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## Russia's Use of UN Mechanisms To Implement And Legitimize Aggression: Legal, Political and Disinformation Aspects

The article presents a comprehensive examination of the Russian Federation's use of United Nations (UN) mechanisms to advance its geopolitical objectives, obstruct international initiatives that contradict its policy, and wage information and psychological warfare. The analysis indicates that the Russian Federation's participation in the UN Security Council lacks a clear legal foundation, raising questions about the legitimacy of its use of veto power'. It is documented that Russia systematically uses this privilege to veto resolutions aimed at condemning its aggression and investigating war crimes, thereby prolonging the war and evading accountability. Significant attention is given to Russia's manipulation of UN peacekeeping operations, which it seeks to exploit to consolidate control over occupied territories. The study emphasizes Russia's information and psychological operations within the

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UN, which facilitate the spread of disinformation, undermine trust in international institutions, and adversely influence state voting on critical resolutions in the General Assembly. The results obtained illustrate the necessity of revamping the UN decision-making mechanism, particularly by limiting aggressor states' ability to exercise the veto in their own interests. Proposed procedural reforms aim to enhance the UN's effectiveness in maintaining peace and safeguarding international security.

### **Keywords**

United Nations, Russian Federation, veto authority, global security, hybrid warfare, peacekeeping operations, disinformation, international jurisprudence

## **Introduction**

Following the Second World War, there emerged a need for an effective international order to guarantee global peace and security. The United Nations (UN), established on October 24, 1945, laid the foundations for the current global order by creating a framework for collective security and norms of peaceful coexistence among states. Despite its fundamental purpose as a primary mechanism for preventing armed conflicts, the UN's effectiveness in addressing state aggression today is increasingly questioned. A contemporary challenge is exploitation of UN mechanisms by the Russian Federation to justify its aggression against Ukraine. Russia's claim to the legal succession of the USSR, combined with its abuse of permanent membership in the Security Council, has created legal gaps that allow it to exploit UN procedures and pursue strategic objectives in a hybrid manner. Its constant use of the veto to block resolutions condemning its policies, particularly against Ukraine, undermines collective security, destabilizes the region, and poses a threat to global security.

Moreover, Russia employs disinformation tactics to alter global perception, complicating the responses of the UN and the international community (NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence, 2015). Through these mechanisms, it attempts to legitimize the annexation of Crimea and ongoing aggression in Ukraine, setting a dangerous precedent for future violations of territorial integrity worldwide.

This article addresses the critical issue of aggressor states abusing UN mechanisms—originally designed to maintain peace and

stability—to justify unlawful actions and avoid accountability. Such actions undermine core legal norms, reduce the credibility of collective security organizations, and weaken the enforceability of legal norms. The UN’s inability to act effectively against violations by permanent Security Council members highlights systemic vulnerabilities that demand a reconsideration of conflict-resolution processes.

The objectives of this research are to analyze the UN mechanisms used by Russia, assess their impact on the war in Ukraine and international legal norms, and explore potential reforms to strengthen the UN’s institutional capacity against similar violations. The study hypothesizes that Russia’s succession claim, misuse of veto power, and strategic use of disinformation create normative voids, weaken multilateral initiatives, and obstruct coherent global responses.

This research employs diverse data sources, including international treaties and laws (the UN Charter, relevant General Assembly resolutions such as 68/262 and 11/6, and the Convention on the Prevention of Genocide), scholarly analyses (Kissinger, Mearsheimer, Zakaria, Vasylenko), and empirical reports from organizations such as Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and the NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence.

The article is structured as follows: it first presents the methodology, then analyzes Russia’s exploitation of UN mechanisms—including questions regarding the illegitimacy of its membership, misuse of veto power, disinformation campaigns, and threats to global security—and concludes with a discussion of the legal and political implications, as well as recommendations for enhancing the effectiveness of the UN and international law in addressing contemporary security challenges.

## 1. Methodology

An integrative methodological design is applied in the research, combining content, discourse, comparative, geopolitical, and theoretical analysis. The methodology was developed to comprehensively examine Russia’s strategies within the United Nations and to explore the impact of such actions on international law, diplomacy, and global security. The core components of the methodology are outlined in Table 1 and explained below.

Table 1. Components of the research methodology applied in the study.

Method	Focus	Purpose
<b>Content Analysis</b>	UN Charter, Security Council minutes, General Assembly and UNSC resolutions, UN reports on Ukraine	To identify Russia's official stances and analyse their influence on institutional decision-making
<b>Discourse Analysis</b>	Speeches by Russian permanent representative to UN V. Nebenzia	To analyse rhetorical methods and propaganda narratives affecting UN discussions
<b>Comparative and Quantitative Analysis</b>	Russia's use of veto power (2000–2023) in conflicts (Ukraine, Syria, Kosovo)	To identify patterns of obstructionism and assess asymmetries in geopolitical influence
<b>Geopolitical Analysis</b>	Implications of UN-related diplomatic deadlocks and their remedies for global security dynamics	To evaluate how Russia's actions within the UN affect the global security environment at both regional and global levels
<b>Theoretical Frameworks</b>	Hybrid warfare (McCuen, Chivvis), Realism, Liberalism, Institutionalism, Critical Theories	To analyse Russia's policy, the shortcoming of the UN, and the impact of global structural disparities.

*Source:* Compiled by the author based on the chosen analytical approaches and theoretical frameworks.

This integrated framework facilitated the discovery of two key analytical dimensions:

**1. Institutional Strategies and Mechanisms of Influence.** This study analyses Russia's employment of institutional mechanisms—veto power, procedural manipulation, and disinformation—within a coordinated hybrid warfare strategy, as delineated by the concept of hybrid warfare (McCuen, 2008; Chivvis, 2017), to alter the normative framework of international relations.

**2. Institutional Limitations and Theoretical Analysis.** Applying institutional realism (Keohane, 1984), the study examines Russia's strategic interaction with UN institutions to obstruct unfavorable resolutions and preserve hegemonic power.

This methodology facilitates a thorough and critical assessment of Russia's use of UN procedures to evade condemnation and sanctions, project power, legitimize violence, and alter international standards.

## 2. Results

The study found that the Russian Federation is systematically using the institutions of the United Nations (UN) to legitimize its aggression, hinder efforts of the international community to

condemn its actions, and engage in information war. This analysis also reveals that its membership in the UN and the Security Council was not established in accordance with the UN Charter, thereby casting doubt on the legality of its position in the institution. This undermines the efficacy of collective security mechanisms, as the Russian Federation consistently uses its veto power to obstruct resolutions aimed at addressing the conflict in Ukraine, thus protecting the aggressor state from accountability under international law and creating legal precedents for violations of territorial integrity by other nations.

## **2.1. The Illegitimacy of Russia's Membership in the United Nations**

Russia assumed the USSR's seat at the UN, including permanent membership in the Security Council and veto privileges, without formal legal justification or approval by the UN General Assembly, as required by Article 18(2) of the UN Charter. On December 24, 1991, Russian President Boris Yeltsin unilaterally declared Russia the "sole successor of the USSR" in correspondence with the UN Secretary-General—a claim contested under international law, as succession after the USSR's dissolution should have been negotiated with all former republics and approved by the General Assembly (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, 2023). Furthermore, Article 23 of the UN Charter explicitly names the USSR, not the Russian Federation, as a permanent Security Council member. No formal amendment was ever enacted to transfer this seat to Russia, raising serious legal concerns about the legitimacy of its permanent membership. This illegitimate status allows Russia to misuse its veto power and obstruct resolutions condemning its actions in Ukraine. The situation undermines the binding force of Russia's vetoes and related Security Council decisions. More broadly, it exposes a systemic vulnerability in the UN framework, which allowed this transition without collective consent, thereby undermining principles of sovereign equality and procedural legitimacy foundational to international law. This case illustrates how geopolitical realities can override legal norms, highlighting structural weaknesses within the international legal system.

## 2.2. Employing the Veto Power to Legitimize Aggression

Russia regularly uses its veto authority in the UN Security Council to obstruct resolutions that may limit its aggression (Vasylenko, 2016; Security Council, 2024.). This has become one of the key mechanisms for legitimizing its own policies.

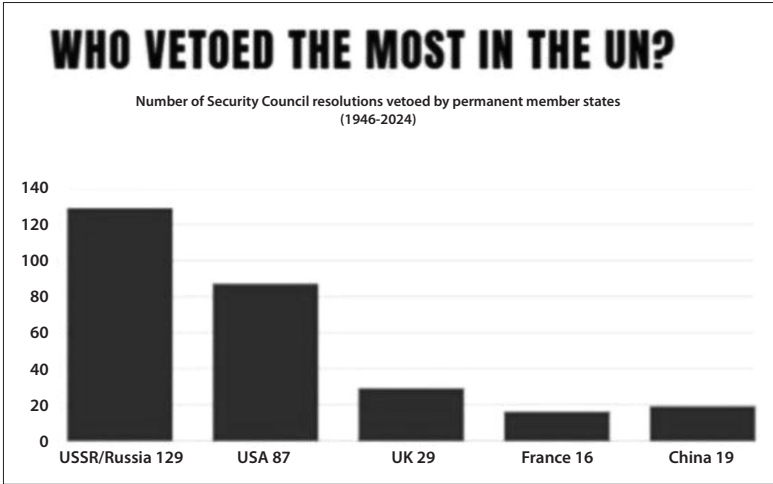


Figure 1. Who vetoed the most in the UN.

Source: Made by the authors on the basis of the UN Security Council Meetings & Outcomes Tables.

As can be seen from Figure 1, between 1946 and 2024, the USSR/Russia used the veto 129 times, which is significantly higher than the other permanent members of the Security Council: the USA – 87 times, the UK – 29, China – 19, France – 16.

These figures show that Russia consistently blocks decisions that could limit its actions or strengthen collective control over compliance with international law. The veto becomes not only a tool to protect its own interests, but also a means of avoiding responsibility.

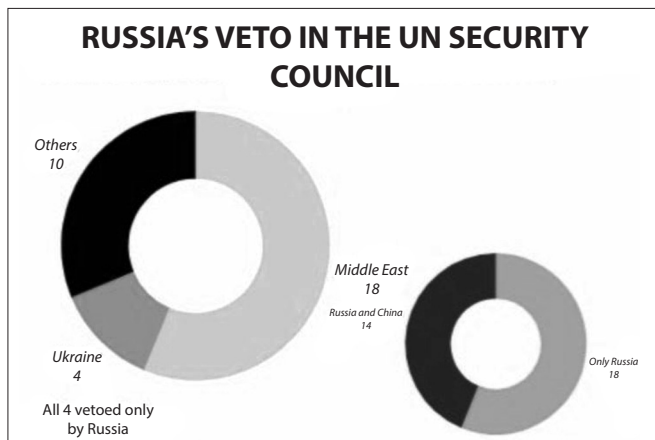


Figure 2. Russia's veto in the UN Security Council.

Source: Made by the authors on the basis of the UN Security Council Meetings & Outcomes Tables.

Figure 2 shows the subject matter of Russian vetoes in 2000–2024. The majority were imposed on Middle East issues (18 cases), 4 on Ukraine, and 10 on other international security issues. Of the 32 cases, 18 vetoes were imposed by Russia alone, and 14 jointly with China. This demonstrates that Russia systematically uses the veto not only to protect itself, but also to support allies or partners who may be important in shaping an alternative international order. Cooperation with China in this context shows the formation of a kind of “blocking coalition” in the Security Council.

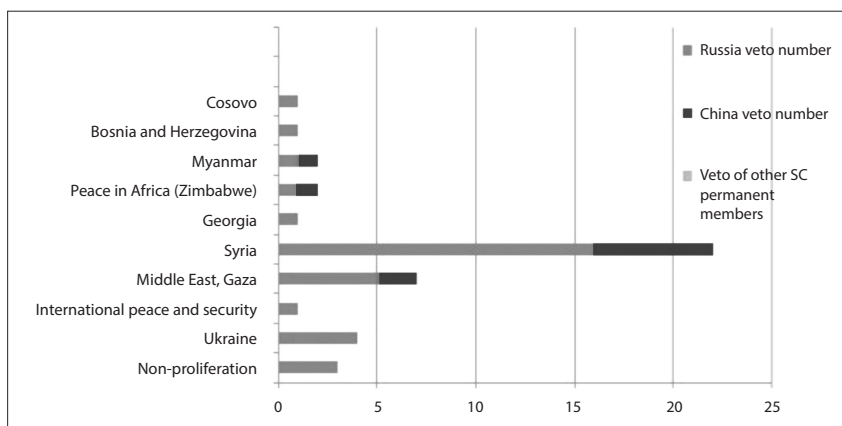


Figure 3. Vetoes in the UN: Blocking Resolutions on War, Nuclear Weapons, and Global Security.

Source: Made by the authors on the basis of UN Security Council Meetings & Outcomes Tables.

Figure 3 details the veto topic by region and area: from blocking resolutions on conflicts in Kosovo, Georgia, Syria, Ukraine to issues of nuclear non-proliferation. The data on Syria, where Russia blocked 16 resolutions and China blocked 5, or on Ukraine, where 4 resolutions were thwarted solely by Russia, are particularly telling. Such actions effectively paralyze the Security Council’s ability to respond to gross violations of international law and call into question the effectiveness of this body as a collective security mechanism.

Russia’s use of the veto right has specific examples that have influenced the course of international crises. Key examples include:

August 9, 2008. Blocking a resolution on South Ossetia during the war with Georgia.

March 15, 2014. Veto of a resolution on the occupation of Crimea (Security Council, 2024).

April 10, 2018. Veto of a resolution to investigate the possible use of chemical weapons in Syria.

February 25, 2022. Blocking a resolution condemning the aggression against Ukraine and demanding troop withdrawal (United Nations, 2022).

September 2022. Veto of a resolution condemning the illegal annexation of four Ukrainian regions.

These examples clearly show that Russia’s veto is systematically used to evade international responsibility and legitimize actions that grossly violate the norms of the UN Charter.

**Table 2. Results of the voting on a resolution intended to end Russia’s military offensive against Ukraine in the UN SG February 25, 2022.**

<b>RESULTS OF THE VOTING ON A RESOLUTION INTENDED TO END RUSSIA’S MILITARY OFFENSIVE AGAINST UKRAINE IN THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL ON FEBRUARY 25, 2022</b>		
<b>Vote</b>	<b>Country count</b>	<b>Countries</b>
<i>For</i>	11	<i>Albania, Brazil, France, Gabon, Ghana, Ireland, Kenya, Mexico, Norway, UK, U.S.</i>
<i>Against</i>	1	<i>Russia</i>
<i>Abstained</i>	3	<i>China, India, UAE</i>

*Source:* Made by the authors on the basis of Statista.

The vote in the Security Council on the aggression against Ukraine (February 25, 2022), the results of which are displayed in Table 2, is particularly telling.

11 member states supported the resolution, 3 abstained (China, India, UAE), and only one state – Russia – voted against.

Notwithstanding the overwhelming majority of votes in support, the resolution was not enacted owing to Russia's veto. This example clearly illustrates how the veto power allows one state to impede the collective activities of the international community, even in the presence of near-unanimous consensus among other Security Council members.

Moreover, Russia obstructed resolutions pertaining to the establishment of a tribunal for the inquiry into the downing of flight MH17, the acknowledgement of the mass murders in Srebrenica as genocide, 16 resolutions concerning Syria, and several resolutions about Georgia (Hrysiuk, 2023).

These actions demonstrate that Russia persistently used the veto not to safeguard world peace and security, but as a tool of a hybrid strategy: obstructing sanctions procedures, legitimizing its own aggressive conduct, and endorsing allies that contravene international law.

Thus, an analysis of the dynamics and topics of Russia's use of the veto allows us to assert that this mechanism is a key element in the Russia's destabilization of the UN collective security system. It blocks timely responses to aggression, undermines the authority of international law, and encourages the formation of alternative coalitions outside the UN framework.

### **2.3. Information Manipulation and Diplomatic Coercion**

In addition to its regular exercise of veto power in the UN Security Council, the Russian Federation has implemented a broad strategy to undermine global support for resolutions denouncing its aggression towards Ukraine. This approach integrates disinformation efforts, diplomatic coercion, and the manipulation of economic dependencies. The primary aim is not to significantly increase the number of governments endorsing Russia, but to enhance abstentions and non-participation, thereby diminishing the normative weight of General Assembly resolutions.

### 2.3.1. Key Instruments of Influence

Russia employs several instruments of manipulation, including:

- Disinformation campaigns promoting narratives such as the “protection of Russian-speaking populations” and the “restoration of historical justice,” aimed at legitimizing the annexation of Crimea and the establishment of the so-called “LPR/DPR” entities, and the full-scale invasion in Ukraine (Tverdokhlib, 2019; 2020; BBC News, 2015);
- Targeted diplomatic pressure on specific UN member states—particularly in the Global South—to secure supportive or neutral voting behaviour (Voytyuk, 2023; Snyder; 2020);
- Utilisation of economic and military leverage, including energy dependencies, food exports, and arms contracts, used to shape foreign policy decisions.

These instruments are employed not to strengthen explicit opposition, but to widen the “grey zone” of abstention or non-participation, thereby eroding the cohesiveness and legitimacy of the international response.

### 2.3.2. Erosion of Support: Trends in UN General Assembly Voting (2014–2020)

A review of voting patterns in the UN General Assembly reveals a notable decline in the number of countries supporting Ukraine-related resolutions over time. Figure 4 illustrates the results of voting on resolutions concerning Crimea from 2014 to 2020.

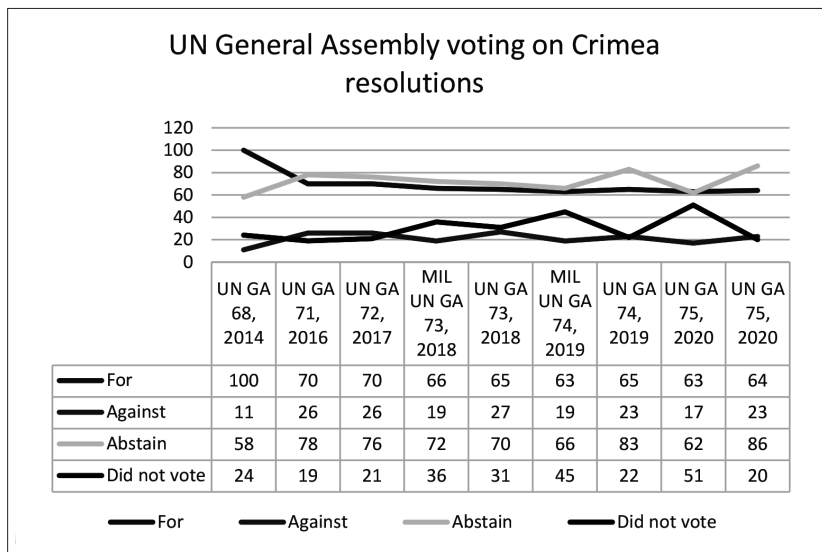


Figure 4. UN GA voting on Crimea Resolutions.

*Source:* Made by the authors on the basis of Euromaidan Press.

The decline from 100 supporting votes in 2014 to an average of 63–66 votes in subsequent years illustrates the effectiveness of Russia’s diplomatic efforts. Despite a relatively small number of countries explicitly voting “against,” the rising incidence of abstentions and absentees significantly undermined the political importance of each resolution. This signifies a deliberate effort to orient nations towards strategic neutrality, undermining global consensus and reinforcing narratives of division within the international community.

### 2.3.3. Russia’s Loyal Bloc: Persistent Opposition

Despite this shift, a small group of states has consistently voted against all Crimea-related resolutions, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. List of states vetoed all UN GA Crimea resolutions.

LIST OF STATES VETOED ALL UN GA CRIMEA RESOLUTIONS									
State	UN GA 68, 2014	UN GA 71, 2016	UN GA 72, 2017	MIL UN GA 73, 2018	UN GA 73, 2018	UN GA 74, 2019	MIL UN GA 74, 2019	UN GA 75, 2020	UN GA 75, 2020
Argentina									
Belarus									
Cuba									
Democratic Republic of Corea									
Nicaragua									
Russian Federation									
Sudan									
Surian Arab Respublic									
Venezuela									
Zimbabwe									

Source: Made by the authors on the basis of UN records and Statista.

Although numerically limited, this core bloc consistently provides sufficient support for Russia in the international arena.

### 2.3.3. Post-Invasion Diplomacy: The 2022 Emergency Session Vote

Following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the UN General Assembly adopted Resolution A/RES/ES-11/1 affirming Ukraines territorial integrity. The results of this vote are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4. Results of the voting on a resolution A/RES/ES-11/1 on the territorial integrity of Ukraine, March 2, 2022

RESULTS OF THE VOTING ON A RESOLUTION A/RES/ES-11/1 ON THE TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY OF UKRAINE ON MARCH 2, 2022		
Vote	Country count	Countries
For	141	<i>Afghanistan, Albania, Andorra, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bahamas, Bahrain, Barbados, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Canada, Cape Verde, Chad, Chile, Colombia, Comoros, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Estonia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gabon, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Indonesia, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Kiribati, Kuwait, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Micronesia, Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, Myanmar, Nauru, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Niger, Nigeria, North Macedonia, Norway, Oman, Palau, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, South Korea, Romania, Rwanda, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, São Tomé and Príncipe, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, Somalia, Spain, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Tuvalu, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United States, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Yemen, Zambia.</i>
Against	5	<i>Russia, Belarus, Eritrea, North Korea, Syria.</i>
Abstained	35	<i>Algeria, Angola, Armenia, Bangladesh, Bolivia, Burundi, Central African Republic, China, Congo, Cuba, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, India, Iran, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Madagascar, Mali, Mongolia, Mozambique, Namibia, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Senegal, South Africa, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Tajikistan, Tanzania, Uganda, Vietnam, Zimbabwe.</i>
Absent	12	<i>Azerbaijan, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Eswatini, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Morocco, Togo, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Venezuela.</i>
Total	193	

Source: Made by the authors on the basis of the UN digital library.

The UN General Assembly vote on the resolution A/RES/ES-11/1 condemning Russia's invasion to Ukraine recorded a prevalent 141 votes in favour, indicating widespread international denunciation of Russia's aggression. However, 47 states abstained or did not participate, indicating the lack of global unanimity.

Further analysis of voting trends reveals a gradual decline in active support for successive resolutions, accompanied by a significant increase of abstentions and absences. This tendency suggests a realignment towards strategic neutrality among certain countries. While the resolutions continue to secure a majority, the growing bloc of non-aligned states undermines the overall political weight of these decisions.

## **2.4. Manipulation of United Nations peacekeeping missions**

Russia is obstructing Ukraine's peacekeeping efforts while simultaneously attempting to utilize the UN to legalize its invasion.

In 2017, Russia vetoed Ukraine's proposal to deploy UN forces in the Donbas region. Subsequently, it introduced an alternative manipulative framework for the peacekeeping mission, which anticipated the deployment of its forces as "peacekeepers along the contact line, aimed at legitimizing the occupation of Donbas and establishing a new internationally recognized border between Ukraine and the Russian-occupied territories of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions (United Nations, 2017).

## **2.5. Using the UN to Justify War**

The analysis suggests that the Russian Federation systematically exploited United Nations Security Council (UNSC) sessions in February 2022 to establish legal and humanitarian justifications for its comprehensive invasion of Ukraine. Instead of engaging in genuine conflict-resolution discussions, Russia used the institutional platform to promote a cohesive strategic narrative portraying its actions as defensive and justified under international law.

At the UNSC meetings on February 17, 21, and 24, 2022, Russian representatives asserted that Ukraine was the aggressor in Donbas and that the self-proclaimed "Donetsk People's Republic" (DPR) and "Luhansk People's Republic" (LPR) required immediate protection. By doing so, Russia attempted to frame itself as a peacekeeping entity rather than an aggressor. These claims were further reinforced by repeated but unverified accusations of genocide allegedly committed by Ukrainian forces against Russian-speaking communities.

On February 24, 2022, while the Council assembled to discuss the worsening security situation, Russia launched its full-scale invasion. In the discussion, the Russian Permanent Representative denied any intentions of escalation while concurrently reiterating consistent themes — such as the necessity to protect Donbas, uphold peace, and react to Ukrainian provocations. This use of disinformation, presented within the formal discourse of the UN, aimed to create a façade of legal legitimacy and to obstruct any immediate international condemnation or action. Table 5 outlines the main rhetorical themes employed by the

Russian delegation during significant UNSC meetings in February 2022, illustrating the consistency and coordination of these narratives. The data is based on a discourse analysis of official transcripts and public statements.

Table 5. **Key narratives used by the Russian Federation at UNSC meetings (February 2022).**

No	Narrative Theme	Example Quotation	Session Date	Frequency (in 3 key UNSC sessions)
1	Ukraine as the aggressor	“Ukraine is actively violating the ceasefire in Donbas.”	Feb 17, 2022	3 out of 3
2	Protection of DPR/LPR	“Russia has a duty to protect the people of Donetsk and Luhansk.”	Feb 21, 2022	3 out of 3
3	Accusations of genocide	We are witnessing genocide against Russian-speakin populations.”	Feb 24, 2022	2 out of 3
4	Framing military action as peacekeeping	“This is not war; it is a peace enforcement operation.”	Feb 24, 2022	2 out of 3
5	Delegitimization of Ukraine’s government	“The current Ukrainian regime is illegitimate and Russophobic.”	Feb 21, 2022	2 out of 3
6	Denial of invasion plans	“Russia has no intention of launching any offensive.”	Feb 24, 2022	1 out of 3

*Source:* Made by the authors on the basis of the UN digital library.

As shown in the table, the narratives were not isolated statements but rather repeated, coordinated messages intended to sow confusion, delay international response, and retroactively justify Russia’s military aggression. The presence of these themes across multiple Security Council meetings suggests deliberate strategic messaging rather than spontaneous political rhetoric. This rhetoric not only allowed Russia to justify its actions but also undermined the UN’s credibility as a guarantor of collective security.

## **2.6. Nuclear Coercion as a Mechanism to Exert Pressure on the UN and International Community**

The Russian Federation is increasingly using nuclear coercion as a tool for strategic leverage in both bilateral relations and multilateral organizations, such as the United Nations. This strategy encompasses public threats and modifications in military doctrine that broaden the scope of potential nuclear use. This undermines existing arms control regimes and exerts pressure on states to limit their political actions or responses.

Table 6. Key forms of Russia's nuclear coercion within the United Nations (2022–2024)

Form of Nuclear Coercion	Description	Example / Date	Consequences
Veto in the Security Council	Blocking resolutions related to nuclear weapons restrictions (including banning deployment of nuclear weapons in outer space)	Veto of the resolution banning nuclear weapons in outer space, April 2024	Maintaining strategic ambiguity, hindering UN initiatives
Changes in an Military Doctrine	Expanding conditions for nuclear weapon use, including first use in response to aggression by non-nuclear states supported by nuclear powers	Military doctrine update, September 2024	Increasing risk of nuclear escalation, global security instability
Nuclear Threats in Diplomatic Statements	Public threats and hints of possible nuclear weapon use to exert political pressure on the international community	Official Russian statements at the UN (2022-2024)	Creating an atmosphere of uncertainty, deterring active responses

Source: Made by the authors on the basis of the UN digital library

An notable example occurred in April 2024, when Russia vetoed a UN Security Council resolution prohibiting the deployment of nuclear weapons in outer space. This move not only obstructed progress in multilateral arms control but also revealed Moscow's intent to maintain strategic ambiguity and preserve potential dominance in emerging domains of warfare. This action is a component of a comprehensive strategy to leverage its permanent Security Council membership to promote its interests and obstruct global security efforts.

In September 2024, President Putin approved amendments to Russia's military doctrine that expanded the scope of nuclear weapons use, including in response to conventional attacks by a non-nuclear state if such an attack is supported by nuclear allies (Atlantic Council, 2023). This step introduces doctrinal instability into global security calculations, blurring the boundary between nuclear and conventional deterrence and increasing the risks of escalation in the event of conflicts involving third parties, including NATO member states.

Russia's nuclear posture is not limited to military signaling, but also serves as an institutional pressure on the UN and the broader international community. The implicit threat of nuclear escalation discourages states from actively responding—diplomatically or militarily—to Russia's conventional aggression, particularly in Ukraine. This creates an atmosphere of uncertainty that undermines the effectiveness of collective security, including peacekeeping mandates, sanctions policy, and humanitarian interventions within the UN system.

Table 6 highlights the primary modalities of nuclear pressure employed by the Russian Federation within the United Nations from 2022 to 2024. It illustrates how a synthesis of diplomatic, institutional, and military-doctrinal instruments enables Moscow to sustain strategic superiority, inhibit actions by the international community, and foster an environment of ambiguity that hinders an effective response from the UN and other global entities.

Thus, the results of the study indicate that nuclear blackmail has become a systemic tool of Russia's hybrid strategy at the global level. The combination of doctrinal flexibility, institutional blocking, and strategic signals allows Moscow not only to deter potential adversaries, but also to change the conditions for the functioning of international bodies, including the UN. This creates a "chilling" effect in the diplomatic process and undermines the normative foundations of the nuclear non-proliferation regime.

In conclusion, Russia's use of nuclear threats and changes in military doctrine are not just defensive rhetoric. They constitute a deliberate challenge to multilateral governance mechanisms, diminish the authority of the UN, and impose strategic paralysis on the international community.

Overall, the empirical evidence demonstrates that the Russian Federation's multidimensional engagement with the UN Security Council—through exploitation of institutional and normative gaps, extensive use of veto power, disinformation strategies, and nuclear coercion—has accelerated both the erosion of the collective security system's legitimacy and the entrenchment of systemic deadlock. These findings highlight the pressing need for institutional reform and reveal how hybrid strategies pursued by potential aggressors expose the structural vulnerabilities of the existing global security framework.

### 3. Discussion

The study's findings demonstrate that the Russian Federation systematically exploits United Nations (UN) procedures to legitimize its aggressive policies, obstruct resolutions condemning its acts, and conduct information and psychological warfare. This presents significant challenges to the international security framework and undermines the efficacy of the UN as a mechanism for conflict prevention. These conclusions are based on the empirical evidence

presented in Section 2, particularly the voting behavior analysis (2.1), veto case studies (2.2), and disinformation strategies (2.3), which collectively indicate systemic patterns in Russia's conduct within the UN.

### **3.1. The Illegitimacy of Russia's Membership in the United Nations: Legal and Political Ramifications**

The legitimacy of the Russian Federation's participation in the United Nations —especially as a permanent member of the Security Council—constitutes a fundamental legal and political issue within the wider discussion on international institutional accountability. In contrast to other newly established states that entered the UN after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russia inherited the USSR's seat without adhering to the formal process outlined in Article 4 of the UN Charter, which stipulates that a state may be admitted to membership solely through a decision of the General Assembly based on the Security Council's recommendation. Since no such process occurred, Russia's succession is considered *de facto* but not *de jure* under international law (Müllerson, 1993; Talmon, 1992). Some scholars and diplomats argue that the absence of formal opposition to Russia's succession reflected a pragmatic consensus within the international community, aimed at preserving institutional continuity after the USSR's dissolution (Hrusiuk, 2023). However, this consensus is increasingly challenged in light of Russia's repeated violations of core UN principles. This procedural irregularity has persisted for nearly thirty years, primarily due to political expediency and geopolitical stagnation. Nonetheless, the Russian Federation's persistent breaches of the UN Charter—particularly in Georgia (2008), Ukraine (2014), and the comprehensive invasion in 2022—have intensified calls to reassess the legal foundation of its status within the United Nations. Russia's use of its permanent seat and veto power to impede resolutions that censure its conduct diminishes the legitimacy of the UN Security Council and weakens the notion of collective security foundational to the UN (Luck, 2006; Fassbender, 2012).

The UN Charter does not contain clear provisions for the expulsion of a permanent member of the Security Council from a legal perspective. Article 6 permits the expulsion of a Member State for ongoing breaches of the Charter's principles; however, such

expulsion requires a recommendation from the Security Council—an unfeasible stipulation when the violator is a permanent member with veto authority. Similarly, Charter amendments under Article 108 require ratification by all permanent members, including the state whose status may be contested. This cyclical legal framework makes institutional reform nearly unattainable under present circumstances, creating an impression of structural stagnation.

In light of this legal impasse, certain experts have highlighted Article 27(3) of the UN Charter, which mandates that a party involved in a dispute must refrain from voting on matters pertaining to that dispute. A unified assessment by the remaining permanent members that Russia is a participant in the armed conflict in Ukraine might provide a legal foundation for its exclusion from votes on relevant issues, including those concerning its own status. While such a precedent would be contentious and politically sensitive, it reflects an emerging doctrine of responsibility to protect the UN system from internal abuse (Weller, 2010).

In parallel, the General Assembly may adopt a resolution—pursuant to Article 18—recognizing the illegitimacy of Russia’s succession to the USSR’s seat. While not legally binding, such a resolution would carry political weight, potentially prompt reinterpretation of decisions adopted with Russia’s participation, and exert normative pressure for alternative security mechanisms outside the paralyzed Security Council.

Beyond the immediate legal discourse, the question of Russia’s contested membership raises broader issues of normative adaptation within the UN system. The Charter, largely unchanged since 1945, does not account for emerging threats to peace such as hybrid warfare, cyberattacks, disinformation campaigns, and psychological operations—tactics that the Russian Federation has institutionalized in its military-political strategy. These non-conventional forms of aggression fall outside the traditional understanding of “use of force” under Article 2(4) of the Charter and thus remain poorly regulated, despite their impact on international peace and security (Schmitt, 2013; Nye, 2011).

Consequently, the disputed membership of the Russian Federation in the UN is not just a historical formality, but a systemic vulnerability that undermines the legitimacy and effectiveness of the Security Council. Addressing this problem requires a multifaceted approach, including:

Interim political measures by the General Assembly, such as the adoption of resolutions recognizing the illegitimacy of Russia's succession;

Reconsideration and application of existing provisions of the UN Charter (in particular Articles 18 and 27(3)) to limit the voting power of a state party to the conflict;

A comprehensive reform of the Charter that ensures accountability for unconventional aggression (hybrid operations, disinformation campaigns) and enhances the institutional resilience of the UN.

### **3.2. Employing the Veto Power to Legitimize Aggression**

The veto instrument, established in the UN Charter as a guarantee of the balance of power between the permanent members of the Security Council, has increasingly been transformed from a preventive mechanism against global wars into a political and legal tool for maintaining impunity. The behaviour of the Russian Federation is particularly illustrative, as it employs the veto not as a tool for safeguarding international peace, but rather as a mechanism to obstruct any efforts towards international legal accountability for its acts of aggression.

Russia has repeatedly vetoed Security Council resolutions concerning military interventions in Georgia (2008), the annexation of Ukrainian regions (2014, 2022), and chemical assaults in Syria (2018) (United Nations veto list, n.d.).

Such a practice testifies not only to political cynicism, but also to a deep erosion of the principle of state responsibility within the framework of the international legal order. All these cases demonstrate a systemic institutional problem: that an aggressor state can simultaneously be a party to a conflict and an arbiter of its resolution.

Originally intended to prevent direct confrontation between superpowers, the veto has increasingly become a shield for geopolitical manipulation. This shift has led to the institutionalization of impunity: when one of the most powerful states in international law obstructs collective mechanisms aimed at addressing its own aggression, it sets a legal precedent that undermines the entire architecture of international security.

This destructive role of the veto is particularly evident in the

light of the provisions of Article 27(3) of the UN Charter, which explicitly prohibits states involved in a conflict from participating in voting in Security Council on relevant issues. The failure to apply this provision in the case of Russia indicates a selective interpretation of legal norms in favor of geopolitical status, rather than the principles of justice and the rule of law (United Nations, 1945). It also exposes a deeper problem — the lack of a procedural mechanism for enforcing the provisions of the Charter with respect to members of the Security Council involved in a conflict.

In its current form, the veto not only fails to guarantee peace but can, in fact, directly obstruct it, serving as a tool for legal manipulation by an aggressor state. Rethinking this mechanism is therefore essential both for future UN reforms and for restoring confidence in the international security system. Limiting or suspending the veto in cases of armed aggression or serious violations of international humanitarian law by a permanent Security Council member is not merely a political consideration; it is also a legal and moral imperative in the context of the evolving modern international order.

### **3.3. Institutional Disinformation, Diplomatic Coercion, and the Erosion of Global Consensus within the UN**

As demonstrated in the Results section (2.3) Russia's influence within the United Nations extends well beyond its frequent exercise of veto power in the Security Council. Russia employs a complex strategy that integrates disinformation efforts, diplomatic coercion, and the manipulation of economic dependencies to undermine international support for resolutions condemning its actions in Ukraine and Crimea.

At the core of this strategy is the deliberate spread of disinformation, promoting narratives such as the “protection of Russian-speaking populations” and the “restoration of historical justice” to justify the annexation of Crimea, endorse separatist factions in Donbas and legitimize the invasion of Ukraine (Tverdokhlib, 2019; Tverdokhlib, 2020; BBC News, 2015; EUvsDisinfo). These narratives are carefully crafted to alter global perceptions of legitimacy, blurring the line between aggression and humanitarian action.

Concurrently, Russia puts diplomatic pressure on key UN member states, especially within the Global South, to secure abstentions or non-participation in critical votes (Voytyuk, 2023; Snyder, 2020).

This approach exploits current economic and political dependencies—such as energy supplies, trade links, and arms agreements—to induce strategic neutrality. Empirical voting data from 2014 to 2022 indicate a clear trend: while the number of states explicitly opposing Russia remains limited, the growing number of abstentions and absentees has considerably weakened the normative and political force of General Assembly resolutions on Ukraine and Crimea.

This dual-layered approach, along with the Security Council veto, creates an effective institutional obstruction. The veto obstructs binding actions by the Security Council, while disinformation and diplomatic coercion undermine political agreement inside the General Assembly. This “double barrier” tactic diminishes the UN’s collective ability to respond effectively to aggression and erodes the organization’s normative authority in enforcing international law.

The deterioration of global consensus poses a significant challenge to the legitimacy and effectiveness of multilateral governance. By promoting narratives that contest established international norms and fostering divisions among UN member states, Russia exposes the vulnerabilities of the current international system to hybrid tactics that intertwine legal obstruction with disinformation campaigns.

These findings highlight the necessity to redefine disinformation and coercive diplomacy as contemporary forms of hybrid warfare, requiring enhanced legal and institutional measures. Current international legal frameworks are predominantly state-centric and inadequately prepared to address these complex non-kinetic strategies. Consequently, enhancing the UN’s institutional capacities—particularly through the establishment of independent verification processes and accountability systems—is crucial for maintaining the integrity of multilateral decision-making and successfully addressing hybrid threats.

In conclusion, Russia’s strategic use of disinformation, diplomatic coercion, and veto authority illustrates a complex approach aimed at eroding the normative underpinnings of international order within the UN system. Addressing this multifaceted challenge requires legal innovation, institutional reform, and a more profound theoretical comprehension of the manifestation of hybrid warfare in diplomatic contexts.

### **3.4. Manipulation of United Nations Peacekeeping Operations: Legal and Political Ramifications**

The findings suggest that Russia exploits UN peacekeeping mechanisms not for conflict resolution, but as a tool for political manipulation to legitimize its activities. The Russian Federation's obstruction of UN peacekeeping initiatives in Donbas, coupled with its promotion of a self-serving peacekeeping framework designed to consolidate its occupation, exposes its strategic objective to subvert international security mechanisms (Detector Media, 2023).

The Kremlin's deceptive "peacekeeping mission" framework introduced in 2017 sought to exonerate Russia from accountability for the conflict with Ukraine. The self-designated "LPR" and "DPR" were to be acknowledged as combatants, allowing Russia to deploy forces under UN authority as peacekeepers. This would recast Russia from an aggressor to a "peacekeeping country," thereby providing a legitimate rationale to exempt its military-political leadership from accountability for the conflict in eastern Ukraine, while holding the leaders of the puppet "LPR" and "DPR" responsible.

Furthermore, the effective execution of this Kremlin strategy required a *de facto* alteration of Ukraine's eastern boundary. At a time when Ukraine was actively pursuing the deployment of UN forces along the internationally recognized post-independence (1991) borders, Russia insisted that such a mission could only be positioned along the demarcation line. This line separates the Russian-occupied areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions from those under Ukrainian government control, effectively acknowledging a new border and legitimizing the annexation of these territories, thereby reinforcing Russian control and facilitating their eventual incorporation into Russia. The alteration of the border line undermined not only Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity but also the international legal framework by eroding the global principle of state territorial integrity. The establishment of the UN mission along the demarcation line suggested by Russia has generated new geopolitical realities that, while *de jure* contradicted the UN Charter and widely accepted principles of international law, could be recognized *de facto* by the global community.

This case exemplifies the hybrid nature of Russia's conduct in the international arena, as it not only rejects and obstructs widely recognized peacekeeping initiatives that conflict with its geopolitical interests, but also seeks to impose alternative, manipulative solutions

that advance its geopolitical objectives.

Such acts undermine the fundamental principles of UN peacekeeping, as the primary objective of these missions—achieving an impartial resolution of the conflict—are supplanted by political advantages for the aggressor.

Moreover, Russia's approach to manipulating peacekeeping missions (United Nations, 2017) sets a dangerous precedent for international law. If an aggressor is permitted to legitimize annexed territories through "peacekeeping missions" under its control, this could become a new strategy for states seeking to alter borders through coercion. Consequently, the insufficient response of the international community to such manipulations may undermine the credibility of UN peacekeeping operations and diminish their efficacy in future conflicts.

The study's findings reaffirm the need to modernize UN peacekeeping processes, namely to prevent aggressor states from obstructing or distorting peacekeeping initiatives for their own benefit. This requires strengthening the independence of decision-making on the deployment of peacekeeping missions and implementing safeguards to prevent their use as tools of hybrid warfare.

### **3.5. Using the UN to War**

The analysis of Russia's conduct in the framework of the United Nations demonstrates a deliberate strategy of utilising international institutions to protect acts of aggression and to create an appearance of legal and moral legitimacy. Rather than serving as a genuine diplomatic platform, the UN has, in several significant cases, been exploited by the Russian Federation as a tool for warfare justification and deception. This dynamic illustrates a broader shift in the operational methods of modern authoritarian regimes: the reconfiguration of multilateral organizations to advance unilateral objectives while presenting them as multilateral.

Russia's actions leading up to and during its full-scale invasion of Ukraine demonstrate an advanced form of legal mimicry and discursive manipulation. By convening Security Council sessions ostensibly devoted to peace and compliance with the Minsk Agreements, Moscow simultaneously shifted responsibility for escalation onto Ukraine and presented its impending military

campaign as a defensive, humanitarian intervention. This dual-track strategy—combining military aggression coupled with institutional theatre—served both to obscure accountability and to delay or weaken coordinated international responses at the critical moment of invasion.

Of particular significance is the use of UN mechanisms to synchronize information warfare with kinetic operations. While Russian artillery targeted civilian infrastructure in the Donbas, and while invasion forces mobilized along Ukraine's borders, Russian diplomats weaponized the language of international law within UN forums—accusing Ukraine of violations, invoking the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine in distorted form, and framing aggression as peace enforcement. This strategic dissonance between military conduct and diplomatic rhetoric has not only hindered the functionality of the Security Council but also revealed the UN system's vulnerability to performative abuse by a permanent member.

This case highlights a critical systemic problem: the potential for global governance systems to be exploited by revisionist actors operating inside their legal and procedural frameworks. By exercising veto power and manipulating narratives inside the UN, Russia has effectively undermined collective action, reinterpreted peacekeeping protocols, and eroded trust in international systems.

In summary, Russia's use of the UN not as a forum for conflict resolution but as a platform for legitimizing aggression underscores an urgent need to strengthen operational safeguards within international organizations. The situation in Ukraine illustrates that the current framework of global peace and security can be compromised not solely by military actions but also through institutional appropriation, rhetorical manipulation, and legal distortion—characteristics of 21st-century hybrid warfare.

### **3.6. Nuclear Coercion as an Instrument of Global Influence.**

Analysis of the actions of the Russian Federation indicates a deliberate conversion of nuclear weapons into a tool for both strategic deterrence and worldwide political and diplomatic coercion. Particularly concerning is the inclination to doctrinalize nuclear coercion, incorporating it into Russia's military policy as a mechanism to influence multilateral decisions and international legal proceedings.

The exercise of the veto power in the UN Security Council to prohibit the placement of nuclear weapons in space illustrates that Russia is not merely obstructing arms control efforts, but also undermining the fundamental concept of preemptive collective security. This exemplifies obstructionism that hinders the establishment of global standards for the secure utilisation of emerging technology domains, including space (Radio Liberty, 2024).

Amendments to Russia's military doctrine permitting the use of nuclear weapons in retaliation to conventional assaults, particularly if supported by nuclear allies, pose a significant threat of expanding regional conflicts into a worldwide catastrophe. This policy blurs the distinctions between nuclear and conventional deterrence, generates strategic ambiguity among other states, and weakens the non-proliferation regime (Security Council of the Russian Federation, 2024).

Russia also uses its nuclear rhetoric as a mechanism for psychological coercion against the political leadership of UN member nations. Intimidation through threats of a "inevitable response" or "unforeseen consequences" not only affects the decisions of individual states but also immobilises initiatives within international organizations, resulting in a "strategic freeze effect" that hinders decisive action against aggression.

Academic analysis indicates that Russia's approach constitutes a component of a comprehensive hybrid strategy that amalgamates military demonstrations of power with the delegitimization of international law. By instilling fear through nuclear threats, the Kremlin seeks to alter global power dynamics to its advantage, thereby compromising the UN's role as a guarantor of peace and security. Nuclear coercion by Russia should not be viewed as an isolated element of its foreign policy but rather as an integral component of a coherent strategy aimed at undermining the multilateral framework of global security founded on predictability, international law, and collective accountability.

The analysis presented in Section 3 underscores that Russia's actions in the United Nations are not ad hoc or episodic, but represent a systematic efforts to geopolitical influence expansion through hybrid means. The integration of nuclear leverage into Russia's broader strategic framework demonstrates a premeditated endeavor to undermine the legal order of the international security system. This approach weaponizes legal ambiguity, abuses institutional paralysis,

and adds strategic uncertainty into global security architecture. By abusing military posturing with deliberate manipulation and legal mimicry, Russia seeks to paralyse the UN's decision-making capacity and erode the authority of international law as a stabilizing force.

## Conclusions

The research revealed that the Russian Federation systematically exploits its position as a permanent member of the UN Security Council as a comprehensive instrument to undermine the global legal order and weaken international security systems. Through the abuse of veto power, manipulation of peacekeeping mechanisms, and deploying coordinated disinformation campaigns, Russia generates structural vulnerabilities that extend beyond regional conflicts, constituting a fundamental threat to the integrity and effectiveness of the international security system.

A central finding is that the current structure of the UN Security Council and the UN Charter, designed in the post-war period, are lacking the capacity to counter asymmetric and hybrid military strategies. The strategic use of legal and procedural tools to obstruct collective action enables *de facto* impunity for aggressor states, undermining both the operational and legal capacity of the UN.

The research further reveals evolving strategic nuclear threat as a deliberate instrument of strategic influence. At the same time, Russia's use of non-military tactics—such as legal mimicry and strategic misinformation—demonstrates how narrative control and institutional manipulation complement its comprehensive strategy of destabilization, including military escalation and nuclear pressure.

These findings have significant consequences for global security theory and practice. They highlight that the institutional strength and legitimacy of multinational institutions depend on their capacity to prevent the exploitation of procedural mechanisms by aggressors. Enhancing the effectiveness of the UN requires reforms such as restricting veto use in cases of aggression, establishing independent investigative bodies, reviewing membership legitimacy, and adjusting the Security Council to reflect contemporary geopolitical realities.

This research contributes to understanding how hybrid tactics, institutional manipulation, and strategic legal abuse transform the international security landscape. It emphasizes the urgent need for

institutional reform and proactive measures by the international community to safeguard collective security, uphold international norms, and ensure the UN's effectiveness in addressing 21st-century threats.

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