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RESISTING HEGEMONY: CHINA AND RUSSIA'S COUNTER-MULTILATERAL STRATEGIES IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC AMID THE TRUMP 'BOARD OF PEACE' INITIATIVE, 2025-2026"

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Abstract
This article will analyze the rapid institutionalization of Donald Trump's "Board of Peace" (hereafter, Peace Board) as a still emergent but institutionalizing policy body for the management of the Gaza Peace "business" (initially associated with post-ceasefire governance and reconstruction of the Gaza Strip) and, the author seeks to answer the question of whether it serves as a parallel, competitive, or, eventually, co-opted extension of the existing UN-centered peace architecture. Using realism, institutionalism, and constructivism, the analysis attempts to capture the strategic reservations of China and Russia as the UN Security Council's permanently concerned West. It posits that their reservations are less aimed at peace as an end, and more at (i) peace as a process (who decides, mandates, and orders execution), (ii) process legitimacy (law-based multilateralism v. a club of leaders governance), and (iii) legitimacy of outcomes (a club of payers and a selective geoeconomic arrangement that cuts off smaller states from the line of equity). The author posits that the Peace Board cannot simply "replace" the UN, but rather it will lead to UN (121) fragmentation by accelerating a two-tiered peace system – one with formal UN legitimacy, the other with direct, high-leverage, transactional governance peace – and the negative outcomes of such for the South and the future of collective security will be massive.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Board of Peace was launched during the World Economic Forum in Davos in January 2026 and first US officials presented the Board as a transitional governance mechanism to 'peacefully' manage the Gaza Strip following the ceasefire. In this Board was envisioned to assume a 'single point of' political, operational, and financial tethering of the fragmentation of the plans and operational tasks of demilitarization and reconstruction and promise (arguably) to (Reuter's 2026a) quick er implementation and more defined assignments. The White House communication s describe the Board as (overly) instrumental to Donald Trump's wider 'Comprehensive Plan' and outline it in oversight terms: resource international funding, implement, and assure Gaza's progression to recovery and development (The White House, 2026).

From the start, diplomats and analysts raised a primary institutional question. What is the Board's institutional being? Is it (a) complementing and genuinely being within the UN's bowels of authority, (b) a competitor that goes around the UN, or (c) a middle of the road that appropriates the UN's legitimacy and keeping the system of governance closed to a few leaders and backwards on an agenda that is example set without the UN (Reuter's 2026b). This matters because, where' authority is, is also where the mandate dies, the legal framework of

the measures of the use of violence, and the political and legal accountability of non-implementation is housed.

It also describes incentives for forum-shopping: if dominant actors start seeing the Board as the preferred forum for substantive deal-making, the UN might be seen as a back-office processing request for legitimization of deals made elsewhere, further delegitimizing the UN over time and weakening the collective security.

The UN's current weaknesses urge these worries. In January 2026, UN Secretary-General António Guterres alerted of an "imminent financial collapse", citing an acute backlog of unpaid contributions and budget cuts that limit operational expenditures and threaten the delivery of critical services (Reuters, 2026c). In these circumstances, The UN is not in the position to execute its most basic promises, while competing institutions appear more appealing for their efficiency, and unilateral decision-making, but their proliferation is likely to speed up the fragmentation of global governance.

2. Literature Review

Global governance scholars recognize the value of both the legal and informal dimensions of an institution, such as legitimacy and authority. For an institution to be viewed positively, it must be seen as fair, representative, and effective. This is particularly important because the more an institution is seen as legitimate, the greater the compliance without having to exert or enforce more control. In this case, states are more likely to comply with decisions that are fair and accepted by peers (Hurd, 1999; Suchman, 1995). From the point of view of the institutionalists, this explains the stickiness of cooperative agreements. Cooperation is made easier by the establishment of expectations, rules, and monitoring systems that reduce uncertainty. This ultimately creates a high-cost environment for defection (Keohane, 1984). In this context, the endurance of important institutions is explained by the path-dependent process that these institutions go through. For powerful states, there is often a high opportunity cost with changing to a new institution due to the uncertainty involved. Moreover, institutionalism sets direct limits on unilateralism. Although power is imbalanced, certain procedures (i.e. agenda-setting, voting, reporting, and conflict resolution) keep a single state from controlling outcomes (Ikenberry, 2001). Constructivist scholars note that international organizations can also be arenas for convenience. These organizations help construct interests and policies, providing meaning beyond the surface. Through norms, metrics and language, a state's behavior can be influenced to be more legal, responsible, and ethically correct (Finnemore, 1996). Bureaucratic authority strengthens this influence as organizations shape political objectives into technical norms and "neutral" guidance that resist critique, especially when the critique seems politically incorrect (Barnett & Finnemore, 2004).

Researchers have increasingly reported the diversification of global governance in the last two decades as a certain type of "regime complexity," where the same issue area is addressed by multiple, partly overlapping institutions (Raustiala & Victor, 2004). In such circumstances, states tend to engage in forum selection. They may establish new bodies or move activities to different venues when the existing rules do not protect their interests or when the distribution of influence among institutions is considered inequitable. Multilateralism becomes "contested" as states that are dissatisfied with the status quo respond to an institution not merely by opposing its outcomes, but by constructing or strengthening alternative fora that redistribute power in the process (Morse & Keohane, 2014). While parallel institutions may potentially be cooperative, taking on burden-sharing when established bodies are overworked, under-resourced or gridlocked, they are also likely competitive (Alter & Meunier, 2009).

Powerful countries often seek alternative institutions when the greater world capitalist system becomes increasingly plagued by crises and has a greater degree of world order and global governance. NATO extends a pillar of military security outside the UN structure. With a smaller membership, NATO can guarantee military collective defense in a more expedited fashion

than is the case with the UN. The G7 serves the purpose of coordination among the world's economically advanced countries. G7 countries can manage the economy and the politics of the world without having to deal with all the countries of the world. The BRICS countries and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization generally provide greater agenda setting and equally provide greater status (especially when it comes to non-Western countries and leaders who want to break away from the control of the West) and along with non-Western countries, these countries provide greater status and control from the West. With greater control and less decision making and control by the membership structure, more dominant members provide greater governance structure. The world becomes more fragmented and competing governance structures emerge.

3. Theoretical Framework – Realism, Institutionalism, Constructivism

According to Realism, both China and Russia will remain skeptical of any new institutions that attempt to change who gets to decide important factors like how decisions are enforced and which power resources are most important. For realists, the central question is not whether any new forum decorates its materials with the word 'peace', but whether it will reallocate any power vis-a-vis the great powers (Mearsheimer, 2001; Waltz, 1979). A Peace Board for the coordination of the implementation of ceasefires, demilitarization, and reconstruction will divert practical coercive (as in, real practical/money coercive) tools of sanctions, funding, and security supervision away from the UN and up towards the United States. The reason this is significant is that, in terms of comparative advantage, Russia and China are the most able to utilize the United Nations Security Council because of their built-in veto and agenda preventing powers (Hurd, 1997). If primary security deals happen outside the UN framework, their veto power is increasingly irrelevant. They can stand in the way of formal UN agreement implementation through a veto but still face faits accomplish from outside the UN. Realism therefore predicts that both states will see the Board as a potential 'authority-bypass' and will refrain from endorsing it, asking for certain measures, and trying to adjust the terms of the Board so it doesn't become a tool of American patronage (Mearsheimer, 2001).

In contrast to the other theories, the institutionalist approach adopts a more nuanced consideration of the quality and the credibility of the rules. In this regard, the most important question becomes whether the Peace Board has the sort of legitimate authority, transparency, and accountability frameworks it can be compared to UN governance mechanisms (Keohane, 1984) (in other words, the Peace Board's governance structures can be compared to those of the UN). According to institutionalists, multilateral cooperation provides more durable (long-standing) cooperation and less costly (transaction) cooperation because they provide expectations, information, and mechanisms for cooperation (Keohane, 1984). A Board with ambiguous decision rules, arbitrary membership, and inadequate overriding authority, will create short-term operational speed and long-term (sustained) compliance reduction (in) trust (Keohane, 1984). He relates the fragmentation of decision chains to a process of "forum shopping," where (in) competing venues, the functions of mandate, authority, resources, and mechanisms of monitoring and dispute resolution are split to a greater degree, resulting in more substantial coordination deficits. This results in collective security as a system being more vulnerable to the weakening of security as a system (as opposed to a single organization) (Morse and Keohane, 2014). While the Board is arguably not designed to supplant the UN, it risks the UN erosion in authority by diverting diplomatic focus, financial resources, and operational capacity toward a more limited platform with higher political implications and lower procedural constraints (Hurd, 1999).

Constructivism refers to the ability to create and shape narratives of legitimacy. For example, a single leader Peace Board may, at least symbolically, reframe global peacemaking from a scope of universal multilateral legitimacy to selective legitimacies of scope, control, and

possibly even payment/ contribution (Barnett & Finnemore, 2004; Wendt, 1999). Constructivists tend to look at the roles of international institutions as framed by the posited problem of international anarchy. They focus on the institutions as social constructs that define what categories like "peace," "security," "terrorism," "reconstruction," or "good governance" look like, thus affecting the justifications of the states (Finnemore, 1996). If the Board is a set of actors that posits that 'effective peacemaking' is something that can be achieved by an exclusive little club, this perspective can change the expectations of sovereign equality and participation. It can, therefore, become a model where decision-making power is excessively and hierarchically distributed. Even though the legal authority may still be up for contest, this symbolic change can have a meaningful impact on the reputations, norms, and appropriateness of coalition behavior and the willingness to dissent (Hurd, 1999; Wendt, 1999).

4. Analysis – China and Russia's reservations

The Peace Board's stated aims are to support the de-escalation of conflicts and to help with post war recovery. The political relevance of the Peace Board lies more in the design of the institutions it hopes to use to implement the stated aims. The Peace Board, as discussed in the charter and the letter of invitation, describes itself as a `more agile` peacebuilding entity. Its members serve for a term of 3 years, which is a short term. The immediate post charter term length and the post charter renewal terms are set by the chairperson. The design of the governance of the board is that there will be a permanent seat for any state that contributes US$ 1 billion in cash in the early post charter period. All of these terms are effectively `endless` which provide for `permanent` participation. Members of the board have contrasted these terms with the post charter period terms of the board that is to be set by the chairman. (Reuter, 2026 a; Reuter 2026b)

This construction is more than a mere `top down` feature. There are provide or greater hierarchical degrees of influence design. Members are free to negotiate the degree or influence over the board for a fee of 1 billion dollars. In the case of the chairperson, for life. Other members are free to negotiate with the chair for the terms of the influence to be purchased or given, which are references to the constraints over the life of the chairperson and the proposed extension to other regions of conflict beyond Gaza. These other regions are also referenced in the Reuter articles. (Reuter 2026 b, Reuter 2026 c)

For China and Russia, both of whom are permanent members of the UNSC, these design elements would provide for the most limited range of responses.

The Center for Peace and Conflict Studies (CPCS) approaches this concern from the standpoint of international relations realism, constructivism, and institutionalism, stressing the positive and/or negative shifts of power and legitimacy concerning the ability and necessity of the use of governing violence (or, in this context, the positive and/or negative shifts of the means and legitimacy of governing violence). In this context, realism draws attention to the changes of power and shifts in the means and the legitimacy of violence and defends the peacemaking of a leader-centric constructivist "peace club" and the normative re-authoring of governing power in the aftermath of conflict (Keohane, 1984; Barnett & Finnemore, 2004; Morse & Keohane, 2014).

In practice, real power and legitimacy of violence seem to have crystallized in solid form: the two states in questions both abstained from the November 2025 Security Council votes regarding the Board of the Peace mandate for Gaza, and both articulated grievances regarding the absence of a UN role regarding the future of Gaza in the proposed UNSC resolution (Reuters, 2026b).

4.1 China's reservations

(a) Preserving UN-centered legitimacy against unilateral "club governance"

China consistently identifies its preferred global order in terms of "true multilateralism" and an international system "with the United Nations at its center." Such phrases are more than mere rhetoric. They indicate China's preference for a system of diplomacy anchored in rules and in an

international order where legitimacy is derived from extensive participation, formal authority, and standardized procedures, which limit the unilateral setting of the dominant agenda (Ikenberry, 2001; Hurd, 1999).When asked about the Peace Board, Chinese officials acknowledged the U.S. invitation, but they did not commit to participating. Reuters described the invitation, the corresponding caution of China, and the description that the Board would have a lifetime Chair and that membership could be extended for 3 years for a payment of US$1 billion (Reuters, 2026c). Simultaneously, Chinese officials have been stating that China will "safeguard the international system with the United Nations at its center," while the Board is described by U.S. officials as a means to circumvent the United Nations for a more rapid solution (Xinhua, 2026).

From an institutionalist standpoint, China's attachment to the UN's center of gravity provides China with two benefits. First, China avoids the reputation and diplomatic fallout of endorsing a body that is perceived, broadly, to be competing with the UN for the centrality of global peace and security (Hurd, 1999). Second, it provides China with an environment where governance is more to China's liking and where the procedural norms and coalition diplomacy can be more determinative than the availability of systemic, material power. This is the case with the Peace Board. Membership is selective, and the Chair has the power to renew at will, and membership can be extended through payment. These characteristics are diametrically opposed to the Chinese preference for a multilateral system where the focus of legitimacy is universality and sovereign equality, and for which the Board is described (Xinhua, 2026; Reuters, 2026a).

From a constructivist perspective, it is noted that China's reservation focuses on the symbolism as well. If world peace governance is described as something accomplished by a small "board" led by one person—rather than by Charter-based multilateralism—then the normative center of gravity shifts from universal to performance legitimacy and patron-client gap. Such a narrative, if accepted, can further reduce the UN's symbolic authority even if the UN remains formally relevant (Barnett & Finnemore, 2004).

(b) Mandate ambiguity and institutional opacity

If we analyze China's statements via UN channels regarding the post-war Gaza arrangements and the Board of Peace, we see that China's caution becomes more explicit. In the explanation of China's Permanent Representative regarding the vote on the Security Council draft resolution on Gaza's post-war arrangements, she described the resolution as \\"vague and unclear on many critical elements\\" and specifically mentioned that although it was requesting authorization for a Board of Peace and an international stabilization force, it did not explain the structure, composition, terms of reference, and criteria for participation. China also mentioned that there were "\repeated requests\" from Council members for more information and that there was \\"no response\\" from the penholder (Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the UN, 2025).

This is a classic case of what institutionalists would call a concern regarding a peace governance body. As for stabilization and civil arrangements, peace governance bodies that are tied to the stabilization forces and civil governance arrangements derive legitimacy from not being merely "endorsed" but also from transparent decision-making processes, clear delegations of authority, and accountability mechanisms that stave off mission creep, slippage, or capture (Keohane, 1984). China's critique reveals a concern of the operational capacity of the Board being high, but the accountability being low.

In the same statement, China further criticized the proposed arrangement's lack of detailed oversight beyond the "annual written reports," which are done at the UN, whereby the UN does mandate, mission reporting, and political accountability to the oversight of the SC (Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the UN, 2025).

Charter features regarding draft concerns the Chairman's discretionary renewals and members' differentiated continuity regarding high liquid

(cash) (Reuters, 2026a). When the ambiguous boundary features are coupled with the charter's bureaucratic and top-heavy concentration of "real" power, institutionalists call it "rule by discretion." China's concern isn't merely that there is a Peace Board, but that operational discretion will exceed the bounds of procedure.

(c) Normative exclusion and process control

China is skeptical about who gets to say what 'peace' looks like, whose interests get incorporated into the process, and what norm(s) guide the transformations that follow conflict. In explaining the vote China, for example, claimed that the draft resolution blocked the "fundamental principle of Palestinians governing Palestine," cautioned against the marginalization of Palestinian sovereignty and ownership, and criticized the draft for not explicitly restating the two-state solution as an international consensus (Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the UN, 2025).

These concerns translate naturally into skepticism toward a small-membership Peace Board, especially one framed as expandable to other conflicts. A club-like forum—designed, chaired, and effectively renewed by a single leader—creates an institutional environment where Western security preferences and negotiation templates can become default settings. Constructivism predicts that such forums shape what is treated as "reasonable" or "responsible" policy: the institution's categories, language, and technical expertise can narrow the range of legitimate options and marginalize alternative norms (Finnemore, 1996; Barnett & Finnemore, 2004).

This is a very real concern for China. China's preferred negotiation scripts for most conflict theatres position sovereignty, non-interference, and a slow political settlement in place of externally driven transitional administration frameworks with strong conditionality. China may view a Peace Board that combines conditionality pegged to a selective/politically instrumental view of a mix of peace and security as a declining operational scope for peace. Such a construct may very well align with the operational and instrumental concerns of China's peace(s) diplomacy and advocacy for true multilateralism. China's concerns regarding the dominance of a small number of states in these ad hoc frameworks is very pronounced (Xinhua, 2026).

The issue of Global South agency is another case of perceived overlap between constructivism and institutionalism. Many of the developing countries have to rely on the UN General Assembly, Security Council, and the resultant reporting and its accompanying formalities to raise the diplomatic costs of the systematic exercise of coercion and to promote debate in constructive ways. The creation of a smaller body as the principal forum to determine reconstruction priorities and the related security arrangements represent a significant contraction of the bargaining space for the less powerful states.

China, even though it is a great power, typically frames its diplomacy as supportive of the developing country voice. A club-based peace architecture contradicts that narrative and, potentially, China's power within the wider coalition politics of the Global South.

(d) The economic barrier: a pay-to-stay structure

The charter design where members would have three-year terms and there would be a US$1 billion cash contribution exception raises significantly high concerns regarding unequal access and governance by transactions. As stated by Reuters based on the charter document, members have a three-year term "subject to renewal by the Chairman," and the three-year term "shall not apply" to countries that contribute more than US$1 billion within the first year of the charter coming into force (Reuters, 2026a). Reuters has also stated that there are diplomatic tensions regarding the fact that there are states who would be permanent members if they pay US$1 billion and that Trump would be "chairman for life" (Reuters, 2026b).

Governance effect is equally difficult to ignore. Even if the U.S. does not consider this a "required fee," the fact remains that there is a considerable degree of governance effect. For the U.S., there is at least three implications.

First, we have a practical hierarchy embedding unequal sovereign all over again. The UN's hierarchy is already (veto power, etc.) but is justifiable through abstract constitutional architecture and the post-world war consensus. The pay-to-stay systems present a new hierarchy: wealth and patronage. This presents a multilateral legitimacy problem, as it indicates that for some a right of membership entails pay, and for others it is a privilege (Hurd, 1999).

Second, it risks creating a market for peace where influence can be bought. For a country like China, which is already deeply engaged in development finance and infrastructure diplomacy, the designs could be viewed as a competing mechanism that shifts "influence returns" from China to a U.S. controlled space. In other words, it opens a market for the U.S. to bestow permanent membership via a private economic contribution to a pay-to-play system, leaving China to rely on its own mechanisms for influence.

Third, it has a reputation risk. The legitimization of exclusionary governance is a risk that is both strategic and symbolic. It is that the governance is pay linked, and China has a publicly accessible discourse as the UN's defender. From the described risks, we can see why China acts the way it does.

4.2 Russia's reservations

(a) Protecting veto-based leverage and status equality

Russia's standing in the UN relates to its great-power status based on veto privilege. Realism posits that Russia will oppose any changes to the system that leads to "spectator power" — where Russia retains the formal, legal right to veto any actions taken by the Security Council but loses the ability to initiate, negotiate, and implement (Waltz, 1979; Mearsheimer, 2001).

Designs reported for the Peace Board pose that very danger. It is reported that the Board will be chaired for life by Trump, that there will be time limits on membership unless countries shell out $1 billion, and that the Board is expected to start with Gaza (and expand to other) conflicts (Reuters, 2026b; Reuters, 2026c). If this peace board becomes the venue for essential peace deals — especially where some coercive mechanisms and reconstruction funding are bundled — then the relevance of the Security Council is diminished. Where the balance of power operates through control of implementation and funding, the veto becomes irrelevant if the Peace Board can be operated by coalition enforcement, donor/country conditionality, or stabilization outside of UN control.

Russia's involvement with the Gaza framework shows sensitivity. According to Reuters, Russia and China abstained from the Security Council's mandate regarding the Board of Peace on Gaza. They criticized the absence of a defined UN role concerning the future of Gaza (Reuters, 2026b). This position may be viewed as an institutionalist objection, but its strategic essence is fundamentally realist: Russia aims to position the Security Council—not the out-of-context club—as the primary dominant gatekeeper concerning international control of the center of international security relations.

(b) Marginalization risk in a Western-led decision core

The Peace Board has been operating with uncertainty as there has been a lack of consistency with the Peace Board. For example, after Trump claimed Putin responded to the invitation, Crow News reported that Putin was still considering the invitation with the Russian foreign minister (Reuters, 2026d). Putin's statement appears to be political. While the statement does not escalate tensions, it does avoid a standstill and is a response to Board legitimacy concerns.

The chair Board is designed to amplify positionality bias. If a U.S. chair renews the Board with a continuity of chair position for sale, Russia faces extreme structural marginalization. Russia can be "included" but is practically excluded and diplomatically "excluded" from influence. For a state like Russia that views constipated positioning in the system as significant, "conditionally" exclusion is not a goal.

Additionally, Russia has a past of defiance to the West, especially concerning the worldwide governance. Moscow remains critical of Western proposals that include some control mechanisms that Russia cannot dominate. Simultaneously, Russia constructs or employs other coalitions (e.g. strengthening relationships with non-Western groupings) when left out. Such behavior towards multilateralism is evident when Russia obstructs what it sees as the transfer of control to a dominant state while strengthening other avenues where it can have a more preferential control over the rule (Morse & Keohane, 2014).

(c) Suspicion of enforcement and conditionality

Russia's reservation also concerns how "peace" is operationalized—especially if the Board is linked to demilitarization monitoring, stabilization forces, and conditional reconstruction finance. In contexts, enforcement and conditionality are not neutral technical issues; they distribute power by determining who is labelled compliant or non-compliant, who receives funding, and who faces sanctions or exclusion.

Reuters reporting on U.S. framing of the Board's role and on demilitarization-related elements in the Gaza plan reinforces why Russia might worry about selective application. For example, Reuters reports U.S. statements about how the Board would begin with Gaza but could serve as a model for other conflicts, and that UN engagement with the Board would only be in the context of the Security Council-endorsed Gaza plan (Reuters, 2026e). Meanwhile, contemporaneous reporting and diplomatic commentary describe broader concerns that the Board could undermine the UN's role as the main platform for diplomacy and conflict resolution (Reuters, 2026b).

Russia is concerned not so much about monitoring per se, but how monitoring is structured from a control perspective: who metric gauges, and who triggers them. If monitoring, enforcement decision, and funding control are with the small executive core of the U.S. aligned with U.S. interests, then Russia prognosticates asymmetry: i.e., there will be stricture to U.S. nonaligned actors and partners, and a loose approach to U.S. allies. Russia's critique and defensive justification here is not new; Russia has always pointed to the use of the Western-led global order's institutions as rule of law to justify their governing systems, and its application of rules in a non-uniform manner. Constructivism would add, and rightly so, that enforcement, as a function, does not have to be about punishment alone; it addresses the maturity of the system, including the emergence of legitimate narratives. To the victor belong the spoils of the game. So, in defining compliance and obstruction, he who is in the enforcement game, has the power to legit justify the out casting of dissenters and the use of force, (Finnemore, 1996; Barnett & Finnemore, 2004).

Finally, Russia's concern is heightened by the risk that the Board becomes a precedent for future conflicts where Russia is directly involved or has major stakes. If the Board evolves into a standing template for crisis resolution, Russia worries it could be used to frame settlement terms, reconstruction finance, and security oversight in ways that bypass Security Council constraints and normalize U.S. leadership in "peace governance."

4.3 Convergent reservations: legitimacy and authority shifts

Although there are varying worldviews and long-term goals, a common institutional preference of China and Russia is to limit U.S. discretionary power by keeping peace and security issues governed by the universal and the Security Council. There is alignment in three overlapping concerns.

First, China and Russia question the legitimacy of mandate ambiguity and centralization of power. In criticism of the UN's ambiguity, Chinese officials mentioned the lack of detail in the mandate concerning the Board and the Stabilization Force and the weak oversight structures (Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the UN, 2025). Concerns about a UN role that could go 'Gaza Board' uncontrolled shape similar thinking to the Chinese abstention with Russia on the Gaza Board mandate (Reuters, 2026b).

Second, both oppose an authority shift that would ignore the veto's gatekeeping role. Realism would predict this alignment: while China and Russia compete in various areas, both still prefer a United Nations Security Council configuration that constrains the imposition of fully unilateral security governance by the United States. A lifetime chair of the Peace Board who is a U.S. president, with renewals at the discretion of the chair, signals a new center of authority where U.S. preference bundling is simplified and veto constraints are less of an issue (Reuters, 2026b; Reuters, 2026c).

Third, both are likely to view the corrosion of multilateralism inherent in the pay-linked continuity mechanism as negative. The reported threshold of US$1 billion to be an extent or durable member, while actively serving the U.S. interests, places a member of the so-called multilateral order in a position that is essentially an admission fee. This is a fundamental challenge to the UN's primary principle of sovereign political equals, a payment-based hierarchy, and a constitutional settlement of inequality (Reuters, 2026a). Even for the wealthy great powers, this is a bad model because it creates a governance vacuum in which the U.S. can barter status for money in a way that is very unclear to a blend of diplomacy, institutionalism, and patronage.

Taking together, these converging concerns highlight a wider global governance risk - institutional divergence and fragmentation through dual-track peace architecture. One track involves the UN, which is universal, procedurally constrained, and rich in legitimacy. On the other hand, a smaller club is operationally nimble, resource-rich, and may be more coercive through funding levers and enforcement coordination. Regime complexity scholarship suggests that states will \\"forum shop\\" among overlapping institutions, and that the authority will shift as actors come to treat the club venue as the main arena for essential negotiation, relegating the UN to a legitimizing role after the fact (Raustiala & Victor, 2004; Morse & Keohane, 2014).

This is the reason why the"chair-centric" design is pivotal. Reuters report that the Board would be chaired for life and that membership can be extended through a US$1 billion payment deepens the impression that the Peace Board is more than a technical coordination mechanism; it is also an authority-relocation mechanism (Reuters, 2026b). The institutional message is clear: peace governance becomes something that is posited by an exclusive executive forum, rather than something that is negotiated through universally multilateral processes.

For both Russia and China, the initial reaction does not have to be a full rejection. A more beneficial response would be a calculated, strategic mix of risk, and ambiguity. China can stay noncommittal and reaffirm focus the UN. Russia can be somewhat committed, but with a strangle hold of the terms of study and negotiation. Still, if either one, or both of them engage-often, their primary, underlying issues: concerns with dilution of the veto, the erosion of credibility, and a non-system member seat right agenda; will be present and will impact their response to the Board's expansion and ultimately crystallize their position, and the lack of any stable, universally accepted alternative.

5. Discussion – Implications for the United Nations and global governance

The Peace Board's importance goes beyond whether or not it manages to stabilize Gaza. Its fundamental relevance's are about the changing geopolitical landscape of conflicts the world is witnessing: a growing recognition of the "Mini lateral" arrangements of leaders that are operating in parallel (and sometimes via) the UN and shifting de facto power elsewhere. The UN has built its influence on a distinct value proposition—it's near universal membership and Charter legitimacy, procedural restraint, and capacity to convert the power of the 'greats' into a collectively sanctioned mandate. A parallel mechanism undermines that value proposition both in terms of what the audience of a given initiative considers 'legitimate' peacemaking (symbolic dimension) and in terms of who gets to have the de facto power, the money, and the guns (implementation, resource, and enforcement dimensions).

5.1 Does the Peace Board challenge UN legitimacy and authority?

The challenge is twofold: symbolic and operational—yet also paradoxically hybrid.

(i) The symbolic challenge: redefining what "legitimate peace governance" looks like

The Peace Board is likely to risk normalizing the suggestion that peace and reconstruction can be the business of the `executive` club—closed by the selective division of membership, branding of leadership, and legitimacy of the club by performance, as opposed to the universal constituency and the Charter mechanism. That collapse of the distinction matters because everyday legitimacy is more than a legal nomenclature; it is the belief of an audience that there is an authority that is right to be trusted which reduces the price of submission and increases the price of opposition (Hurd, 1999). When state and civic actors come to regard the smaller setting as the place of business where `real` choices are made, the uniquely central narrative of the UN legitimacy remains, albeit the UN remains formally central.

The leader-centric design of the Peace Board strengthens this symbolic displacement. The World Economic Forum in Davos was the launch of the Board, and the report highlighted the perception that this body would be life-chaired, and even after Gaza, it could open memberships structured by time-limited high buy-in retention participation. Even in instances when U.S. officials characterize the Board as working "in conjunction with" the UN, the message is clear. A branded executive forum, however, case studies will show the authority is increasingly conceding to leader-driven coalitions with the ability to act quickly, as opposed to deliberations with universality and time in the balance.

The pathway to authority constructivism is in full operation. The narrative of "effective peace" is one of a club's decisiveness as opposed to the legal reliance of an international institution, and it is in such instances that the norms of equality and participation dilute. The UN proclaims that the decision to intervene with peace and security is derived from a Charter-based rule, and an almost global member alignment. The UN may risk losing legitimacy partly to the Peace Board if the Peace Board serves the purpose of a more visible alternative design, especially when it comes to complex transitions after conflict; the Peace Board then becomes a new benchmark of performance with patronage rather than of universality with procedure.

(ii) The operational challenge: implementation, resources, and compliance can shift away from UN mechanisms

If the Peace Board operates independently of the UN system, it can undermine the UN's authority by managing monitoring, transitional governance, and reconstruction financing coordination, thereby promising to distract political, donor, and compliance attention from the UN. The UN's budget issues make this even more risky. There have been reports of an even worse liquidity crisis, a backlog of unpaid bills, and the Secretary-General warning of an ``imminent financial collapse" and the possibility of no funds for the regular budget by July 2026, unless there is a big change in payments or financial rules.

Financial constraints impact competition between institutions. When a global institution has financial constraints that slow or limit resource allocation to support programming or operational flexibility, an emerging "club" with high concentration funding and low veto player "opposition" becomes relatively more appealing, in this case the Peace Board. The proposed governance model of the Peace Board offers a more resourceful, albeit less adaptive to the UN System, with what appears to be creative resource capture, including three year terms, chair linked renewals, and a mechanism that allows continued participation to be tied to very large donations. Even if the US calls such donations voluntary, the design of the structure conveys to others an unequal system in which funding becomes an outsourced and, therefore, less politically costly means for states to gain influence and secure what would be a long-term participation.

The shift in operational authority is also related to coercive means. The more implementation of

peace is linked to either security supervision, demilitarization, conditional reconstruction finance, and administrative oversight on-the-ground, the more determining control lies with the person(s) in charge of these instruments. In this case, U.S. discourse provides a particular elaboration: command at the level of Board of Directors, Executive Board with names and portfolios, field representation, and collaboration with the International Stabilization Force for the provision of security and demilitarization and their concomitant administrative oversight. Even when the UN is mentioned as a cooperating partner, the operational focus is likely to gravitate toward the Board and his/her coalition, especially if the center of gravity for cooperation, enforcement, and funding is located there.

(iii) The hybrid paradox: UN legitimacy can be used to validate a structure that reduces UN control

The Peace Board can't be considered as outside the UN ecosystem. Supporting the current arrangement, the Peace Board has a role in Gaza that is being tied to the frameworks endorsed by the Security Council. The Board is being framed by the U.S. as being aligned with Security Council Resolution 2803 (2025) and as being integral to the operationalization of the "Comprehensive Plan." A UN spokesperson reported by Reuters has stated that the UN's engagement with the Board would be limited to the Gaza situation only.

This explains the paradox you pointed out: the UN's legitimacy may be used to support a governance model that is a lot less UN centric. This is the situation that international lawyers describe as clearly 'odd' and 'institutionally' unusual. A paper on Resolution 2803 in the ASIL Insights describes the Board as "a transitional administration with international legal personality," which is not a UN 'subsidiary body' but is considered a sui generis body with a head of state of a permanent Council member, and is unprecedented in the absence of resolution text provisions on the appointment of Palestinian representatives and UN oversight to governance of the manager of the technocracy.

In so many words, you will find a shift of authority where the borrowing of legitimacy and the relocation of control is most evident. About operational control, the UN is given the corroborative power of collective endorsement, the UN charter, and the configuration of the Board and daily management. If this pattern continues, the UN will suffer an even further downward loss of prestige, being viewed as mere endorsement rather than a manager. The legal and ethical endorsements of arrangements of which the control and directive constitutionally organizing parts are situated outside the UN.

(iv) Why the UN's fiscal stress makes this challenge more consequential

The UN's financial crisis is more than just noise. It is a structural accelerant. More willing to accept anything that provides speed and capacity, states will make trade-offs around procedural universality, when the resource-pull tightens. In a world of competing claims of legitimacy and effectiveness, a UN that is fiscally weak is unfit and will lose status to club governance that looks deliverable. This is a self-reinforcing cycle and the more focused the resources and attention becomes on the club, the more the UN is weakened and the more attractive the club becomes. Stress related to deadlines on reporting arrears and cash out timelines is acute and illustrates the current state of the UN's financial crisis.

In short: The Peace Board, yes, challenges the UN's legitimacy and authority by replacing the UN, but, more so, by redefining the narratives around legitimacy, controlling the mechanisms for implementation, and using UN authorization as a legitimacy construct, while governance moves to an outer smaller executive forum.

5.2 Could the Peace Board accelerate fragmentation?

Yes—particularly by institutionalizing two-tier multilateralism and incentivizing forum shopping.

(i) Two-tier multilateralism as a stable pattern

Two-tier model captures the likely dynamic:

1. **Universal tier (UN):** broad legitimacy, formal legal mandates, procedural restraint, but slower consensus and resource constraints.
2. **Club tier (Peace Board):** faster action, concentrated agenda control, selective membership, higher entry costs, and potentially stronger enforcement tools through pooled funding and coalition security capacity.

If states begin treating the club tier as the primary venue where outcomes are decided, especially on major conflicts, the UN may increasingly become the forum that *endorses* decisions made elsewhere. That is fragmentation through functional displacement, a core concern in contested multilateralism (Morse & Keohane, 2014).

Multiple documented characteristics of the design move in this direction. The Board has been framed as possibly expanding beyond Gaza. This signals institutional eagerness to become a more permanent fixture rather than an ad hoc mechanism. Second, the term limits and the high-volatile continuity mechanisms in the charter suggest design elements that favor more inscribed and, therefore, durable influence to the rich and politically like-minded. Third, the public record of which states participated and which states did not reveal the potential of the Board to create new, legally sanctioned, and non-multilateral block aligned club diplomacies.

(ii) Fragmentation by "authority laundering": UN endorsement as cover for non-UN control

A significant especially complex dissolution pathway is perhaps what you may call authority laundering. A certain arrangement achieves a measure of gain acceptability simply because it is coupled with a Security Council resolution. However, the operational details—such as which piece of the governance puzzle the authority to renew is, the rules of membership, portfolios, and day-to-day operational control—lie largely outside the institution's control of the UN. Within ASIL Insights regarding Resolution 2803, the Board's atypical character as a non-UN actor and possessor of international legal personality and a concern regarding a lack of oversight and appointment criteria in the UN text are visible. This leads to a split in governance; the UN endorses a framework, but the charter governs the crucial aspects. Gradually, that may lead to the normalization of a model in which the UN offers legal cover, and executive clubs undertake the implementation, and in effect, the UN is transformed into a 'mandate validator' instead of a governing center.

(iii) Fragmentation by resource competition and donor re-routing

Fragmentation becomes even worse when major powers and donors funnel resources through club tiers because it seems quicker, less bureaucratic, and more politically manageable. The UN losing money makes this more likely. When the UN has to deal with the hurdles caused by payment arrears, donors can justify the pivot to other mechanisms that are likely to shift funds. However, this shift erodes the UN's credibility and negotiating position, resulting in more of this type of funding. The cycle of displacement has begun. The warnings over liquidity and arrears are examples of why this is the case.

The Peace Board financing logic suggests yet another layer of competition. Large minimum fee thresholds that guarantee extended participation can create a quasi-subscription type of arrangement where countries buy status and access to the agenda that lasts for a period of time. Should major powers see this as a more immediate pathway to influence than payments tied to UN Assessments, which are governed by rules, the greater the incentives to engage the club tier.

(iv) Fragmentation by enforcement pluralism: competing standards for compliance

Fragmentation is also about *standards*. If monitoring, demilitarization, and conditionality are coordinated through the club tier, then compliance judgments may be made there rather than through UN-standard reporting and deliberation. That introduces enforcement pluralism: multiple authorities claim the right to define compliance, determine sanctions, and judge legitimacy. Reuters reporting on U.S. briefings to the Security Council concerning

demilitarization measures and monitoring ideas illustrates how these enforcement concepts are being operationalized within the broader framework.

As soon as pluralism in enforcement appears, actors may choose their own forum. Non-compliant defendants may try to move the conflict to places where they expect a friendly disposition; sponsors may choose to prioritize the place that supports their narrative the most. This explains the phenomenon where regime complexes create instability: because of the existence of multiple, concurrent, and equally powerful cementing pieces of authority, the opposing parties may choose their strategy to reduce the strong counterbalance effect of a single authority rule definitor.

(v) The likely end state: complementarity, displacement, or managed coexistence

Whether fragmentation becomes severe depends on how the Peace Board evolves. Three plausible trajectories follow:

1. **Complementarity (managed coexistence):** The Board stays within the original allocated boundaries of Gaza and gives itself an UN-mandated principle of document reporting, accountability, and international oversight. The Board then serves as a capacity-surge tool (which will be a new and different tool for the UN) while maintaining UN legitimacy and control of primary global governance. Reporting requirements of the Resolution and the Gaza constraints provide a foundation for this outcome.

2. **Functional displacement (accelerated fragmentation):** The Board goes beyond Gaza (including the Middle East or adjacent 'Global South's' Disruptive wars and conflicts) and operates as a standing executive-jacket club (possibly for greater 'Global South' mediation); then shifts to dominant financing and a club control of coercive alliance for the regulation of peace. States conclude coercive deals and utilize the UN merely for legitimation or humanitarian sidelining. The media information of boards for peace expanding beyond Gaza conflict zones is why this hypothesis is plausible to many analysts and diplomats.

3. **Hybrid dominance (UN legitimacy, club control):** The most subtle (and arguably most plausible) fragmentation outcome is persistent hybridization: UN Security Council resolutions provide cover for the (legitimate) combinations of club systems, while the charters of those clubs control the operational governance systems.

The UN is still a symbol of authority, but they lack the operational capability to back it up. Commentary on the resolution states that the board's lack of UN affiliation, and generalized oversight gaps, dictates the possible breadth of the template to be reproduced. The Peace Board may further fragmentation since it offers a faster and more centralized multilateral action approach that is more selective and may be more enforceable. In conjunction with UN financial distress, it becomes increasingly destabilizing. Competition is not just about the norms; it is also about the resources, and in this instance, the Peace Board is more reliable.

6. Conclusion – Future trajectories and policy recommendations

The establishment of the Board of Peace incites a larger inquiry of the evolution of multilateralism: whether peace governance will continue to be based on universality, Charter-based frameworks, and the UN; or move toward more exclusive, top-down frameworks (or "clubs") which offer quicker, more resourceful, and more readily enforcement options. The Board of Peace, however, operates on a distinctly different model— that of 'peace and security' decision-making based on executive 'concentrated' authority, differentiated (i.e., exclusive) membership and continuity, and an expandable remit beyond Gaza. The Board of Peace has been reported to have exceptional membership terms (i.e., a state has to contribute a disproportionate amount to the Board to be granted membership), and to have a very central chair (or top) leadership model (Reuters, 2026a; Reuters, 2026b).

6.1 Future trajectories

Trajectory 1: Co-option (functional nesting within UN primacy).

When pathways are co-opted, a Peace Board becomes a bounded implemental instrument, integrated into UN oversight, rather than functioning as a freestanding alternative. This might be the case if the Board's Gaza function is limited regarding the Gaza provisions in the Security Council, with reporting frameworks, decision-tracking transparency, and a credible a handover/back to Palestinian and UN-recognized authorities' framework. An enabling condition is Security Council-sanctioned (e.g., Resolution 2803 (2025) recognizing the Board in Gaza as a transitional administration with an international legal personality) propose with control, supervision, review, and predefined triggers for positive and negative reinforcement on the Board's operational objectives and discretion (UN Security Council, 2025; Southey, 2025).

This is also the path of least resistance, in regard to the U.S. articulating the Board is not to supplant the UN, but rather, serve a particular transitional arrangement (Reuters, 2026b). If co-opted, it would be governance fragmentation's tipping point, as it would legitimize the Peace Board as a temporary, capacity-surge instrument for UN-system governance. However, unlike the other pathways, co-option demands more than alignment on the rhetoric; it necessitates fundamental changes in institutional design, particularly decision-making, participation, representation of the affected, and the metrics of compliance and accountability.

Trajectory 2: Competitive displacement (a standing alternative that erodes UN peace functions).

Displaced competitive situation may happen when the Peace Board expands beyond Gaza and becomes a crisis management platform, detaching hard crisis diplomacy, donor coordination, and enforcement from the UN, and reporting crisis management diplomacy financing management coordination crises. There is reporting of the Board being extended, and diplomats being concerned that the Board may become a competitor to the UN (Reuters, 2026b; Reuters, 2026c).

Competitive displacement does not require the UN to "collapse" in an institutional sense. Yet, from a functional standpoint, it does. The Peace Board may become the place where most states go to for results; in crises that require speed and urgency, the UN may only be relegated to humanitarian coordination and ex-post legitimation. This is even more likely to happen given the financial constraints of the UN. UN leadership has pointed to a cash-flow crisis characterized by a backlog of arrears, and a budget that may run out by mid-2026 without significant changes or timely payments (Reuters, 2026d; Associated Press, 2026).

In this scenario, China and Russia are likely to contest the legitimacy of the situation persistently. Their concerns of veto attenuation, relocation of power, and selective "club governance" in the Board would be exacerbated if the Board were to move into hostile situations where their interests were directly involved. While this proposal will likely not stop expansion, it would certainly politicize the legitimacy of the Board. It could also lead to the formation of parallel coalitions and counter-forums, which would exacerbate the competition within global governance.

Trajectory 3: Fragmented pluralism (managed coexistence plus forum-shopping).

The United Nations and the Peace Board employ different types of pluralism. The United Nations has the authority and broad legitimacy, while the Peace Board has legitimacy in situations where a smaller group is using their resources and can make and enforce commitments. This leads to forum shopping, where states and parties to conflict choose a venue at which to pursue their objectives. If they need broad universal support, they choose the United Nations. If they need speed, money, and enforcement, they choose the Peace Board.

This is an example of the use of the logic of regime complexity. Institutions that overlap can remain in place, but authority becomes uneven, and standards and protections become

inconsistent and, in many instances, especially rare, conflict-affected smaller states, the protections become more limited (Morse \& Keohane, 2014). Fragmented pluralism is, in practice, normatively stable and politically costly because it decreases the United Nations' ability to fully perform its role as the primary peacekeeper.

6.2 Policy recommendations

1) Clarify institutional relations and legal constraints.

Any of the Peace Board's activities that involve security monitoring, transitional governance, or coercive conditionality must have clear legal boundaries reflecting the UN Charter and must be within some form of defined lines of reporting, periodic reviews, criteria for decision-making, and conditions for termination or handover (United Nations Security Council, 2025; Southey, 2025). These safeguards help avoid the *"legitimacy lending"* problem, whereby the UN allocates legitimacy to a quasi-governing body that UN cannot supervise properly, thus creating a shift in authority that is difficult to undo.

2) Reduce pay-to-stay incentives and prevent transactional membership hierarchies.

Peace governance is likely to be seen as a market for status and access, as high entry costs and differentiated membership create continuity. The draft charter has already been reported to connect longer-term participation inevitably to outsized contributions, resulting in unequal and transactional legitimacy perceptions (Reuters, 2026a). Reform must change dependencies of continuity and influence from financial thresholds to participation equity in multilateral governance, such as regional, affected, and purpose-based representation, and clear, open participation criteria.

3) Protect Global South agency through coalition coordination.

Your Global South Coalition proposes managing Global South states' anticipation of increased regional grouping and coalition aligning for forum shopping to defend sovereign equality and procedural voice. Where club forum(s) is/are created, Global South states have to advocate, as a collective, for (i) clear, transparent, and publicly available criteria for membership, (ii) guaranteed and adequate representation of all so called relevant and affected geo-political or geo-economically defined sub-regions, in addition to the so called principal regions, and (iii) balancing mechanisms in order to ensure that implementation of a peace agreement is not, or does not become, aligned to a set of preferences of a select group of donors.

4) Address UN financing as a collective security priority.

There is a collective security issue with the fragile and unadministered finances of the UN. An unadministered cash dilemma, as predicted by the Secretary General, is a displacement issue as well. The predicting of a cash-out of the UN, coupled with the record amount of UN payment arrears, is a signal for the need of a set of timely payment of contributions, or structural changes to the UN financing system (Reuters, 2026d; Associated Press, 2026). When the UN system is in a state of unadministered cash out, the alternative 'clubs' become more attractive for coming to 'peace' and it is more likely that the 'peace' will not be universal. Hence, the system will become more fragmented, and the universal legitimacy of the system will be eroded even more; it will be more of a cash out system. To put it simply, financing the UN is an investment in collective security. When peace is more fragmented and there is no universal peace, the investments in financing the UN become more valuable.

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