

How to expel Russia from the UN

THE HILL

11/03/22 [Opinion](#)>[International](#)

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<https://thehill.com/opinion/international/3717566-how-to-expel-russia-from-the-un/>

The war in Ukraine will have demonstrated the impotence of the United Nations if a permanent member of the Security Council with full veto power becomes a rogue state without consequence. For the havoc it created, Russia must now be evicted from the UN.

This is how.

On Oct. 12, 2022, a UN [resolution condemning Russia's illegal annexation of Eastern Ukrainian territories was adopted by 143 to 5 with 35 abstentions](#). This majority suggests that Russia is thoroughly diplomatically isolated. While Moscow deserves to be removed from the Security Council, its position is enshrined in [Art. 23, #1](#) of the UN Charter. Moreover, its veto power cannot be revoked because of the provisions of [Art. 27, #3](#). There is also no consensus for changing the existing structure of the UN.

Nevertheless, there is another way forward based on *principles* and the common will of the international community. This involves expelling the Russian Federation from the UN through the General Assembly, which can be done under [Art. 18, #2](#). Obviously, if a country loses its status as a UN member, it also loses its seat on the Security Council.

To accomplish this, first, a resolution proposing Russia's [expulsion/suspension needs to go to the General Assembly from the Security Council, per Art. 12, #1](#). Second, the General Assembly must vote by a two-thirds +1 supermajority in favor of expulsion.

Article 27, #3 of the Charter states that if the Security Council is deliberating an issue concerning one of its members, "[a party to the dispute shall abstain from voting under paragraph 3 of Article 52](#)." This can allow the Security Council to send the issue to the General Assembly without Russia simply vetoing the move.

The UN has done this before. Fifty years ago, a UN founding nation and Security Council permanent member was expelled. The Republic of China (Taiwan) occupied the seat from 1945 until Oct. 25, 1971, when its place was taken by the PRC. The Assembly even [lifted the supermajority requirement](#) when adopting resolution 2758 by 76 votes to 35, with 17 abstentions. So not only is there precedent for expulsion,

but now the international community is far more united than it was during the height of the Cold War.

These days, Russia is a major threat to the existence of a stable, rules-based international system. In an article published by *Project Syndicate* back in 2016, one of us called it a country “[flirting with fascism](#).” Today it has evolved into [a mature fascist dictatorship](#).

Russian President Vladimir Putin invaded Ukraine lacking just cause or legal mandate. Russia has flagrantly violated [Art. 2 \(#3, 4 and 7\) of the UN Charter](#) and refused to comply with the General Assembly’s resolutions. It has committed crimes of aggression against a sovereign state and numerous crimes against humanity in the occupied parts of Ukraine, many of which we believe should be considered acts of genocide.

Moreover, the Russian Federation under Putin has become less and less accountable to international law. Its amended Constitution [rejects the priority of international norms](#) over domestic laws and regulations; its laws allow Russian authorities to [disobey the rulings of international courts and arbitration](#). Russia was recently [excluded from the Council of Europe](#); withdrew from some other international organizations and terminated its participation in several landmark international treaties, [including the Geneva Convention](#). Should these behaviors concretely change and its war in Ukraine end, Russia could be re-admitted to the UN.

China is the only country in the Security Council that might veto sending a vote on expelling Russia to the General Assembly. If we want Russia to be appropriately punished, China must be offered a deal: Make Beijing’s abstention in the Security Council the first test of President Xi’s proposal for a US-China condominium in managing world affairs. China must accept shared responsibility for facilitating international peace. To refuse would be to embrace Russian aggression and present China tying itself to an unstable and declining actor on the world stage.

The only chance to make the UN relevant is by terminating the aggressor’s capacity to pretend it is a guardian of peace.

The expulsion of Russia would make the Security Council an effective body able to adopt much-needed decisions aimed at preserving global stability and security. To save the UN from a looming existential crisis, bold steps must be taken. The enfeebled League of Nations only managed to [expel the Soviet Union because of its attack on Finland](#) just months before the League itself ceased to exist.

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