival.

Overall, States with closer ties to the target state will be more opposed to passing actionably severe resolutions. States with strong relationships with the target state will be especially sensitive to the actionable severity of the proposed resolution. These considerations most recently blocked action on the Rohingya genocide in Myanmar. An advocate for the Center for the Responsibility to Protect discussed with me how NGOs, as well as fellow Council members, requested targeted sanctions as well as arms and jet fuel embargos in response to the atrocity, but the United Kingdom, as the penholder on this issue, feared a Chinese veto. These difficult negotiations led to long delays in bringing a resolution to a vote, and the resulting resolution was critiqued for amounting to only "finger-wagging", not including any binding measures. However, this significantly weakened draft was able to pass without a veto from China. Many UNSC resolutions rely solely on rhetorical severity to communicate their position. These resolutions are much lower commitments for Council members as they do not extend past the vote itself in terms of outcomes and agenda space. Rhetorically focused resolutions provide a minimal response that Council members can accept without jeopardizing important relationships, even if they do little to address the underlying violence. While still influenced by the relationships between co-members, agreement for rhetorically severe resolutions should be easier to achieve as they are lower commitments as compared to actionably severe resolutions. I propose four hypotheses at the passage stage:

**Hypothesis 3:** Actionable severity decreases passage.

**Hypothesis 4:** Rhetorical severity increases passage.

**Hypothesis 5:** Permanent member sponsorship increases passage.

**Hypothesis 6:** Greater political distance among permanent members decreases passage.

## 4 Methods

To investigate the resolution drafting behavior and outcomes of the UNSC, I analyze a sample of 403 UNSC meetings from 1989-2024 covering 17 MA events. I collected new data on these event-meetings and their outcomes, finding a total of 122 proposed resolutions. First, I will discuss the scope of cases. I will then discuss the two outcomes of interest, reflecting the two-stage process: resolution proposal and resolution

passage. Next, I will discuss the operationalization of my independent variables at each stage of analysis. For the proposal stage, I will discuss measuring the strength of the relationship between Council members and the target state, the relationship between key co-members, and the scale of international community attention. In the passage stage, I will discuss how the variables observable in the proposed resolutions are measured, particularly rhetorical and actionable severity. Finally, I discuss control variables and present descriptive statistics.

## 4.1 Scope

While much of the literature on UNSC outcomes focuses on cases of civil conflict, the bargaining environment surrounding resolutions on mass atrocities differs in a theoretically important way: the configuration of relevant political actors. In civil conflicts, violence is perpetrated by two or more organized political actors, each of which maintains relationships with external states. These cross-cutting ties generate competing and potentially countervailing preferences among Council members, as states may favor different belligerents, producing bargaining complexity and deadlock.

Mass atrocity cases present a more constrained bargaining environment. This violence is unidirectional, perpetrated by a government against civilian populations that lack the capacity to represent their interests directly within the international system. This eliminates the need for Council members to balance pressures from multiple organized domestic actors and instead centers deliberation on a single focal relationship, Council members' political ties to the target state.

Focusing on MA events, therefore, allows the analysis to foreground the strategic benefits Council members can derive from proposing resolutions independent of passage. Proposal alone enables the state to signal leadership on salient humanitarian crises, claim moral or normative authority, and accrue reputational benefits from international and domestic audiences. Introducing a draft resolution also structures the bargaining space by compelling other Council members to take public positions, thereby clarifying alignments and increasing the political costs of inaction. These agenda-setting and signalling benefits are more difficult to disentangle in civil conflict settings, where proposals are often entangled with competing domestic actors and divergent end-state preferences. As such, MA cases provide a theoretically motivated scope for examining proposal behavior as a strategic act in its own right, as well as a step towards passage.

I utilize the Targeted Mass Killings (TMK) dataset (Butcher, Goldsmith, Nanlohy, Sowmya & Muchlinski 2020) as the foundation upon which to scope my cases of mass atrocity. The TMK data defines a targeted mass killing as “the direct killing of noncombatant members of a group by an organized armed force or collective with the intent of destroying the group, or intimidating the group by creating a perception of imminent

threat to its survival. A targeted group is defined in terms of political and/or ethnic and/or religious identity”. I further narrow this definition to only include cases resulting in at least 1,000 civilian deaths per year perpetrated by state actors. These considerations yielded 24 cases of MA events with violence onset between 1989 and 2022. I use this restricted sample of mass atrocity events, beginning in 1989 or later, to exclude the Cold War period, during which UNSC behavior was shaped by a distinct set of geopolitical dynamics. During the Cold War, ideological rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union frequently resulted in deadlock, limiting the Council’s ability and willingness to act on humanitarian crises. As evidenced by the stark increase in subsidiary body creation in the post-Cold War period (Lugg et al. 2024), the resolution drafting and passage patterns from the Cold War period are not reflective of the institutional dynamics that structure Council behavior today. Thus, limiting the cases to the post-Cold War period provides a more coherent and comparable context for analyzing variation in Council responsiveness to mass atrocity events.

From these 24 cases, I then collected event-month level data in order to identify which cases received a UNSC meeting, as the prerequisite for a proposed resolution, as well as any outcomes from those meetings. The list of cases is presented in Table 1 below, listed by the commonly used names of the MA events as designated in the TMK data, and the start and end dates of the MA events (Butcher et al. 2020). If the event was still ongoing as of December 31st, 2024, I recorded it as such, but limited data collection to UNSC response on or before 12/31/2024. This data collection effort yielded 403 formal UNSC meetings, representing 17 MA events, with 7 MA events receiving no meeting at all. These 403 formal meetings resulted in 122 proposed and 95 passed resolutions. I list the MA events that received at least one UNSC meeting in Table 1 below.

Table 1: List of Mass Atrocity Events

Event Name	Start Date	End Date
Salvadoran Civil War	11/11/1989	5/31/1990
Rwandan Civil War	1/1/1991	4/6/1994
Kurdish/Shia Uprisings	3/31/1991	4/30/1991
All Saints Massacre	10/31/1992	11/1/1992
Rwandan Genocide	4/7/1994	7/15/1994
Burundian Civil War	1/1/1995	5/15/2005
First Congo War	1/2/1996	5/16/1997
Republic of Congo Civil War	6/5/1997	12/31/1997
Afghan Civil War	9/12/1997	12/5/2001
Kosovo War	3/31/1998	6/10/1999
East Timor Crisis	9/4/1999	10/20/1999
Darfur Genocide	6/1/2003	1/31/2005
Syrian Civil War	3/18/2011	3/6/2020
CAR Civil War	12/5/2013	12/6/2013
Rohingya Crisis	8/25/2017	Ongoing
Tigray Civil War	3/11/2020	Ongoing
Russian invasion of Ukraine	2/27/2022	Ongoing

## 4.2 Dependent Variables

I utilize a Heckman selection model to address the non-random selection on the outcome of resolution passage, as a resolution must first be proposed before it can be passed. Thus, we must first examine factors for selection into this population, meaning which factors contribute to the resolution proposal. Thus, the outcome of my first-stage selection equation is a resolution proposal. Resolution proposal is measured as a binary, with 1 indicating a resolution was proposed at a meeting, and 0 if not. This stage of the model is estimated as a probit, given the required binary outcome and the structure of the Heckman model.

As a requirement of the Heckman selection model, a variable must be included in the selection equation that does not impact the final outcome of interest. To address this requirement, I control for the type of meeting being held, as some types of meetings are the venue for resolution proposals and discussion, while others are not. During my data collection, I recorded if a meeting invoked rule 39, a UNSC procedural rule that allows for individuals outside of the Council to present relevant information to Council members. When rule 39 is invoked, this indicates that a meeting is a briefing, rather than a discussion and vote on a proposed resolution. The occurrence of briefings, rather than discussions on resolutions, impacts the likelihood of resolution proposals but does not impact the likelihood of passage, and serves as an appropriate instrument.

For the second stage, the outcome equation, the outcome of interest is resolution passage. This is also measured as a binary with 1 indicating the resolution was passed and 0 indicating it was not passed, either due to veto or not securing 9 affirmative votes from the Council. This stage of the model is estimated as a Linear Probability Model, as the second stage of Heckman models utilize OLS (Heckman 1979) and given the binary outcome of interest.

## 4.3 Independent Variables

### 4.3.1 Proposal Stage

The independent variables of interest reflect the two countervailing forces influencing UNSC preferences over the resolution severity and outcome, the relationship with the target state and the international community discussion on the MA event. I measure member states' relationship to the target state through three avenues: political, economic, and military relationships. To measure the strength of the political dyadic relationship between the Council and the target state, I calculated the ideal point distance between each Council member and target states using the ideal point estimates derived from countries' voting records in the UN General Assembly (Bailey et al. 2017). I then take the average of these 15 ideal point distances as a measure of the average relationship between members and the target state. This measure indicates the degree of similarity between the Council's preferences and the target state's, with lower numbers indicating

greater similarity. I use this measure as a proxy for the strength of the political relationship between the Council and the target state, as similar voting behavior in the UNGA indicates similar preferences for UN action. I also include a measure of the ideal-point distance between the US and Russia to analyze how the distance between key Council members affects Council outputs. The US and Russia, particularly, frequently block the adoption of actionable resolutions when US-Russia tensions are high (Lugg et al. 2024).

I measure military relationships through SIPRI's Arms Transfers database (SIPRI 2025). I utilize data on arms transfers from each Council member to the target state in the year prior as another measure of the military relationship between the states. I also take the average of these measures, as well as the average of the P5. Finally, I measure the economic ties between the Council and target states. I utilize IMF trade data to measure goods imports and exports between the target state and each member state, measured annually in millions of USD (Fund 2026). This measure is also an average for the Council and P5, and is one year lagged.

To capture international community discussion, I focus on international human rights organizations (IHROs), which often act as both early-warning actors and norm entrepreneurs. Following prior work, I collected data on Amnesty International's (AI) public documents to use as an indicator of case visibility within these networks rather than a direct measure of advocacy capacity or mobilization strength (Hendrix & Wong 2013, Ron, Ramos & Rodgers 2005). Specifically, I collected monthly counts of all AI public documents that reference the state experiencing a mass atrocity, producing a dataset of 3,089 documents. These counts were then lagged by one month and matched to the timing of UNSC meetings in order to test my third and fourth hypotheses. In this framework, AI documentation functions as a proxy for the salience of an atrocity within human rights advocacy networks and thus for the reputational costs the Council may incur through inaction. Although imperfect, document frequency provides a reasonable signal of how prominently a given case features in global human rights discourse.

### 4.3.2 Passage Stage

In this stage, the content of resolutions directly contributes to its likelihood of passage, particularly the severity of the resolutions. I measure severity in two ways: rhetorical severity and actionable severity. Additionally, I examine how severity impacts resolution passage in these cases. Rhetorical severity refers to the language of the resolutions. The UNSC uses a limited dictionary of verbs and modifiers in their resolutions, leading off each paragraph with at least a verb, either an emotive or action word, if not a verb and an emotive modifier. These words are frequently italicized in the body of the resolution<sup>1</sup> I utilize

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<sup>1</sup>The italicization of these words appears to become standard when the UN moves to digital word processors for their documents. In documents prior to this switch, italicization appears in the majority, but not all, uses of these terms.

Gruenberg's rhetorical severity scale to measure the rhetorical severity of each of the proposed resolutions (Gruenberg 2009). This measure has separate scales for emotive, action, and modifying words. Modifying words are the simplest; these words, like 'gravely' or 'strongly', increase the rhetorical severity by 1 point for each usage as they only modify the statement. Emotive words vary on a scale from 1 to 9, with the less severe words receiving lower scores while the more severe have higher scores. For example, 'considering' and 'noting' each have a severity score of 1, while 'outraged' and 'censured' have scores of 8 and 9, respectively. Finally, the action words indicate what action the UNSC has taken, will take, or is requesting others to take. These vary on a scale from 1 to 7, with the least severe, like 'affirm', receiving a score of 1 and the most severe, 'demand', receiving a score of 7. The full dictionary of terms and severity scores can be found in the Appendix as Table 5. Using this dictionary, I reviewed the 122 proposed resolutions, noting the occurrence of each term and summing their values across each resolution to generate the rhetorical severity of each resolution. I do not control for the length of resolutions within this measure; rather, I control for resolution length separately using a count of the sections in the resolution. Additionally, this measure applies to all meetings, not just those that had a resolution put to a vote. Meetings without a resolution receive a 0 in this measure, as holding a meeting is still a visible act by the Council, but the lack of resolution diminishes the severity of that meeting, since observers know no further outcomes are expected.

I operationalize the actionable severity of resolutions as if the resolution mandates the creation of a subsidiary body. Subsidiary bodies are the mechanism through which the UNSC can become more directly involved in a crisis. To assess the actionable severity of each resolution, I use the subsidiary body strength measure developed by Lugg, Lansdale, and Carcelli (2024). This measure categorizes subsidiary bodies based on the types of outcomes they are able to achieve. Bodies with a military component are the strongest body type and receive a 3 on this scale, while bodies tasked with information collection would be the weakest type of body and receive a 1 on this scale. Economic outcomes, sanctions, and embargoes represent the middle strength category. Resolutions that do not establish a subsidiary body, or meetings that do not have a resolution proposed, receive a 0 in this measure, as no further action is mandated in either case. I include an additional binary measure of actionable severity, indicating if a proposed resolution invoked Chapter VII of the UN Charter, as this is the article that imbues the UNSC with the power to forcefully respond to crises. I also include controls for the length of resolution, measured as a count of the sections in a resolution, and if the resolution is continuing from a prior resolution, as Council members may be more likely to agree to a resolution based upon a prior agreed-upon resolution.

I also include variables indicating the number of penholders, as more penholders on a proposed resolution indicate greater support for the resolution in the body. I also include a binary indicating if the US or Russia acted as a drafter on the resolution. If the US or Russia acted as a drafter, this indicates their support for

the resolution, decreasing the potential for a veto.

#### 4.4 Control Variables

I include a number of additional variables across both stages to control for event-level context that may shape Council responsiveness. These include the number of civilian deaths in the previous month and if the event was ongoing at the time of the meeting. I draw on UCDP’s Georeferenced Event Dataset (GED) (Sundberg & Melander 2013) to measure the number of civilian fatalities occurring within a state during each month. This approach aligns with the Targeted Mass Killings (TMK) dataset (Butcher et al. 2020), which relies primarily on UCDP GED for its death estimates. My measure essentially disaggregates those estimates to the monthly level. To account for the information available to the Council at the time of the meeting, I lag this variable by one month. As shown in Table 2, the distribution of civilian deaths is highly skewed; accordingly, I use the natural log of this variable in the analysis. The TMK data also includes a measure indicating if the MA event is associated with a civil war. This is a binary, time-invariant indicator. I also include a binary measure of whether the MA event was ongoing at the time of the meeting, as the Council can lag in its responsiveness, taking up an issue for discussion after the violence has passed. These variables represent an event’s connection to broader peace and security concerns. Crises that result in large numbers of deaths, are ongoing, or are embedded in broader civil conflicts may be more likely to prompt Council engagement due to their heightened implications for peace and security.

#### 4.5 Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics of all variables used in the models can be seen in Table 2, below. This report shows that, overall, the average political distance between the Council and target states is low, as the average ideal-point distance between Council members and target states is small, indicating similar UNGA voting patterns between Council members and target states on average. The AI response varies widely between meetings, with a median of five reports in the prior month, but a maximum of thirty-one reports, and a minimum of zero reports in the month preceding the meeting. The majority (80%) of these meetings occurred while the MA event was active, indicating overall responsiveness to ongoing crises. Of the meetings held, 50% were briefings, with the other 50% eligible for a resolution proposal. Resolutions are proposed in 30% of the meetings overall. Within that 30% of meetings with a proposed resolution, the majority of these resolutions pass.

The rhetorical and actionable severity of proposed resolutions varies from low to high severity on both measures. There is also variation across additional indicators of severity and prior agreement, with a third of

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics

	min	mean	median	max	sd
Resolution Passage	0.00	0.24	0.00	1.00	0.42
Resolution Proposal	0.00	0.31	0.00	1.00	0.46
Avg. Political Distance	0.89	1.69	1.53	2.36	0.48
US-Rus. Political Distance	1.62	2.52	2.54	3.81	0.33
Avg. Arms Trade	0.00	9.12	1.73	77.60	17.75
Avg. Trade Balance	-708.87	-15.47	-4.04	581.10	141.52
AI Reports (lag)	0.00	5.04	3.00	31.00	5.38
Rule 39	0.00	0.50	0.00	1.00	0.50
Active	0.00	0.83	1.00	1.00	0.37
Civilian Deaths (lag, log)	0.00	2.00	1.10	13.35	2.45
Rhetorical Severity	0.00	18.18	0.00	252.00	36.31
Actionable Severity	0.00	0.17	0.00	3.00	0.62
Section Count	3.00	23.21	22.00	90.00	13.35
Chapter VII	0.00	0.34	0.00	1.00	0.48
Continuing	0.00	0.33	0.00	1.00	0.47
No. of Penholders	1.00	5.15	5.00	13.00	3.44
US-Rus. Penholder	0.00	0.13	0.00	1.00	0.33

resolutions invoking Chapter VII and a third continuing prior agreements. The average number of penholders for a draft is 5, a third of the Council, with the maximum number of penholders being 13, the vast majority of the Council. These descriptives also show that the US and Russia pick up the pen on only 13% of resolutions.

## 5 Analysis

As discussed above, I used a Heckman selection model to co-estimate the impact of key variables across both proposal and passage stages. The selection equation is a probit model that estimates the probability of a resolution being proposed, while the outcome equation is an LPM model that estimates the likelihood of resolution passage conditional on its proposal. This approach both addresses the non-random selection into the final population of interest, proposed resolutions, and demonstrates clearly the distinct influences at each stage of the process, as I theorized. The results are reported in Table 3, below. Variables that reached statistical significance are further highlighted in Figure 1 as a coefficient plot. The results are consistent across model specifications and are generally supportive of my hypotheses.

Table 3: Heckman Selection Model of UNSC Response to MA Events

	Selection	Selection AME	Outcome
(Intercept)	-0.283 (0.809)		2.861*** (0.530)
Avg. Political Distance	0.695** (0.230)	0.137** (0.043)	-0.573*** (0.139)
US - Russia Political Distance	-0.216 (0.278)	-0.043 (0.054)	-0.516** (0.189)
Avg. Arms Trade	0.001 (0.007)	0.000 (0.001)	0.009* (0.003)
Avg. Trade Balance	0.000 (0.001)	0.000 (0.000)	0.001** (0.000)
Active	-0.445. (0.234)	-0.088. (0.045)	0.096 (0.123)
Civilian Deaths (lag, log)	0.039 (0.034)	0.008 (0.007)	-0.031. (0.017)
AI Reports (lag)	0.039* (0.017)	0.008* (0.003)	0.004 (0.008)
Rule 39 Briefing	-2.433*** (0.252)	-0.479*** (0.027)	
Rhetorical Severity			0.004* (0.002)
Actionable Severity			-0.043 (0.072)
Section Count			-0.012. (0.006)
Chapter VII			0.060 (0.166)
Continuing Resolution			0.144 (0.110)
No. of Penholders			-0.026. (0.014)
US - Russia Penholder			0.233* (0.100)
IMR			0.076 (0.115)
Num.Obs.	387		75
R2			0.588
R2 Adj.			0.484
AIC	286.2	286.2	60.2
BIC	321.8	321.8	99.6
Log.Lik.	-134.095		-13.089
F	13.762		5.620
RMSE	0.33	0.33	0.29

. p < 0.1, \* p < 0.05, \*\* p < 0.01, \*\*\* p < 0.001

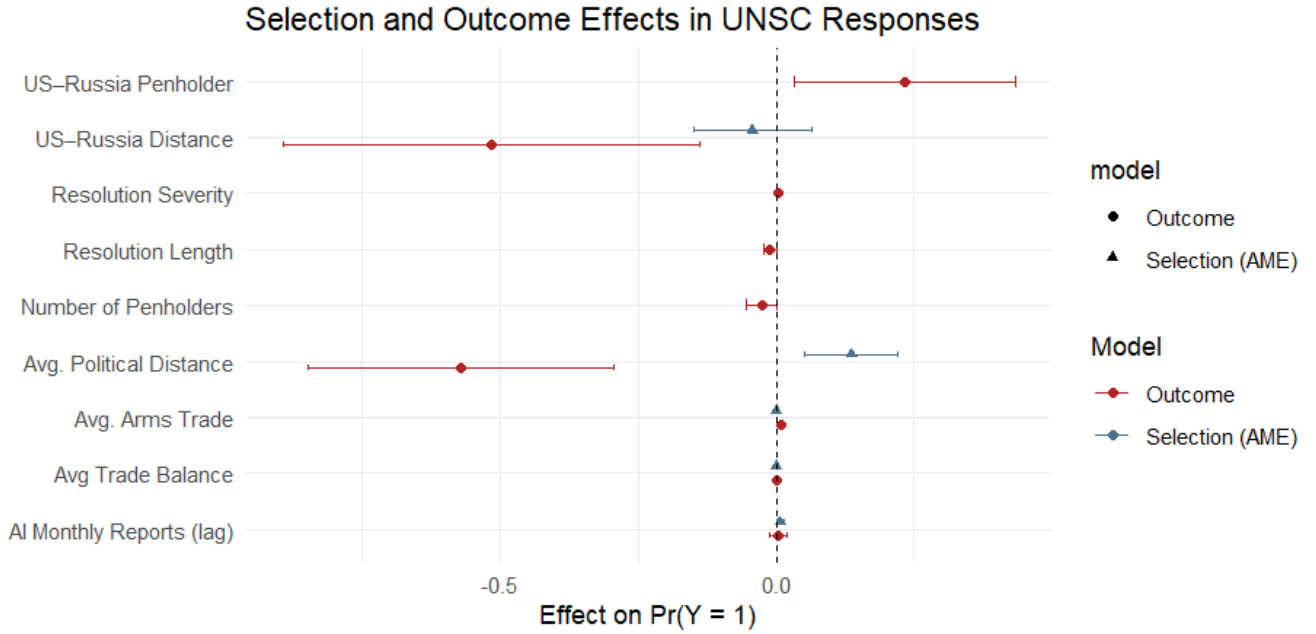


Figure 1: Coefficient Plot

Across model specifications in the selection stage, the average political distance between Council members and the target state is statistically significant and positively associated with the likelihood of a resolution proposal. As the selection stage of this model is estimated with a probit, I generate the Average Marginal Effects (AME) to further identify the substantive effects at this selection stage. As reported in Table 3 and visualized in Figure 1, a unit increase in the average political distance of the council towards the target state will, on average, increase the likelihood of a resolution being proposed by 13.7 percentage points. However, a unit change in the Avg. Political Distance of UNSC members is a substantively large one, representing a 2 standard deviation shift. Overall, this indicates that as the average relationship with the target state weakens, UNSC member states are more likely to take the initiative and pick up the pen to draft a resolution, supporting hypothesis 1. Additionally, as AI reports increase, so does the likelihood of a resolution proposal, with any one AI report increasing the likelihood of a proposal by 0.8 percentage points. Though this effect is substantively small in isolation, AI frequently releases multiple reports on a given crisis, demonstrating how greater international attention increases the likelihood for attempts at action, indicating modest support for hypothesis 2. Furthermore, the US-Russia political distance variable is not statistically significant in the proposal stage, indicating that proposals are not affected by anticipatory concerns about passage. As expected, when a meeting was invoked under rule 39, indicating a briefing-style meeting, the likelihood of a resolution being proposed markedly decreased, demonstrating its usefulness as the necessary excluded measure for the Heckman model.

In the outcome stage, different relationships emerge. AI reports lose statistical significance at this stage, supporting my argument that while international attention increases the likelihood a resolution is proposed, it does not increase the likelihood a resolution is passed. Average political distance remains statistically significant but changes signs in the outcome stage and increases in its substantive effect. In the passage stage, a unit increase in political distance *decreases* the likelihood of passage by 57 percentage points, indicating that the closer target states are to council members, the more likely passage becomes. This finding is further supported by the substantially small, but statistically significant effects of Arms Trade and Trade Balance. As these alternative measures of bilateral relations increase, indicating closer ties, so too does the likelihood of resolution passage, further demonstrating that when states are more *closely* aligned, passage is more likely.

Similarly, US-Russia political distance, while not statistically significant in the proposal stage, is statistically significant at the passage stage. A single unit increase in US-Russia distance decreases the likelihood of passage by 51 percentage points. However, when either of these two states is a drafter of the proposed resolution, the passage likelihood increases by 23 percentage points. These results support hypotheses 5 and 6. To check if these dynamics are unique to the US-Russia dyad or are present across the P5, I ran an additional model substituting the US-Russia penholder binary for a binary indicator of whether any P5 acted as a penholder. These results are reported in Appendix Table 4 and demonstrate that these dynamics are unique to US and Russia rather than a broader P5 influence. As the US and Russia are seen as the heads of the two voting blocs of the P5, the P3 and P2, respectively, and are the most frequent users of their veto powers, these results are consistent with contemporary understanding of UNSC dynamics.

As for the content of the resolutions, greater rhetorical severity is positively and significantly associated with resolution passage. With a single unit increase in rhetorical severity, such as *demanding* rather than *warning*, the likelihood of passage increases by 4 percentage points. This finding supports hypothesis 4, which posits that Council members are less hesitant to approve rhetorically severe resolutions. However, measures of the actionable severity of a resolution, including resolution length and invocation of Chapter VII of the charter, do not emerge as statistically significant predictors of resolution passage. This may be due to the greater effort required to draft an actionably severe resolution, as increasing the actionable severity entails establishing some form of UNSC subsidiary body, be that fact-finding missions, sanctions regimes, or peacekeeping missions. The additional resources needed to draft these resolutions may be exerted only when passage is assured, compared with the relative ease of increasing rhetorical severity.

## 6 Discussion

Taken together, these findings demonstrate that resolution proposal and resolution passage are shaped by distinct, and at times, opposing, political forces. Although a proposal is often viewed as an intermediate step on the path to adoption, these results show that the incentives driving Council members to draft and propose resolutions are largely decoupled from the conditions that determine whether those resolutions ultimately pass. This divergence underscores the importance of treating the proposal as a strategic act with independent political value.

At the proposal stage, Council members appear motivated by primarily reputational and expressive considerations rather than anticipatory calculations about passage. As international attention increases, measured through the volume of Amnesty International reporting on a given MA event, states are more likely to initiate draft resolutions. This suggests that heightened attention generates greater incentives to take visible action, such as picking up the pen, regardless of whether agreement among Council members is likely. Proposing a resolution allows states to signal leadership on salient humanitarian issues, demonstrate responsiveness to international audiences, and position themselves as a moral and normative authority, even in the absence of realistic prospects for adoption.

Similarly, the positive relationship between average political distance with the target state and proposal likelihood indicates that weaker ties with the perpetrating government reduce the political cost of initiating action. Additionally, the absence of effect of US-Russia distance at this stage suggests that Council members do not systematically condition proposal decisions on anticipated veto dynamics or great-power disagreement. Rather than self-censoring in anticipation of failure, states appear willing to incur the costs of drafting and tabling a resolution even when passage is uncertain. This reinforces my argument that the proposal itself generates benefits independent of the resolution's success, including compelling other members to publicly state their positions, clarify alignments within the Council, and engage with the broader international community.

The dynamics governing passage are markedly different from the factors that increase the likelihood of proposal. International attention loses statistical significance at the outcome stage, indicating that while global scrutiny can motivate a single state or coalition to act, it does not overcome the bargaining constraints that shape final approval. Instead, passage is driven more by variables tied to intra-Council agreement and great-power politics. Political proximity to the target state increases the likelihood of adoption while US-Russia preference divergence substantially decreases it, highlighting the continued centrality of major-power consensus in determining enforceable outcomes.

The role of penholding further illustrates this distinction. While US-Russia divergence does not deter

proposal, the involvement of either state as a drafter significantly increases the likelihood of passage, suggesting that penholding by these actors can mitigate coordination problems at the final stage. The absence of a similar effect for other permanent members indicates that this dynamic is not a general feature of P5 influence, but reflects the unique position of the US-Russia dyad in Security Council bargaining.

Finally, the results related to resolution content reinforce the broader pattern of divergence between expressive and enforceable action. Rhetorically severe resolutions are more likely to pass, whereas longer, potentially more involved texts face greater resistance. This supports my argument that Council members are more willing to approve resolutions that impose symbolic or reputational costs than those that require complex or far-reaching commitments.

Overall, these findings challenge linear models of Security Council action that treat proposal as a mere precursor to passage. Instead, these results point to a two-stage process in which proposals and passages respond to different incentive structures. By focusing on Mass Atrocity events, where the benefits of visible engagement are high, the costs of inaction are reputationally salient, and the relations between Council members and target states are singular, this analysis demonstrates how Council members utilize the proposal stage as a site of political action in its own right, even when the prospects for binding outcomes remain constrained.

## 7 Conclusion

This article argues that variation in the UNSC's response to Mass Atrocity events cannot be understood by treating the resolution proposal and passage as a single process influenced by the same factors. Instead, these stages reflect distinct incentive structures operating at different levels of decision-making. Proposing a resolution is an individual or small coalition action shaped by reputational concerns, relationships with the target state, and international attention to the crisis. Passage, by contrast, is a collective commitment constrained by great-power politics, veto dynamics, and the substantive costs embedded in resolution text.

By isolating mass atrocity cases, this analysis shows how Council members use the proposal stage as a site of political action even when passage is improbable. Failed resolutions are not simply evidence of dysfunction, but are expressive acts that establish normative and moral authority on an issue, structure debate, and impose reputational costs on co-members who block action. These dynamics help explain why the Council repeatedly produces increasingly severe draft resolutions in high-profile crises despite anticipating vetoes.

More broadly, this study contributes to our understanding of selective responsiveness within international institutions by showing that visible action and enforceable action are governed by different political logics.

Recognizing proposals as an outcome in their own right clarifies why the Security Council simultaneously appears active yet ineffective in the face of mass atrocities, and why reputational politics will be central to understanding Council behavior as we move into a new era of great power politics that constrains actionable outcomes.

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## 8 Appendix

Table 4: Heckman Selection Model Outcome with P5 Dummy

	(1)
(Intercept)	2.899*** (0.573)
Avg. Political Distance	-0.553*** (0.147)
US-Russia Political Distance	-0.571** (0.195)
Avg. Arms Trade	0.009* (0.003)
Avg. Trade Balance	0.001** (0.000)
Active	0.110 (0.127)
Civilian Deaths (lag, log)	-0.030. (0.018)
AI Reports (lag)	0.004 (0.008)
Rhetorical Severity	0.005** (0.002)
Actionable Severity	-0.051 (0.075)
Section Count	-0.012. (0.006)
Chapter VII	0.116 (0.172)
Continuing Resolution	0.161 (0.116)
No. of Penholders	-0.014 (0.013)
P5 Penholder	0.100 (0.120)
IMR	0.073 (0.125)
Num.Obs.	75
R2	0.556
R2 Adj.	0.442
AIC	65.9
BIC	105.3
Log.Lik.	-15.960
F	4.916
RMSE	0.30

. p <0.1, \* p <0.05, \*\* p <0.01, \*\*\* p <0.001

Table 5: Rhetorical Severity Scale Dictionary

Severity Score	Emotive Words	Action Words	Modifiers
1	Aware, Believing, Considering, Noting, Recognizing, Stressing	Affirm, Adopt, Direct, Establish, Emphasizes, Recalls	Gravely, Strongly, Deeply, Seriously, Urgently, Vigorously
2	Anxious, Concerned	Calls, Invites	
3	Distressed, Grieved, Regretting	Recommend	
4	Deploring, Dismayed, Disturbed	Ask, Request	
5	Condemning	Require, Urge	
6	Alarmed	Warn	
7	Appalled, Shocked	Demand	
8	Indignant, Outraged		
9	Censured		