

# Setting the Agenda of the UN Security Council\*

YUKARI IWANAMI<sup>†</sup>

August 12, 2011

## Abstract

Although the primary responsibility for maintaining international security is conferred on the UN Security Council, not all domestic conflicts come to the agenda of this organization. Why do some domestic disputes enter the Council's agenda while others do not? This paper examines the determinants of the agenda and resolutions of the Security Council by focusing on civil wars between 1946 and 1999. I find strong empirical support for the power-politics argument that the Council's agenda reflects the interests of the permanent members. Domestic disputes in countries that are alliance partners and former colonies of permanent members are less likely to come to the agenda, while the Council is more inclined to intervene in conflicts where permanent members have already become involved. This result suggests that permanent members have a significant influence on the Council's decision making process even before the voting takes place. However, I also find that international norms have some influence on the Council's agenda setting. Intrastate conflicts that escalated into international wars by involving third parties tend to enter the agenda more frequently than those that did not, suggesting that the Council is more likely to intervene in conflicts if it is given justification for the involvement.

---

\*I would like to thank Hein Goemans and Michael Peress for helpful comments and suggestions on an earlier draft of the manuscript. Paper prepared for the 2011 annual meeting of the American Political Science Association.

<sup>†</sup>Department of Political Science, University of Rochester. E-mail: [yiwanami@mail.rochester.edu](mailto:yiwanami@mail.rochester.edu)

# 1 Introduction

The UN Security Council is one of the few international organizations that engage in security affairs. The Charter of the United Nations grants the Council primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security, and confers on it the power to impose sanctions, deploy peace-keeping operations, and authorize military operations so that the Council could resolve conflicts and restore international order. Despite the fact that since its establishment the Security Council has been criticized for lacking competence and decisiveness, a great number of both international and domestic disputes entered the Council's agenda.

When a conflict enters the agenda of the Council, Council members discuss that matter in the formal meetings where they decide whether to pass resolutions. Those resolutions contain the Council's orders such as calling for a ceasefire and troop withdrawal, dispatching observers who monitor ceasefires, condemning the disputants who threatened international security, and encouraging parties to engage in diplomatic negotiations. If the disputants do not follow these orders, the Council may further decide whether to take coercive measures such as imposing sanctions, dispatching enforcement missions, and authorizing military operations in order to contain ongoing conflicts, bring humanitarian aid, and prevent the recurrence of conflict (de Jonge Oudraat 1996).

Although the Council is supposed to become involved in any type of event that might threaten global security, scholars often believe that the Council's involvement is particularly effective in settling domestic disputes because the presence of the security dilemma or the existence of spoilers and war entrepreneurs makes it extremely difficult for the disputants to settle disputes by themselves (DeFigueiredo and Weingast 1999; Posen 1993; Stedman 1997). Previous studies on domestic conflicts find that the involvement of third parties tends to bring about an early settlement of disputes (Regan 2002; Walter 1997). Since by definition, domestic disputes normally originate within the territory of one country, it is not always easy for the Council to define all of these conflicts as threats to international peace and security. Nevertheless, the Council is frequently

dragged into these conflicts because domestic disputes can easily spread to neighboring countries and cause grave humanitarian disasters. Indeed, following the sudden increase in the number of domestic disputes in the post-Cold War era, the Council's agenda has expanded significantly. A large number of domestic disputes have entered the agenda of the Security Council and given rise to resolutions. Nevertheless, not all domestic disputes came to the Council's agenda. Whereas the Council became involved in civil wars in Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the former Yugoslavia, El Salvador, and Liberia, it did not address conflicts in Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Peru, and Colombia. Civil war in Cambodia entered the Council's agenda 12 years after the onset. While the Council discussed domestic strife in Papua New Guinea, it did not take any actions to settle the dispute. Why do some domestic disputes enter the agenda of the Security Council while others do not? How do members' political interests affect the agenda of the Security Council? What determinants influence passage of draft resolutions?

Scholars who analyze the United Nations tend to argue that the Council's decision-making process is driven by the interests of the permanent members (Bennis 1996; Wallensteen 2002; Wallensteen and Johansson 2004). The members that have continuous membership and veto power not only affect passage of resolutions but also prevent certain issues from entering the agenda with the threat of a veto. Accordingly, the agenda of the Security Council does not always reflect the concerns of the international community. The power-politics argument is widely discussed in the literature of the United Nations; however, very little systematic research has been done to test the validity of this argument. Wilkenfeld and Brecher (1984) have conducted one of the few empirical analyses of the Council's agenda setting by focusing on international conflicts. They find that the intensity of international war is associated with a high likelihood of UN involvement. However, to the author's knowledge, no systematic analysis has examined which domestic disputes are likely to enter the agenda of the Security Council. Although there exist several studies of UN peacekeeping operations that focus on domestic disputes and analyze when and where peacekeeping missions are likely to be dispatched (Doyle and Sambanis 2000; Page Fortna 2008; Gilligan and Stedman

2003), peacekeeping is just one measure of UN intervention, and in order to capture the Council's involvement in general, it is still necessary to analyze other forms of Council's intervention. This paper attempts to expand the scope of the analysis into the Council's agenda as a whole and examine factors that influence the Council's decision making.

In the next section, I offer a brief overview of the Council's agenda-setting process. Next, I introduce several hypotheses that I derive from existing literature. I then explain my data, discuss my results, and conclude with a discussion and implications to future analyses.

## **2 The Agenda and Resolutions of the Security Council**

When an event starts threatening international order, the members of the Security Council convene a meeting in order to discuss whether and how the Council should respond to the crisis. There are two types of meetings Council members hold to handle an issue: formal meetings and informal consultations.<sup>1</sup> The former are held in public and Council members use them to consult on issues at stake, exchange information, and decide whether the Council should take actions. The latter are private gatherings held prior to the formal meetings where Council members decide whether and when to hold a formal meeting and approve a provisional agenda for that meeting (Bailey and Daws 1998, 21-37). While a verbatim record of the formal meetings is issued, no official records of the informal consultations are kept.

The Charter of the United Nations confers the rights to bring issues to the Council on non-Council members (Article 35 (1)), non-UN members (Article 35 (2)), the Secretary-General (Article 99) and other UN organs (e.g., the General Assembly) (Article 11); however, the Provisional Rules of Procedure of the Security Council states that any items on the agenda first need to be prepared by the Secretary-General (Rule 6 of the Provisional Rules of Procedure of the Security Council). The Secretary-General lists the issues that the Council should handle through communi-

---

<sup>1</sup>There are also private meetings that are normally held to discuss the Council's recommendation on the appointment of the UN Secretary-General.

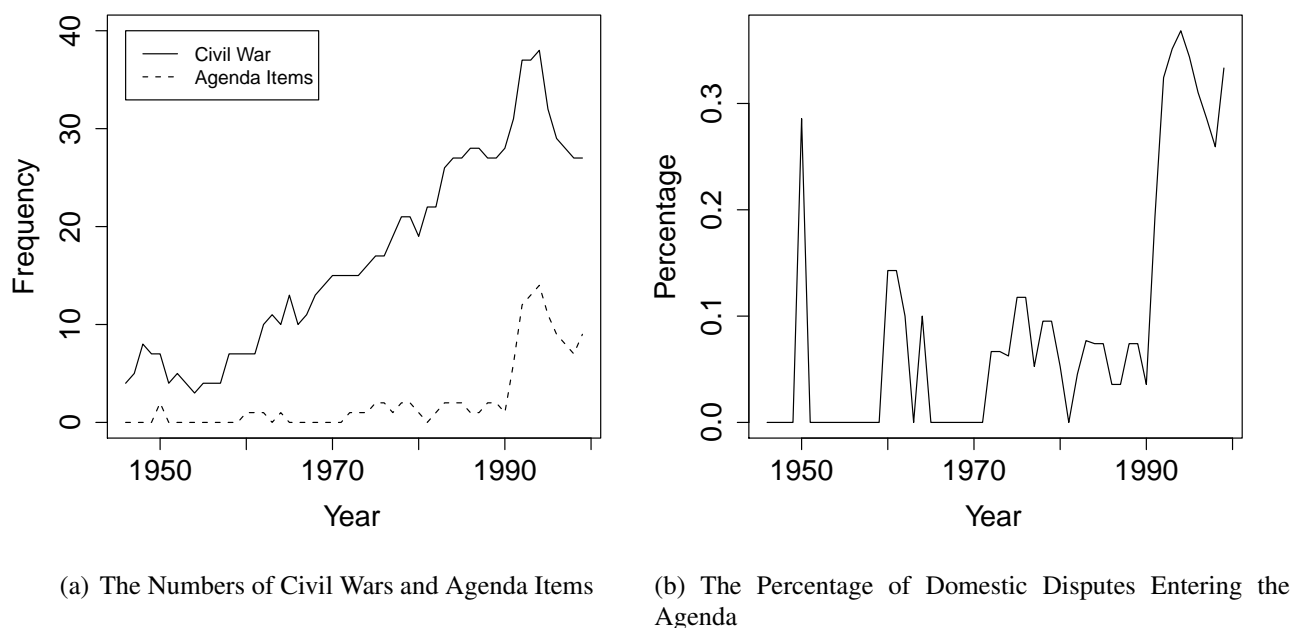


Figure 1: Domestic Disputes and the UN Security Council's Agenda

cations with member states and other organs of the United Nations in a document. The document is handed to the President of the Security Council who decides whether to approve it. Once it is approved, it is called the provisional agenda (Rule 7). Then, the President provides the provisional agenda to other Council members who decide whether to adopt the agenda. Once adopted, Council members discuss these issues at a particular formal meeting. Items that are adopted on the agenda are contained in *the Summary Statement of matters of which the Security Council is seized* until they are removed. Matters could be deleted from the Summary Statement if the Council adopts a resolution or rejects all proposals submitted, or if Council members reach a consensus on the removal of that item (Bailey and Daws 1998, 80-81; Hurd 2002).

Until 1990, the Security Council had put its main focus on the settlement of international disputes. However, since the end of the Cold War, the number of civil wars has increased significantly, outweighing the number of international wars. Following the increase in the number of civil wars, more and more domestic disputes entered the agenda of the Security Council and a large number

of resolutions have been adopted in order to settle these disputes. According to Fearon and Laitin (2003), 144 domestic disputes took place between 1946 and 1999. Of these, 36 entered the agenda of the Council and 33 gave rise to resolutions. Figure 1 (a) presents the numbers of ongoing civil wars and those that entered the agenda of the Security Council and (b) shows the percentage of domestic disputes that entered the Council's agenda. Although these figures suggest that more and more domestic disputes came to the agenda of the Security Council, the Council's agenda remains selective. In order to examine which domestic conflicts are more likely to draw the attention of the Security Council, I derive several hypotheses from the existing approaches and examine which hypotheses are empirically supported.

### **3 Setting the Agenda of the Security Council**

Why does the Security Council become involved in some domestic disputes and not others? Is the Council's involvement in civil war driven by the interests of permanent members, or by humanitarian imperatives? Previous studies on the United Nations and conflict management offer several explanations for the involvement of the Security Council in civil war. In this section, I derive several hypotheses from these approaches.

#### **3.1 Strategic Interests of the Permanent Members**

A common view that is shared by many scholars of international relations is that the Council's decision-making process is dominated by the five permanent members, and that both the agenda and resolutions reflect the interests of the major powers (Bennis 1996; de Jonge Oudraat 1996; Makinda 1996; Wallensteen 2002; Wallensteen and Johansson 2004). Although permanent members do not have any agenda-setting privileges, they can still exert a significant influence on the Council's agenda by threatening to veto resolutions. The Council is not able to pass any resolutions unless there is support from nine members including the concurring votes of the five permanent

members. While bringing up an issue that is likely to be vetoed may signal members' disagreement with the status quo, Council members tend to avoid these issues because the Council has limited resources and the inclusion of them on the agenda will certainly slow down the decision-making process. Indeed, during the 1950s, the Council was paralyzed due to the frequent use of vetoes by permanent members, in particular, by the Soviet Union. As a result, the Council was able to pass only one resolution in 1959.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, Council members attempt to avoid bringing issues that might threaten the vital interests of permanent members.

While scholars agree that domestic conflicts that are closely related to the national interests of the major powers are associated with Security Council involvement, there are conflicting views over which direction of the relationship. Some argue that the likelihood of involvement will increase if a domestic conflict is related to the vital interests of permanent members, whereas others contend that the likelihood will decrease if the interests of permanent members are highly engaged. While the proponents of the former view argue that permanent members welcome the involvement of the Security Council because it will reduce the costs of intervention and increase the legitimacy of engagement, the latter believe that permanent members attempt to circumvent the Council in order to avoid interference of other members in strategically important countries. Both arguments are well developed and widely discussed in the literature, though we still need to investigate which approach is more empirically supported. I first derive hypotheses from each of these approaches.

The first approach argues that the Security Council is more likely to become involved in a civil war when permanent members have close political and historical ties with the country in dispute. If a conflict takes place in an alliance partner, former colony, or neighboring country of a permanent member, the member is more willing to invite the Security Council because the involvement of the Council may bring about an earlier settlement of the dispute, and burden-sharing among UN members may reduce the costs of intervention. Therefore, civil wars in countries that have geographic proximity, ally ties, or former colonial relationships tends to enter the agenda and give

---

<sup>2</sup>S/RES/132 was approved on September 7, 1959.

rise to resolutions more frequently than those in other countries.

**Hypothesis 1.** *Conflicts in countries that have closer political and historical ties with permanent members tend to enter the Council's agenda and give rise to resolutions more frequently than conflicts in other countries.*

Moreover, this approach also considers that the Security Council is more inclined to handle domestic disputes in which a permanent member has already intervened. Although the involvement of the Security Council may increase the constraints on their actions, major powers still have an incentive to bring these issues to the Security Council in order to sort out the disagreements among permanent members, or enhance the legitimacy of their military operations. The involvement of a major power in a domestic dispute sometimes threatens the interests of other great powers and exacerbates the relationship between them. In order to reduce the tension arising from the dispute, Council members use the Council as a forum for sorting out the disagreements among themselves (Wallensteen 2002). Permanent members may also have an incentive to bring an issue to the Council because Council's involvement increases the legitimacy of their intervention. Given that Council's resolutions require support from nine members with various geographical and political backgrounds, Council's authorization to take coercive measures appears to be more legitimate than unilateral intervention. Although going through an international organization may require compromise and patience, receiving the Council's endorsement for unilateral action reduces the costs of intervention in the long run. Therefore, the major powers tend to bring a issue they are involved in to the attention of the Security Council (Bennis 1996, 84).

**Hypothesis 2.** *The involvement of the Security Council is more likely if a permanent member has already intervened in the conflict.*

According to this approach, the domestic regime type is also associated with the likelihood of the Council's involvement. Scholars who support this argument tend to stress that Great Britain, France, and the United States have an incentive to spread democracy. In order to turn war-torn



countries into democratically governed states, these permanent members bring more conflicts in nondemocracies to the attention of the Security Council than those in democracies (Andersson 2000; Marten 2004; Paris 2004). For example, Andersson (2000) argues that the United Nations is more likely to dispatch peacekeeping operations to nondemocracies than democracies.

**Hypothesis 3.** *The Security Council tends to intervene in conflicts that take place in nondemocracies more frequently than those in democracies.*

Moreover, this approach also argues that the presence of primary commodities influences the likelihood of the Council's involvement. In particular, if a domestic conflict takes place in a country that is rich in natural resources, such as oil, permanent members have an incentive to bring that issue to the Council in order to preserve their access to primary commodities (Gibbs 1997, 126; Andersson 2000, 17). Therefore, I derive the following hypothesis.

**Hypothesis 4.** *The Security Council is more likely to intervene in civil wars in countries that are rich in natural resources.*

Although these scholars view conflicts that are closely related to the interests of the major powers as more likely to invite active participation of the Security Council, other scholars contend that the Security Council is less likely to become involved in conflicts when the interests of permanent members are highly engaged. If a conflict takes place in a strategically important country, the great powers would rather choose to take unilateral action or intervene with a regional organization where they have stronger influence (Neack 1995, 190). Accordingly, the Security Council is less likely to intervene in countries that are strategically important to permanent members. In particular, domestic conflicts in countries that are alliance partners, former colonies, or neighboring countries of the permanent members are less likely to enter the Council's agenda. In her study of peacekeeping operations, Page Fortna (2008) finds that the United Nations is less likely to dispatch peacekeeping operations in the former colonies of the permanent members, and in the territory of

their neighboring countries. I examine whether her findings still hold even when I expand the scope of analysis into the Council's agenda as a whole.

**Hypothesis 5.** *The involvement of the Security Council is less likely in the domestic disputes of alliance partners, former colonies, or neighboring countries of the permanent members.*

This approach also views the Council's intervention as less likely to occur if one of the permanent members has already intervened in the conflict, or if a permanent member is a party to the conflict. The great powers have an incentive to circumvent the United Nations when they want to exclude the influence of other members from the conflict (de Jonge Oudraat 1996; Durch 1993, 22-23; Beadsley 2004; Bennis 1996; Gibbs 1997; Diehl 1993, 86). For example, Page Fortna (2008) finds that the United Nations is less likely to dispatch peacekeeping operations in a civil war that takes place in the territory of a permanent member.

**Hypothesis 6.** *The Security Council is less likely to intervene in conflicts in which a permanent member is directly involved as a conflicting party or a third party.*

### **3.2 International Norms and Humanitarian Concerns**

As the organization that is given primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security, the Security Council is often asked to intervene in interstate conflicts in order to settle disputes. However, the Council does not always find justification for intervening in intrastate conflicts because its involvement in domestic disputes might cause an infringement of the principles of sovereignty and non-intervention in internal affairs. In order to avoid infringing on international norms, the Council needs to single out conflicts that it can easily define as threats to international order and justify its involvement. Since domestic disputes that have escalated into international conflicts or invoked humanitarian concerns are more likely to give the Council justification for intervention, the Security Council is more likely to become involved in these conflicts.

First, the Security Council is more likely to become involved in a domestic dispute where a third party has already intervened and escalated it into an international war. Although a domestic conflict usually takes place within the territory of one country, it can easily influence politics and economy of neighboring countries by generating a massive outflow of refugees, destabilizing the regional economy, and invoking humanitarian concerns. This gives neighboring countries an incentive to intervene in order to bring about the early settlement of the dispute. Moreover, countries that share certain political preferences, ideologies, or ethnicity tend to intervene in a conflict in order to help one faction or one ethnic group win. However, if the assistance of third parties is not enough to tilt the power balance between the disputants, their involvement often results in the intensification of the conflict and the destabilization of the entire region. Therefore, the internationalization of conflicts gives justification for the Council to become involved (de Jonge Oudraat 1996, 517–18), and so the Security Council is more likely to intervene in a conflict if it has escalated into an international war by involving a third party.

**Hypothesis 7.** *If a domestic conflict escalates into an international war, the Security Council is more likely to step in.*

This approach also views the Security Council as inclined to intervene in a domestic conflict in order to improve humanitarian situations. The rise of humanitarian concerns led the Security Council to interfere in conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, the Sudan, and Cambodia. As the intensity of the conflict increases, the need for third-party intervention to provide humanitarian assistance and protect citizens from atrocities grows. The sudden increase in the number of deaths suggests that genocide, politicide, or ethnic cleansing is ongoing in that country. Such atrocities certainly give justification for the Council's involvement (Gilligan and Stedman 2003; Regan 2000; Beadsley 2004; Jakobsen 1996). By focusing on international crises, Wilkenfeld and Brecher (1984) find that the United Nations is more likely to intervene when a crisis poses a serious threat to international peace and security and that an increase in the intensity of the crisis tends to trigger the involvement of the Security Council. Gilligan and Stedman (2003) also find that the number

of deaths in a conflict is one of the best predictors of peacekeeping operations. This leads to the following hypothesis.

**Hypothesis 8.** *As the number of battle deaths increases, a conflict is more likely to draw the attention of the Security Council.*

Likewise, as the length of war increases, it also signals the intensity of conflict. The longer a conflict is, the more battle deaths result. The gradual increase in the number of deaths may enhance the likelihood that the Council will intervene in the conflict.

**Hypothesis 9.** *The longer a conflict is prolonged, the more likely it is that the Council will handle that issue.*

## 4 Research Design

In order to test the hypotheses derived in the previous section, I have collected a new dataset on the agenda and resolutions of the Security Council. The unit of observation is conflict-year. I examine only conflict-years in which a civil war is ongoing. Although there are various data on civil war, conflict-year observations of battle fatalities are available only to the data of Fearon and Laitin (2003) and observations of the involvement of permanent members and third parties are only available in intrastate war data of the Correlates of War Project (Sarkees and Wayman 2010). Therefore, my data include the observations of civil wars that are contained in both data sets. There are 445 ongoing domestic disputes between 1946 and 1999. Of these, 75 observations (16 percent) enter the agenda of the Security Council and 57 (13 percent) give rise to Council's resolutions.<sup>3</sup> These lower percentages suggest that the decision-making process of the Security Council is extremely selective and that only a few domestic disputes can successfully draw the attention of Council members. Although previous studies on UN peacekeeping operations tend to

---

<sup>3</sup>Note that data of Fearon and Laitin contain 917 ongoing domestic disputes. Of these 122 observations (13 percent) entered the agenda and 91 (10 percent) gave rise to resolutions.

use domestic disputes as the unit of observation, I use conflict-year data in order to analyze the effects of various factors on the Council's involvement in a particular year. This also minimizes the endogeneity issues that Gilligan and Stedman (2003) mentioned in their analysis.

I utilize two binary indicators as my dependent variables. The first variable, *Agenda*, measures whether a civil war enters the agenda of the Security Council in a given year. It is coded 1 for the years that a conflict comes to the Council's agenda and 0 for all other years. The second variable, *Resolution*, indicates whether the Security Council passes a resolution on that matter in a particular year. It is coded 1 for the years that the Council passed a resolution and 0 for all other years. Although the Council can also ask the General Assembly to hold meetings to discuss certain issues, I do not include those resolutions. I have collected these dependent variables based on the official documents of the United Nations (available at *UNBISNET*). Since both of the dependent variables are dichotomous, I use a logistic model to test the hypotheses.

Now I explain operationalization of the explanatory variables. In order to examine the validity of the power-politics argument, I prepare the following variables. *P5 Involvement* measures the effect of the involvement of permanent members on the likelihood that the Security Council will handle domestic conflicts. It is a binary variable, coded 1 if a permanent member is a party to the conflict or becomes involved in the conflict as a third party. I have coded this variable based on the Intrastate War data of the Correlates of War Project (Sarkees and Wayman 2010). Hypothesis 2 asserts that the involvement of permanent members increases the likelihood that the Security Council will handle that dispute whereas Hypothesis 6 contends that it decreases the likelihood. I examine which hypothesis is empirically supported.

In order to examine Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 5, I introduce the variables that measure the relationship between countries in conflict and Council members. *P5 Ally* is a dummy variable which is coded 1 if a country is an alliance partner of permanent members and 0 otherwise. I use the Alliance Treaty Obligations and Provisions (ATOP) dataset to code this variable (Leeds et al. 2002). *Former P5 Colony* is also a dichotomous variable, coded 1 if a country is a former

colony of permanent members and 0 otherwise. I obtained this variable from Page Fortna (2008). *P5 Contiguity* is another binary variable, which is coded 1 if a country is adjacent to permanent members by land or up to 150 miles of water and 0 otherwise. I obtained this variable from Page Fortna (2008). Although Hypothesis 1 states that a close connection with permanent members will increase the likelihood of the Council's involvement, Hypothesis 5 contends that it will decrease the likelihood. I examine whether the coefficient estimates are positive to support the former or negative to support the latter.

I also introduce a series of variables that measure the attributes of countries in conflict. *Democracy* measures domestic regime type of each country. I use the polity2 democracy-autocracy measure from the Polity IV Project (Marshall, Gurr and Jaggers 2010). This variable takes on values ranging from -10 to 10, where larger values correspond to higher level of democracy and smaller values higher level of autocracy. According to Hypothesis 3, democratic countries should be associated with a lower likelihood of being on the agenda and promoting resolutions of the Council. Thus I expect that the coefficient estimate of this variable is negative. *Oil* is a binary variable which is coded 1 if a country in conflict exports oil. I use the variable collected by Fearon and Laitin (2003). According to Hypothesis 4, Council members are more willing to intervene in countries that are rich in natural resources in order to secure access to primary commodities. I expect the coefficient estimate of this variable to be positive.

In order to control for the effects of international norms and humanitarian concerns, I include the following variables. *Internationalized* is a dichotomous variable which takes a value of 1 if a domestic conflict escalates into an international war with the involvement of a third party. I created this variable based on the intrastate data of the Correlates of War Data Project (Sarkees and Wayman 2010). Hypothesis 7 suggests that if a conflict becomes internationalized, the Security Council is more likely to become involved because it is given justification for intervention. Thus, I expect the coefficient estimate of *Internationalized* to be positive. *Deaths* is a measure of the number of battle fatalities in thousands. I use the battle deaths data from Lacina and Gleditsch

(2005). According to Hypothesis 8, the increase in the number of battle fatalities is associated with a higher likelihood of being on the agenda and resolutions of the Security Council. Therefore, I expect that the coefficient estimate of this variable is positive. As another proxy of the intensity of disputes, *Duration* is included. This variable measures the length of domestic disputes. It takes a value of 1 in the year when a country enters a conflict plus 1 for each year the conflict continues.<sup>4</sup> Hypothesis 9 states that the longer a conflict lasts, the more likely it is that the Security Council will become involved in that conflict. Therefore, I expect that the coefficient estimate of this variable is positive.

Finally, I include a series of control variables. The first variable controls for the strength of the government army. Previous studies suggest that as the government army size increases, the Security Council will be less inclined to become involved in the conflict for two reasons. First, as the strength of government increases, it is more likely that the government will win the conflict outright before the Council intervenes (Page Fortna 2008). In addition, countries with strong military capabilities tend to have a significant influence in world politics or in the region, which may allow them to prevent certain issues from coming to the agenda of the Security Council (Wallenstein 2002). For example, Gilligan and Stedman (2003) find that the United Nations tends to avoid dispatching peacekeeping operations in a country whose government has strong army. Accordingly, I include *Government Army* which measures the government army size in thousands. This variable is from Doyle and Sambanis (2006).<sup>5</sup> Given that as the size of government army increases, the likelihood of the Council's involvement will decrease because the government is more likely to win outright and because militarily strong countries are more capable of excluding the influence of other countries. Thus, I expect that the coefficient estimate of *Government Army* is negative.

I also choose to include another variable, *Cold War*, in order to control for the effect of the

---

<sup>4</sup>A new conflict sometimes takes place following the end of the previous conflict. However, I did not differentiate these two conflicts because my interest is to measure the overall years that a country is involved in civil war.

<sup>5</sup>I also use the country's military capabilities as a proxy, using the Composite Index of National Capabilities (CINC) from the Correlates of War Project (Ghosn, Palmer and Bremer 2004). This does not change the results.

structural change in the international system. This is a dichotomous variable which is coded 1 before 1990 and 0 if 1990 or later. During the Cold War, the Council did not play an important role in conflict management because the superpowers prevented the Council from getting involved in the internal affairs of the countries that are under their spheres of influence. Since the involvement of the Security Council will lead to the increase in the opponent's influence, the superpowers have an incentive not to bring some domestic disputes to the Security Council. Following the end of the Cold War, the constraints imposed on the Council's activity have decreased significantly, which allowed the Council to intervene in domestic disputes in countries that were once under the control of the superpowers. Since this suggests the need to control for the systematic change in the international system, I include *Cold War* and expect that the coefficient estimate of this variable is negative.

Note that since Council's involvement in countries may affect their characteristics, I lag democracy scores, and the government army size by one year to avoid endogeneity issues. Note also that in order to avoid numerical instability, I divide *Deaths* and *Government Army* by 1000.

## 5 Results

For each dependent variable, I run logistic regressions with two different specifications.<sup>6</sup> Model I examines the likelihood that a domestic conflict where a permanent member has been involved as a party to the conflict or as a third party will enter the agenda and give rise to resolutions. Model II examines the likelihood that an internationalized domestic dispute will come to the agenda and give rise to resolutions. Since the variable, *Internationalized*, includes most of the observations of *P5 Involved* (except those where a permanent member is a party to the conflict), I run regressions with either of these variables. Table 1 presents the results of regressions. For each specification,

---

<sup>6</sup>I also run regressions with a Heckman bivariate selection model using the specification of Model I by excluding *Government Army* and *Oil* from the selection equation. However, the correlation term  $\rho$  was not statistically significant and so I focus on the results of logistic model.



	Model I (a)	Model I (b)	Model II (a)	Model II (b)
	<i>Agenda</i>	<i>Resolutions</i>	<i>Agenda</i>	<i>Resolutions</i>
<i>Constant</i>	2.124*** (0.492)	1.663*** (0.512)	1.904*** (0.495)	1.412*** (0.532)
<i>P5 Involvement</i>	1.690*** (0.570)	1.385** (0.596)		
<i>P5 Ally</i>	-1.368*** (0.443)	-1.368*** (0.522)	-1.350*** (0.450)	-1.310** (0.536)
<i>Former P5 Colony</i>	-1.803*** (0.455)	-2.001*** (0.502)	-1.601*** (0.444)	-1.773*** (0.498)
<i>P5 Contiguity</i>	-0.274 (0.468)	-0.640 (0.603)	-0.012 (0.449)	-0.324 (0.569)
<i>Democracy</i>	-2.323*** (0.799)	-1.629* (0.871)	-2.346*** (0.800)	-1.520* (0.866)
<i>Oil</i>	-0.228 (0.480)	1.013* (0.553)	-0.393 (0.477)	0.732 (0.559)
<i>Deaths</i>	-0.017 (0.022)	-0.016 (0.026)	-0.019 (0.024)	-0.024 (0.029)
<i>Duration</i>	-0.036 (0.023)	-0.015 (0.024)	-0.035 (0.023)	-0.016 (0.024)
<i>Internationalized</i>			0.842** (0.373)	0.763* (0.407)
<i>Government Army</i>	-0.792** (0.394)	-8.615** (3.720)	-0.473 (0.395)	-7.012* (3.679)
<i>Cold War</i>	-3.000*** (0.369)	-2.653*** (0.412)	-2.977*** (0.363)	-2.676*** (0.412)
<i>Log Likelihood</i>	-120.3728	-103.8977	-122.2527	-104.7656
<i>N</i>	445	445	445	445

Standard errors are reported in parentheses. \* $p < 0.1$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.01$  (two-tailed).

Table 1: Issues that entered the agenda and gave rise to resolutions.

Model (a) shows the results of the regression with *Agenda* as the dependent variable and Model (b) presents the results of the regression with *Resolutions* as the dependent variable. Table 2 presents the results of fixed effects for each model.

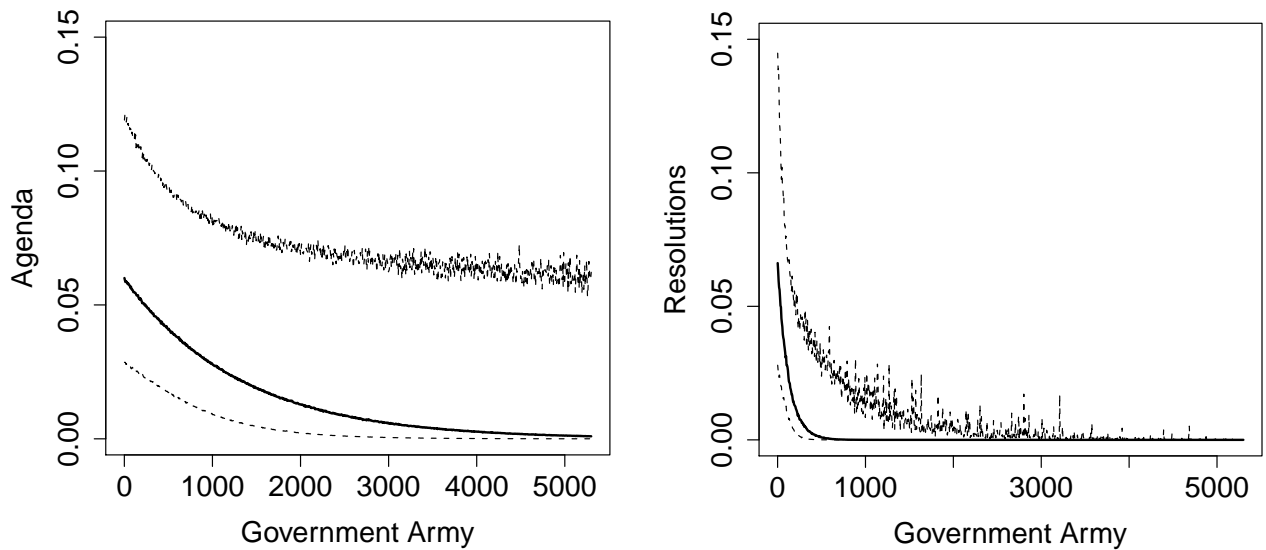
The coefficient estimates of *P5 Involvement* are both positive and statistically significant at least at the 5 percent level in Model I (a) and (b). This result suggests that the Security Council is more likely to intervene in conflicts in which a permanent member has already become involved as a party to the conflict or as a third party. This result supports Hypothesis 2. Table 2 suggests

	Model I		Model II	
	<i>Agenda</i>	<i>Resolutions</i>	<i>Agenda</i>	<i>Resolutions</i>
<i>P5 Involvement = 0</i>	0.05	0.009		
<i>P5 Involvement = 1</i>	0.22	0.033		
<i>P5 Ally = 0</i>	0.17	0.033	0.153	0.034
<i>P5 Ally = 1</i>	0.05	0.009	0.045	0.01
<i>Former P5 Colony = 0</i>	0.05	0.009	0.045	0.01
<i>Former P5 Colony = 1</i>	0.008	0.001	0.009	0.002
<i>Democracy = 0</i>	0.05	0.009	0.045	0.01
<i>Democracy = 1</i>	0.005	0.002	0.004	0.002
<i>Internationalized = 0</i>			0.04	0.01
<i>Internationalized = 1</i>			0.098	0.02
<i>Cold War = 0</i>	0.512	0.110	0.479	0.123
<i>Cold War = 1</i>	0.05	0.009	0.045	0.01

Table 2: Fixed Effect

that if a permanent member is not involved in a conflict, the likelihood that the conflict will enter the Council's agenda is 5 percent and the likelihood that the conflict will give rise to resolutions is only 1 percent. However, the involvement of a permanent member raises the former likelihood to 22 percent and the latter to 3 percent. The small impact on passage of resolutions suggests that passing resolutions requires more political factors than setting the agenda.

It appears that *P5 Ally* and *Former P5 Colony* have a negative influence on the agenda and passage of resolutions, though the effect of *P5 Contiguity* remains uncertain. In both specifications, the coefficient estimates of *P5 Ally* and *Former P5 Colony* are negative and statistically significant at least at the 5 percent level, suggesting that the Security Council is less inclined to become involved in domestic countries that are alliance partners or former colonies of permanent members. Although the effect of neighboring countries on the agenda remains uncertain, this result partially supports Hypothesis 5. According to Model I in Table 2, if a country is not an ally of a permanent member, the likelihood that a conflict in that country will enter the agenda is 17 percent and the likelihood that the conflict will give rise to resolutions is 3.3 percent. However, once a country becomes an ally of a permanent member, the probabilities fall to 5 percent and 1 percent, respec-



(a) Likelihood that a Civil War Will Enter the Agenda

(b) Likelihood that the Council Will Pass a Resolution

Figure 2: The Expected Probabilities of the Size of the Government Army

tively. The effect of former colonial tie seems to have much smaller effects. The likelihood that the Security Council will discuss an issue in countries that are not former colonies is 5 percent while the likelihood drops to 1 percent if the conflicts take place in former colonies. These results suggest that a permanent member has a strong influence on both agenda setting and passage of resolutions.

It appears that Hypothesis 3 is supported. The coefficient estimates of *Democracy* are statistically significant at the conventional level in all models, suggesting that the Security Council is more inclined to become involved in civil wars in nondemocracies than in democracies. Table 2 suggests that with the Model I specification, less than 5 percent of domestic disputes in non-democracies enter the agenda, whereas less than 1 percent of conflicts in democracies come to the agenda.

The coefficient estimates of *Oil* are negative in the Model (a)'s while they are positive in the Model (b)'s. However, they are not statistically significant except in Model I (b) where the coeffi-

cient estimate is significant at the 10 percent level. This suggests that I need further investigation before drawing conclusions about the effects of primary commodities on the involvement of the Security Council. Similarly, the intensity of conflict has no significance. The coefficient estimates of *Deaths* and *Duration* are negative but not statistically significant at the conventional level, suggesting that the effects of the intensity of conflict on the Council's involvement remain uncertain.

The UN Security Council appears to be more likely to become involved once a civil war escalates into an international war. The coefficient estimates of *Internationalized* are positive and statistically significant in Model II. This result supports Hypothesis 7, suggesting that the involvement of third parties is associated with the increase in the likelihood that the Security Council becomes involved. Table 2 shows that if a domestic dispute becomes internationalized, the likelihood that the Security Council discusses that matter rises from 4 percent to 10 percent, and the likelihood that the Council passes a resolution increases from 1 percent to 2 percent. Although conflicts involving a permanent member appear to have a greater influence on the involvement of the Council, this result suggests that international norms also have some effect on the Council's policy outcomes.

*Government Army* has mixed results. The coefficient estimates are negative in all models and they are statistically significant at the conventional level in all models except model II (a). Using the coefficient estimates of Model I, I plot the expected probabilities of *Government Army* and present them in Figure 2 with 95 percent confidence intervals. Figure 2 (a) shows the expected probability that an issue enters the Council's agenda, and (b) shows the probability that the Council passes a resolution on that matter. If the government army size is around 500,000, the likelihood that the Council puts that matter on the agenda is 4 percent. However, if the government army size is over 5000,000, the likelihood falls to almost zero, though uncertainty increases as the size of the army increases. Likewise, if the government army size is less than 200,000, the probability that the Council passes a resolution is about 7 percent. The probability falls to almost zero once the army size becomes larger than 200,000.

Finally, the structural change in the international system seems to have a significant influence on the agenda and resolutions of the Security Council. The coefficient estimates of *Cold War* are negative and statistically significant at the 1 percent level in all models, suggesting that the end of the Cold War led the Security Council to become involved in domestic disputes more frequently. Model I in Table 2 shows that the likelihood that the Security Council becomes involved in domestic disputes has increased from 5 percent to over 50 percent since the end of the Cold War, though the probability that the Council passes a resolution on a domestic dispute remains low (11 percent). The low likelihood of passing resolutions in the post-Cold War era suggests that Council members' policy preferences are still conflicting and that passing resolutions remains difficult.

## **6 Conclusion**

This study conducted the first systematic empirical analysis on the agenda and resolutions of the UN Security Council. It examined which domestic disputes are more likely to come to the agenda and give rise to resolutions, and what factors influence the decision-making process of the Security Council. The results provide empirical evidence for the power-politics argument that the Council's agenda and resolutions are controlled by the members that have continuous membership and veto power. Domestic disputes in countries that are closely related to permanent members, such as alliance partners and former colonies, are less likely to come to the agenda of the Security Council, while conflicts where permanent members have already become involved, or conflicts in nondemocratic countries are more likely to enter the agenda of the Council. Although these findings suggest that the Council's decision-making process is manipulated by the permanent members, it is noteworthy that these members can influence Council's decision making even before the voting takes place. Furthermore, I also find that international norms have some influence on Council's agenda setting. Once a civil war involves a third party, the likelihood that the Security Council becomes involved in that dispute doubles. This suggests that the Security Council is more likely to intervene

in a civil war if it is given justification for the involvement.

Although the primary purpose of this paper is to to conduct empirical analyses of the UN decision-making process, my findings also contribute to the literature on conflict management and civil war. Previous studies suggest that the involvement of third parties tends to bring about the settlement of domestic disputes (Regan 2002; Walter 1997); however, only a few systematic studies have been conducted to analyze which domestic disputes are more likely to involve international organizations, specifically the United Nations. By focusing on the UN Security Council, this study provides insights into which domestic disputes are more likely to involve the Security Council and which disputes still need the involvement of other organizations or individual states in order to bring about resolutions of those conflicts.

Yet, this is a first cut analysis of the agenda and resolutions of the Security Council and there are several points that deserve further analysis. First, I need to clarify the puzzles that came up while I was doing this research. For example, while I find that power politics among Council members have a significant influence on Council's agenda setting, it still remains unclear why conflicts in alliance partners or former colonies of permanent members are less likely to come to the Council's agenda, while conflicts that permanent members are already involved in are more likely to draw the attention of the Council. This suggests that permanent members are less likely to become involved in conflicts in their alliance partners or former colonies. What prevents them from intervening in domestic conflicts of their allies? Or are these countries simply less likely to suffer from domestic disputes? Which domestic disputes are permanent members more likely to become involved in and why are these countries less likely to be allies of permanent members? In the future, we need to investigate these issues further. Moreover, I also need to do more detailed research on the passage of resolutions. Although I analyze what factors increase the likelihood that a domestic dispute will prompt the Council's resolutions, whether a proposal becomes a resolution depends on the voting choices of Council members. By analyzing the voting patterns of Council members, I investigate the relationship between the countries in conflict and Council members' policy preferences and

how the relationship influences the policy outcome of the Security Council.

## References

- Andersson, Andreas. 2000. "Democracies and UN Peacekeeping Operations, 1990–1996." *International Peacekeeping* 7:1–22.
- Bailey, Sydney D. and Sam Daws. 1998. *The Procedure of the UN Security Council*. Third ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Bennis, Phylis. 1996. *Calling the Shots: How Washington Dominates Today's U.N.* New York: Olive Branch Press.
- De Figueired, Rui and Barry Weingast. 1999. "Rationality of Fear: Political Opportunism and Ethnic Conflict". In *Civil War, Insecurity, and Intervention*, ed. Barbara F. Walter and Jack L. Snyder. New York: Columbia University Press pp. 261–302.
- de Jonge Oudraat, Chantal. 1996. "The United Nations and Internal Conflict". In *The International dimensions of Internal Conflict*, ed. Michael E. Brown. Cambridge MA: MIT Press.
- Diehl, Paul F. 1993. *International Peacekeeping*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Doyle, Michael W. and Nicholas Sambanis. 2000. "International Peacebuilding: A Theoretical and Quantitative Analysis." *American Political Science Review* 94(4):779–801.
- Dyle, Michael W. and Nicholas Sambanis. 2006. *Making War and Building Peace: United Nations Peace Operations*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Fearon, James D. and David D. Laitin. 2003. "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War." *American Political Science Review* 97(1):75–90.

- Ghosn, Faten, Glenn Palmer and Stuart Bremer. 2004. "The MID3 Data Sets, 1993-2001: Procedures, Coding Rules, and Description." *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 21:133–154.
- Gibbs, David. 1997. "Is Peacekeeping a New Form of Imperialism?" *International Peacekeeping* 4:122–128.
- Gilligan, Michael and Stephen John Stedman. 2003. "Where do the Peacekeepers Go?" *International Studies Review* 5(4):37–54.
- Hurd, Ian. 2002. "Legitimacy, Power, and the Symbolic Life of the UN Security Council." *Global Governance* 8(1):35–51.
- Jakobsen, Peter Viggo. 1996. "National Interest, Humanitarianism, or CNN: What Triggers UN Peace Enforcement after the Cold War?" *Journal of Peace Research* 33(2):205–15.
- Lacina, Bethany and Nils Petter Gleditsch. 2005. "Monitoring Trends in Global Combat: A New Dataset of Battle Deaths." *European Journal of Population* 21:145–166.
- Leeds, Brett Ashley, Jeffrey M. Ritter, Sara McLaughlin Mitchell and Andrew G. Long. 2002. "Alliance Treaty Obligations and Provisions, 1815-1944." *International Interactions* 28:237–260.
- Makinda, Samuel M. 1996. "Sovereignty and International Security: Challenges for the United Nations." *Global Governance* 2:149–168.
- Marshall, Monty G., Ted Robert Gurr and Keith Jaggers. 2010. "Polity IV Project: Political Regime Characteristics and Transitions, 1800-2009." <http://www.systemicpeace.org/polity/polity4.htm>.
- Neack, Laura. 1995. "UN Peace-keeping: In the Interest of Community or Self?" *Journal of Peace Research* 32:181–196.



- Page Fortna, Virginia. 2008. *Does Peacekeeping Work?* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Posen, Barry R. 1993. "The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict." *Survival* 35:27–47.
- Regan, Patrick M. 2000. *Civil Wars and Foreign Powers: Outside Intervention in Intrastate Conflict*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
- Regan, Patrick M. 2002. "Third-Party Intervention and the Duration of Intrastate Conflicts." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 46(1):55–73.
- Sarkees, Meredith Reid and Frank Wayman. 2010. *Resport to War: 1816–2007*. CQ Press.
- Stedman, Stephen John. 1997. "Spoiler Problems in Peace Process." *International Security* 22(2):5–53.
- Wallensteen, Peter. 2002. *Understanding Conflict Resolution: War, Peace and the Global System*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Wallensteen, Peter and Patrik Johansson. 2004. "Security Council Decisions in Perspective". In *The UN Security Council: From the Cold War to the 21st Century*, ed. David M. Malone. London: Lynne Rienner Publications pp. 17–33.
- Walter, Barbara F. 1997. "The Critical Barrier to Civil War Settlement." *International Organization* 51(3):335–64.
- Wilkenfeld, Jonathan and Michale Brecher. 1984. "International Crises, 1945-1975: The UN Dimension." *International Studies Quarterly* 28:45–67.