The Pot Calling the Kettle Black: The Function of Politicisation Charges in United Nations Security Council Discourse Regarding Action

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I.   Introduction

Charged with protecting human rights, maintaining international peace and security, and also able to impose sanctions or authorise force, the most powerful body of the international community is, without a doubt, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) (Pay & Postolski, 2021). In spite of the UNSC holding all this power, it can only act after debates in which the appropriate behaviour, as well as the limit and extent of the UNSC legitimacy in enforcing such behaviour, are discussed (Johnstone, 2003, p. 438). It is within these discussions, in which every word is weighed, that charges of the pervasive phenomenon of 'politicisation' are invoked antithetically to both justify as well as prevent action, in particular within discourse regarding the Middle East.

The topic of politicisation is not novel to the international relations discipline, and neither is the scrutinisation of politicisation within the UN as a whole, or the UNSC specifically (Freedman, 2014; Dominguez-Redondo, 2020). Previous research has largely paid attention to the consequences of politicisation to the structure of the UN and the UNSC, who due to their intrusive nature were established to "be more politicised" than usual international organisations (Zürn et al. 2012, p. 97; Davenas, 2018; Freedman, 2014; Gruenberg, 2009). However, the function of charging - or accusing - another nation with politicisation in discourse, particularly the UNSC, has been left as an underexplored field. This is in spite of the fact that the subject of politicisation charges was asserted to be interesting, in addition to problematic, within earlier academic scholarship. Schmitt, in 1932, regarded these politicisation charges as a "typically and particularly intensive way of doing politics" and they caution people to be suspicious of any claim of being 'depoliticised' (p. 21, as cited within Palonen et al, 2019, p. 3). Lyons et al.'s (1997) research into the UN specialised agencies also mentioned the troubling 'charge of politicisation'. They stressed the fact that these charges, and countercharges, affect the work of UN organisations, and thus politicisation charges should be scrutinised and examined closely, since they carry a societal implication. Nevertheless, they themselves do not delve into these charges' their function, nor did any research that followed this publication look at the function of these charges within the UNSC.

There has been some tentative research on charges of politicisation specifically within the wider UN. For instance, Terman and Byun (2022) looked at politicisation in the UN Universal Periodic Review through a quantitative lens. They discuss that within these reviews – in which the extent to which states respect their obligation towards human rights protection – some violations are more likely to be condemned and politicised by allies of states, rather than their adversaries, through which they hope to spur these allies into action (p. 385). However, states overall have a tendency to discuss safer topics with friends whilst criticising and politicising sensitive human rights issues for adversaries, through which they undermine these target states' power and legitimacy (p. 399). Carraro's (2017) empirical research takes special treaty bodies into consideration, as well as the aforementioned UN Universal Periodic Review. The author finds that politicisation appears predominantly in the way that recommendations regarding human rights are formulated, which takes into consideration bilateral relations, which is a similar conclusion to Terman and Byun's (p. 968). In addition, Carraro observes that when charges of politicisation arise, compliance with undertaken commitments regarding human rights by countries are perceived to be more realistic (p. 969). Nevertheless, this previous research has focussed not so much on the function of charges of politicisation for the targeting state, as it has on the consequences on the targeted state. Further research regarding charges of politicisation within bodies of the UN – outside of the special treaty bodies and UN Periodical Review – was however requested within Carraro's (2017) article, thus highlighting the academic importance of further exploring this avenue (p. 969).

The study of politicisation has gained saliency over the past couple of decades. Notwithstanding all this previous research, a significant research gap remains. Namely, in spite of discourse being central to the UNSC, as well as charges of politicisation being prevalent and their use antithetical in both justifying and preventing action within the UNSC, there has been no research regarding this facet of politicisation within this body of the UN (Allen & Bell, 2020, p. 12). This thesis aims to bridge this gap by shedding light upon the function of charges of politicisation within the UNSC's discourse concerning action, an avenue that has yet to be investigated. The research question this thesis will thus explore, through a discourse analysis, is: what is the function of the invocation of charges of politicisation within the United Nations Security Council's discourse regarding action?

In section II of this thesis, three theories will be introduced that have been derived from earlier work on argumentation within the UN, and from these a theoretical framework that will be used to infer hypotheses to answer the research question will be drafted. In section III, the methodology, the case studies, the data collection and operationalisation of this thesis will be discussed and justified. Subsequently, in section IV, the results of the discourse analysis of both case studies will be critically analysed, interpreted, and discussed. Lastly, in section V, an answer to the research question and the overall findings and conclusions of this research will be given.

II.   Theoretical framework

It is pertinent to analyse a multitude of theories in order to draft hypotheses that can answer what exactly the function of the invocation of charges of politicisation is, for its function remains woefully underexplored within previous research. It is due to this lack of research regarding the function of charging a target state with politicisation that this thesis will be drawing upon Johnstone's (2003), Goldsmith and Posner's (2005), and Sheeran's (2021) earlier work on the function of argumentation in general within the UN and the UNSC. Although their theories do not focus on politicisation charges, they do form a basis for theoretical functions of advancing a certain claim within the UN. Therefore, by making use of these theories, this thesis will explore the function of politicisation charges within the discourse of the UNSC regarding action.

The first theory of significance is realism, which claims that powerful states benefit from manipulating the rules, often especially those that they have written, and invoking these within the international system (Johnstone, 2003, p. 438; Sheeran, 2021, p. 65). This goal of states benefiting from their actions is central to realism. Therefore, according to a realist, powerful states often try to enforce their national interests within discourse. Charges of politicisation within discourse could hence be used in order to highlight and accuse states of trying to benefit in the international system. Through this, the targeting states' own proposed action could seem depoliticised, due to which it becomes easier to further their own national interests. In short, the hypothesis derived from realist theory assumes that:

H₁: The function of the invocation of charges of politicisation within discourse is to accuse proposed action by a target state to be "politicised", since through this the targeting states own statements seem depoliticized of national interests.

The second theory pertains to a social constructivist lens, which supposes that the compliance and claims that states pursue do not only relate to a state its interests, but it constitutes the identity of a state (Johnstone, 2003, p. 438; Goldsmith & Posner, 2005, p. 169). Social constructivists believe that a state's claims are based upon the values and norms of that state itself. Thus, when the values or norms of a state are violated they will make use of charges of politicisation in order to condemn this behaviour. As such, the function of charges of politicisation, according to social constructivist theory, is based upon the identity and values of the state charging them. A social constructivist hypothesis thus assumes that:

H₂: the function of a charge of politicisation is to signal violations of states' values and norms regarding suggested (in)action through deeming it "politicised".

The third theory is an amalgamation of various strands of legal and international relation theories, which offers that legal arguments are used in order to be a part of a larger discursive process through which legal norms are invoked for the purpose of persuading and defending (Johnstone, 2003, p. 439). Since the UN is a valued institution, upholding reputation matters, as well as the upkeep of the UN Charter-based rules (p. 477). Every decision taken should reflect an interpretation of the Charter or other relevant law (p. 452). Therefore, charges of politicisation, according to this theory, are used to defend the rules and norms enshrined within the Charter, as well as enhance a states' legal legitimacy (Johnstone, 2003, p. 439, p. 441; Sheeran, 2021, p. 64). Although this theory remains unnamed within Johnstone's and Sheeran's work, within this thesis it will be referred to as the 'legalist theory'. The hypothesis extracted from legalist theory is that:

H₃: the function of charges of politicisation is to highlight or accuse the target party of not upholding the Charter or other relevant laws because they are "politicised", and through this assure all action authorised is legitimate and in accordance with these legal parameters.

III.   Research design

Due to the nature of the question this thesis aims to answer, this research will be an exploratory qualitative study. In addition, this thesis will make use of a discourse analysis. A discourse analysis is not something that can be succinctly described (Taylor, 2013). However, a starting point is the notion that a discourse analysis refers to an approach through which "language material, such as talk or written texts, and sometimes other material altogether, is examined as evidence of [a] phenomena [...]" (p. 2). Discourse analysis puts an emphasis on the contextual meaning of language, and not solely the 'rules' of language use. Through discourse analysis, it is possible to provide evidence concerning subjectivity such as an actor's intentions (Halperin & Heath, 2017, p. 174). Especially critical is the fact that it puts a focus on social aspects of communicating and aims to look at the manner through which people use language to achieve "special effects" (Luo, 2022). These 'effects' consist of things such as building trust, evoking emotions, or spreading mistrust. Therefore, for the purposes of deriving the function - or the 'special effect' - of politicisation charges, conducting a discourse analysis is the method with the best fit.

Case selection

The Middle East has had its fair share of wars, interstate conflicts, and crises within the past few decades, and over a similar timespan the Security Council has tried to draft resolutions for several of these. The divisiveness of the debates regarding this, and contested notions of whether action should be taken are also possible to be seen through the number of times that the resolutions proposed concerning the Middle East situation have been vetoed within the UNSC (United Nations Dag Hammarskjöld Library, n.d.). These vetoes are held by the permanent members of the UNSC, the P5 nations – China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States. These nations carry the most power regarding the decisions of what the UNSC does and does not take part in (Ibrahim, 2018). Between these veto-holding and permanent members there is a divide, this split is more commonly known as the P3 (France, the United Kingdom, and the United States) and the P2 (China and Russia) (Gallagher & Wheeler, 2021, pp. 183-285). In spite of their usage of the veto of the resolutions that pertain to undertaking action in the Middle East, the P5 cannot veto discourse. Discourse concerning the appropriate behaviour by the UNSC within this region consequently continues to occur. Within these discussions the P2 and P3 share largely adversarial opinions regarding what action

the UNSC should engage in (Thakkar, 2020). This thesis will look at both charges of politicisation from the P2, and P3, in order to find out what the general function of the invocation of these charges is since their stances and socio-political backgrounds differ, through which it becomes possible to discern whether there are variations in their function and usage. In short, due to their veto-holding status, as well as their opposing stances, it is pertinent to analyse how the P3 and P2 make use of charges of politicisation in discourse regarding action within the Middle East.

In addition to looking at the P2 and P3, in order to limit the scope of these debates, this thesis will focus on two very divisive and typical cases within the UNSC discussions about the Middle East. This thesis opts for typical cases due to the fact that through studying these, one can understand or identify key aspects of a certain phenomenon in their ordinary manifestation (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). The two cases that will be examined are debates concerning action by the UNSC regarding Syria and Palestine, which through their disparity in stances from the members of the P5 should provide fertile ground for the invocation of politicisation. This is because, on the one hand, action concerning Syria, on the grounds of human right violations, is supported by the P3, however the P2 have made clear they do not want to intervene (Sirbiladze, 2022). On the other hand, the P3 does not support an intervention by the international community for the violation of human rights within Palestine, whilst the P2 does support this – albeit as a possible tool to show the hypocrisy of the P3 (Bochkov, 2021; Javad Heydarian, 2021). Hence, these cases pave the way for an academically interesting analysis that can illustrate both charges of politicisation that aim to prevent and justify action and inaction by the P5, which should indicate the general function these charges serve. Therefore, both the P2 and the P3 discourse within the UNSC regarding the discussion of the cases of Syria and Palestine will be analysed in order to provide an answer to the research question.

Data collection

Although the debates concerning both of the cases this thesis examines are longstanding, in order to keep this research manageable within the allotted time span and word count, this thesis will make use of a timeframe. This timeframe ranges from April 2022 until April 2023, making it a period of a year. This timeframe will both keep this thesis relevant as well as provide ample work to analyse.

The data compiled for the analysis will be primarily composed of primary sources, combined with some secondary sources. Primary sources that will be studied are explanations for vetoes within the UNSC as well as meeting records of the UNSC. Secondary sources constitute previous research regarding the role the cases of Syria and Palestine play for the P2 and P3, through which it becomes possible to better contextualise the discourse analysis.

Operationalisation

The concept of a charge of politicisation is one that needs to be operationalised, however it first needs to be adequately defined. Lyons et al. (1977) define a charge of politicisation as one that is used when "agencies are being used as a forum for political debate rather than the functional tasks for which they were founded" (p. 81). This definition can be further expanded by incorporating the definition of Terman and Byun (2022), who pose that "[charges of] politicisation [describe] a situation in which principled neutrality is compromised in favour of political discretion" (p. 385). A politicisation charge within this thesis is thus considered a claim that agencies are used as a political forum in which principled neutrality is jeopardised by political discretion of the target state.

Within the discourse there will specifically be looked for terms that signal a charge of politicisation, such as, but not limited to: politicisation, double standards and (im)partiality. The discourse analysis conducted within this thesis is deductive, therefore the coding scheme (see figure 1) that will be used to analyse this data is based on the previously expanded theories.

Figure 1. Discourse analysis coding scheme

Theory	Description	Example of discourse
Realist theory	Charge within discourse that refers to *national interests* (such as, personal gain, prioritisation, and hypocrisy)	"These nations are politicised and are only trying to further their national interests, and therefore we should (not) do something."
Social constructivist theory	Charge within discourse that refers to *violations of norms and values*	"These nations are politicised and thus violate norms that we deem

	(such as immorality, litmus test, and lack of basic needs)	important, and therefore we should (not) do something."
Legalist theory	Charge within discourse that refers to *upholding legal parameters* and *legitimacy* (such as obfuscation, inconsistency, and impunity)	"These nations are politicised and thus are allowing legal parameters to be crossed which affects our legitimacy, and therefore we should (not) do something."

IV. Results and analysis

This part of the thesis will examine the findings from the timeframe that was opted for, from April 2022 until April 2023. Within this timeframe there were fifteen UNSC meetings pertaining to the Palestine question, and 22 that included the Syria question. The Syria question being included within these meetings did not mean that this question was the sole focus of this specific meeting, for the Syrian question could also just be mentioned by a UNSC member. Hence, meetings that solely revolved around the Syria question within the time frame were selected.

The results and analysis section is divided into three larger parts. In the first section the findings from the Palestine case will be discussed and explored. The second section will look at the results from the Syria question. The third, and final, section will combine the findings of both case studies and discuss some trends, implications, and noteworthy points.

The Palestine question

The P3 rarely made use of charges of politicisation in order to discursively push for inaction within the UNSC regarding the question of Palestine, unlike the P2 who frequently made use of such charges within the discussions to push for action. This section will first discuss and analyse the results of the P3, and will afterwards dive into the analysis and discussion of the results of the P2.

Palestine and the P3

Realist theory

The P3 did not make use of any charges of politicisation that could be categorised under realist theory in the discussions concerning the Palestine question within the entire year the timeframe encompassed. Instead, many of the speeches by the P3 are almost superficial in nature, in which the P3 states that they will "try everything in their power to reduce tension", or to "establish a political horizon", but they do not discuss how they aim to do so (United Nations Security Council, 2022f, 2023d). Therefore, in a year of discourse, and 15 meetings, concerning the Palestine question, the P3 did not charge other nations with politicisation for being more concerned with national interests.

Social constructivist theory

The P3 only used a charge that fit with the social constructivist theory once in the entire year. In the 9107th meeting the USA stated that the council should "unconditionally repudiate the terrorism of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad" and that all countries should not be "expected to tolerate or passively accept such brazen attacks on its civilians" (United Nations Security Council, 2022f). This is a charge that targets Russia in particular, since they have had meetings with the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (Rasgon, 2020). By stating this the USA could possibly be aiming to change Russia's behaviour that violates their norms, or at least they are attempting to highlight it.

Legalist theory

The use of charges of politicisation that classify under legalist theory by the P2 are similarly scarce to the previous two theories. Nevertheless, the USA does press upon the notion that, according to them, there is an "unfair focus on Israel" within draft solutions, which are a "distraction and do nothing to improve the situation on the ground" (United Nations Security Council, 2022m, 2022o). They do not go into who they were referring to specifically, but since in particular the P2 are strong advocates of the Palestinian side, this could be targeted towards them and their advocacy in order to urge the UNSC into action for the Palestine case.

Palestine and the P2

Realist theory

The P2 often makes use of charges of politicisation that fit into the realist theory within the discourse regarding Palestine. However, there is a distinct difference in the respective approach

Russia and China have towards charging target states. Russia often directly addresses the United States, or "Washington", within their speeches and singles out their lack of action through charging them with being more concerned with moulding the Palestine process towards their own interests (United Nations Security Council, 2022g). In order to do this they often use phrases such as "monopolisation of peace processes", "privatisation of the Middle East dossier", and "prioritisation of other crises" (United Nations Security Council, 2022b, 2022e, 2022g, 2022m, 2022o, 2022r, 2023b, 2023d). Furthermore, they also specifically target the larger P3 in their discourse, which they call "Western States" in statements such as: "Given that the actions of a number of Western States specifically caused the outbreak of the majority of conflicts in the Middle East, we believe that regional conflicts should not fall hostage to geopolitical competition" (United Nations Security Council, 2023d). Through these direct charges Russia constructs an 'us versus them' tactic which forces nations to either side with the West's, whose politicised actions are solely based on their own national interests, or on the other side, where Russia is trying their best to create peace altruistically. Albeit, questions do arise as to whether these claims are legitimate, since Russia themselves are also recognised to make use of the Palestine question in a cynical and instrumental manner (Czerny, 2022). Moreover, especially after the outbreak of the Russo-Ukrainian war did the Russian pro-Palestine stance solidify. The use of this pro-Palestine stance to Russia will further get expanded upon in the discussion of the charges of politicisation following the legalist theory.

China, conversely, hides politicisation charges that are in line with realist theory in a slightly less direct way. They urge "countries who could bring significant influence to bear on this issue" to "take a fair stand, shoulder their due responsibilities and take practical action" (United Nations Security Council, 2023d). 'Fair stand' within this sentence refers to these countries having to change their stance to be more impartial, for, according to China, these countries with significant influence are partial and focus on their own national interests. Within their discourse they never refer to any nation, or group of nation specifically, but through looking at the context it becomes clear that charges in statements like "we must abandon the double standards and uphold an objective and impartial position rather than engage in the long-term practice of creating roadblocks for the Council's handling of the Israeli-Palestinian question" (United Nations Security Council, 2022c) are clearly also targeted towards the Western States that Russia refers to.

Social constructivist theory

Although the P2 makes use of politicisation charges that support the social constructivist theory, they use these significantly less often than both charges of politicisation categorised to the realist and legalist theories. Most of these charges by the P2 pertaining to the social constructivist theory stem from discourse from China. Similarly to the previous theory, China does not outrightly mention who exactly they are targeting with their statements, but their targets remain clear nonetheless. They claim that "what is lacking in the settlement of the Palestinian question is not grand plans or strident slogans but the courage to stand up for justice and action to honour commitments" and due to Western nations lacking this the Security Council also lags behind in their "responsibility and dare to act" (United Nations Security Council, 2022g). In addition to these kinds of statements, China also poses rhetorical questions in order to ask what exactly is hindering Western States (or in their words "international community") from achieving a fair resolution to the Palestine question. Adding to this they claim that "[...] every day of inaction by the international community is a disservice to peace, a betrayal of justice and a failure to the next generation" and therefore they "call on all parties to use their conscience in order to uphold justice and take action to fulfil their commitments" (United Nations Security Council, 2022r). With these charges they try to invoke outrage for these violations of norms within the broader UNSC, and through this create support and compassion for their own claims.

Russia also uses charges of politicisation related that can be categorised under the social constructivist theory, but less frequently than China. Within these politicisation charges, Russia draws upon the West's colonial past. Due to this past, according to Russia, Western States do not share the same norms and untainted historical ties with the Middle East as Russia does (United Nations Security Council, 2022b, 2023j). Using the colonial history of the West highlights how they exploited as well as performed practices that clearly violated norms within this region, and therefore Russia presumes that the West cannot interact with the Middle East in the same way they can. Moreover, they position themselves in a manner through which they insinuate that they do share norms and historical ties with this region, and therefore they are more qualified and justified to indicate the appropriate behaviour that should be taken by the UNSC.

Legalist theory

The P2 makes use of charges of politicisation in line with legalist theory more often than the social constructivist theory, but less than the realist theory. Both China and Russia establish that the "duties of the Security Council" are to protect international peace and security, that this makes the UNSC "duty-bound on the question of Palestine" (United Nations Security Council, 2022m, 2022j). Nevertheless, they charge the P3 with "[deviating] the peace process from the right track" and instead the "double standards of the Western countries" are highlighted by the lack of provisions for the protection of human rights and international humanitarian law within the Palestine case (United Nations Security Council, 2022b, 2022c, 2022f). This specific point is also spearheaded by Russia to further argue that due to the West granting Israel a "carte blanche" in unilateral unlawful action with the region, they should also not pose questions regarding Russia's invasion of Ukraine, unless they ask similar questions about the Palestine question. This point circles back to the earlier discussions regarding how legitimate Russia's charges of politicisation with regards to the realist theory are, for they seem to be using the fact that the West does not ask questions about Palestine in their own favour as well.

A trend akin to the previous two theory discussions also manifests itself in the use of politicisation charges that constitute legalist theory, namely, Russia directly targets the West, whilst China directs itself towards a more general 'international community'. However, due to this the legalist charges by Russia hold a much stronger accusatory nature than the Chinese ones. Indeed, Russia impugns the Western States compliance with Article 25 of the Charter, as well as questions to what extent in particular the United States is concerned with the legality of their actions (United Nations Security Council, 2023j). China's gentler addresses once again discuss "countries with influence", who they urge to "be poised to take meaningful action to discharge [their] duties under the Charter of the United Nations" (United Nations Security Council, 2023h). Nonetheless, the goal of the P2 making their proposals seem more legitimate through mentioning the Charter holds true through utilising both of these methods.

The Syria question

Both the P3 and P2 made use of a plethora of charges of politicisation in order to both discursively urge the UNSC to take action or remain inactive regarding the Syria question. This

section will - akin to the findings pertaining to the discourse concerning the Palestine question - first analyse and discuss the results of the P3, and will afterwards dive into the discussion and analysis of the results of the P2.

Syria and the P3

Realist theory

The P3 often charges in particular Russia with putting its own national interests above the needs of the Syrian population (United Nations Security Council, 2022d). These charges usually make use of terms that assert that Russia "paralyses", "stalls" or "undermines" the political process of the UNSC (United Nations Security Council, 2022h, 2022i). Related to this is that the diplomatic ties between the Russian and Syrian regimes are often pulled into question by the P3. For instance, the USA remarked that "[UNSC] unity on Syria is impossible" since, "one member is repeatedly putting its narrow interests and those of the Al-Assad regime ahead [...]" (United Nations Security Council, 2022h). Additionally the UK questioned to what extent it is not just the Al-Assad regime that Russia is trying to protect by insisting on inaction within Syria, but their own hide as well (United Nations Security Council, 2023g). The UK backs up this claim by directing the UNSC's attention to the fact that the Russian military intelligence service carried out a chemical weapon attack in 2018 in Britain. Through these charges the P3 tries to make Russia stand out as a particularly biased member of the Security Council, due to which Russia's proposals of inaction should not be acquiesced to.

Social constructivist theory

The discussion by the P3 regarding what should be done in Syria often revolves around humanitarian needs and the norms concerned with defending these. Humanitarian needs, and the lack of action to safeguard these, is often argued to be because of the politicisation of Russia. In particular after the vote, and veto by Russia, on the resolution to extend cross-border aid in Syria for another twelve months did the P3 charge Russia with social constructivist charges (United Nations Security Council, 2022d). France, for instance, stated that due to the veto "international humanitarian support to Syria and the survival of millions of people" were jeopardised. Moreover, aside from humanitarian needs, the moral validity of Russia is questioned by the P3 in queries like: "[...] What else should we expect from Russia, a country which itself has barely attempted to mask its own pattern of chemical weapons use and disinformation?" (United Nations Security Council, 2023a). Through these charges of politicisation within the discourse concerning Syria the P3 tries to pave a moral high ground

for themselves through which they can argue that action - especially humanitarian action - is necessary.

Legalist theory

The P3 uses politicisation charges that can be categorised under the legalist theory fairly regularly, and most often do so in order to discuss Russia's blockage on the Constitutional Committee, through which they attest that Russia is trying to allow impunity of the Syrian regime (United Nations Security Council, 2022l, 2022p, 2022s, 2023k). Additionally members of the P3 expressed their frustration regarding the lack of progress due to the efforts of Syria and Russia to obscure "breaches of core international norms, including resolutions of the Security Council", and to "avoid accountability, including deeply irresponsible attempts to attack the OPCW" (United Nations Security Council, 2022n). This notion of Russia spreading disinformation in order to undermine, illegitimate, and discredit the OPCW is a claim that also returns in more discourse by the P3 concerning Syria (United Nations Security Council, 2023a, 2023e, 2023g). In addition, the notion that Russia "allows impunity" and "protects Syria from accountability" arises several times within the P3's discourse (United Nations Security Council, 2022l, 2023i, 2023e, 2023g). Therefore, the P3 charges Russia with allowing international law to be violated and accountability for this to be withheld, which could wane support for Russia's calls for inaction.

Syria and the P2

Realist theory

Within the discourse regarding Syria there is an abundance of charges of politicisation by the P2 that fit into the realist theory, all of which stem from Russia. Russia substantiates many of its charges of politicisation with words that make the West, in particular the USA, seem to be solely interested in furthering and prioritising their national interests. These include calling the P3's statements "deceptive", "sly", "hypocritical" and attempts to "mislead world public opinion" (United Nations Security Council, 2022d, 2023a). These words form a trend in their general discourse within the UNSC, in particular when charging the P3 regarding the Syrian question. For instance, they claim that the Western delegations talk about "helping Syria" whilst "at the same time trying to hold the country by the throat" (United Nations Security Council, 2022s). In the same speech they also charge Western states with being particularly opportunistic in their approach towards the Syrian question, stating that the West "like careless students on the eve of an exam" all of the sudden "remember the provisions of resolution 2585

(2021) and 2642 (2022) only when they are about to expire and try to present the situation as though they have been diligently implementing those resolutions over the past six months". This claim can also be seen in earlier statements, for instance earlier that year Russia stated that the West should "rethink their approaches and abandon their flawed insistence on isolating Syria internationally" and slightly later in the year they posited that, "none of our Western partners [are] interested in a fundamental solution to the problem, just as no alternatives are being proposed to return people to normal life" (United Nations Security Council, 2022i, 2022k). Aside from this, Russia also draws upon the geographical imbalance in favour of Western States based early recovery projects in Syria that "demonstrate how politicised the discussion on the Syrian file is" (United Nations Security Council, 2022s, 2023c).

In addition to charging the West with politicisation, they also do the same to the OPCW, who the Russian delegation argues is an instrument that the West has attempted to make its own in order to implement their own "opportunistic objectives" (United Nations Security Council, 2022q). In later statements they continue to claim that the OPCW has become a platform of Western States for their "political games", and thus is politicised in order to further the West's national interests (United Nations Security Council, 2023e). By illustrating the OPCW as a puppet organisation of the West, Russia also questions the authority of the OPCW in general. Thus, Russia uses charges of politicisation in line with realist theory in order to question the authority of the OPCW and the personal gain of the West, through which they aim to prevent action.

Social constructivist theory
The morality of the actions by the P3 is questioned by the P2 within charges of politicisation that are categorised under the social constructivist theory. China calls upon the "countries concerned", which is another way to address the West indirectly, to "lift their unilateral coercive measures against Syria" on the basis of these "unilateral sanctions [impeding] humanitarian work" (United Nations Security Council, 2022s). The lack of "humanitarian concern" from the P3 is something that the P2 uses relatively often within their discourse. They posit that the West is trying to "politicise humanitarian assistance" through which they aim to "[undermine] the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria" (United Nations Security Council, 2023k), both which are sacrosanct norms of the P2 that they often emphasise (Stoker, 2019; Remler, 2020). Additionally, the P3 are discursively illustrated by the P2 to look as if they do not care about the "needs and aspirations of [the] ordinary Syrian" (United Nations

Security Council, 2023i), instead they are forgoing these aspirations in order to "plunder Syrian natural resources" (United Nations Security Council, 2022k). Therefore, the action that the P3 argues in favour of is portrayed as immoral within the P2's discourse.

Legalist theory

In the discourse concerning the question of Syria the use of charges of politicisation that flow along the legalist theory are, once again, usually charged by Russia towards the West. However, in the 9117th meeting China stated that "the recent United States military operations in eastern Syria constitute a violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria and have nothing to do with the right to self-defence under Article 51 of the Charter" (United Nations Security Council, 2022h). Here China clearly makes use of the Charter in order to substantiate their charge, as well as argue why inaction is the right position to take legally. This is especially interesting since this is one of the few times that China actually charges a nation with politicisation outrightly. In addition to this targeted charge China also adds a more general statement that: "The unlawful presence of foreign forces and illegal military operations in Syria must end". The use of these charges by China is thus to enhance the legitimacy of their standpoint.

Russia on the other hand, does not make use of any untargeted charges and they often label the action of the United States to be "glaring violation[s] of international law" due to which "foreign companies simply refuse to contract with the United Nations" (United Nations Security Council, 2023i). A particularly striking point that Russia draws upon several times is the missile strikes by the P3 on Syria, for which the West did "not wait for any sort of investigation" and instead "identified and punished the guilty party themselves" (United Nations Security Council, 2023e). These are usually labelled as "gross violations of the fundamental norms of international law" by Russia in order to argue that these attacks "must be stopped", since these attacks not only violate principled neutrality, but also are illegal (United Nations Security Council, 2022h, 2023e). Furthermore, the notion that the approach of the West towards the Syrian question "devalues", or poses a direct challenge to the UNSC, the Charter, the implementation of resolutions, and the Syrian government's legitimacy, arises several times within Russia's discourse (United Nations Security Council, 2022q, 2023c, 2023k). Russia thus questions the West's neutrality and their legal legitimacy. Moreover, they assume that in particular the United States is unconcerned with legality. The Russian delegation quoted a paragraph by Blinken - the US Secretary of State - during their speech in the 9309th

meeting, in which Blinken mentioned to both "leav[e] aside legalities", and that "legal questions are something else", when queried about the solution to the Holan Highlands which Israel annexed in 1967 from Syria (Blinken, 2021; United Nations Security Council, 2023j). Russia hyperbolically posits that this indifference to international law by Blinken within this speech is how all of the resolutions from the UNSC are being implemented by the USA. Nevertheless, through focussing on the violations of international law by the West, Russia aims to diminish the legitimacy of the statements of the P3.

Discussion of overall results

First of all, it is interesting to note the disparity between the use of charges of politicisation by the P3 towards both of the questions, especially since all of the data encompasses the same timeframe. Within the Palestine question, the P3 rarely use charges of politicisation, but they do use these within the discourse concerning Syria. The P3 make use of charges that fit into all three of the theories, and use these as a means of highlighting how biased Russia is, to craft their own moral high ground, and accuse Russia of international law violations. Through these three pronged attacks, they aim to discursively urge the UNSC towards the notion that action within Syria is necessary, and diminish the support for the impression that inaction is the appropriate behaviour. It can thus be posited that the P3 do make use of charges of politicisation regularly within discourse when insisting the UNSC does act, but rarely make use of these charges when arguing in favour of inaction. In addition, the charges they utilise do not support one theory in particular to be the main function of charging target states with politicisation, instead it seems to be a coalescence of all the theories.

Secondly, within the discourse concerning both of the cases analysed, the P2 invoked a profusion of charges of politicisation. The Palestinian question is often accused of being politicised by the West in order for the P2 to argue that they are altruistically working to create peace, to solicit outrage regarding norm violations as well as highlight historical ties to the region, and to make their own proposals seem legitimate and closely aligned with the Charter established rules. Moreover, aside from using politicisation charges to argue in favour of the UNSC taking action, the P2 also uses these charges when advancing the notion that the UNSC should refrain from action. Within the discourse regarding Syria they, in particular Russia, charge politicisation through which they question the authority of the OPCW, the moral high

ground of the P3, and how concerned the P3 are with the legitimacy of their proposed action. A remark to these charges is that Russia directly charges the West with these, whilst China only does so implicitly. Nonetheless, the P2 uses charges of politicisation regularly in both discourses in which they are in favour of action by the UNSC, as well as discourse in which they view action as inappropriate. The P2 does, similarly to the P3, make use of all charges that fit into all of the different theories, however they use charges that can be categorised under the realist theory significantly more than both of the other two theories.

Taking these findings from both the P3 and P2 discourse together, it can be said that, overall, charges of politicisation are mainly used in order to justify and demand action, rather than defend inaction. Additionally, in general, the legitimacy of the P3 and its statements is questioned more by the P2 through charges of politicisation, especially those categorised under the realist theory. However, when inspecting the claims that the P2 makes closely, it is possible to see their own double standards underlying these charges, as was seen for instance within the discussions regarding both realist and legalist theories in discourse concerning the Palestinian question. Overall, it is hard to discern whether either side, the P3 or P2, has a stronger legitimacy to charge politicisation towards the other. This is because in both the P3 and P2 there is one actor that makes use of its vetoes in order to ensure that action authorised by the UNSC is not a possibility within both of the cases analysed. It is thus within the case of Palestine that the P2 have a stronger legitimacy to charge and raise questions of politicisation, since here USA vetoes resolutions and proposed action, and within the case of Syria the P3 holds more legitimacy in charging politicisation, considering that within this question Russia utilises its veto-right.

V.   Conclusion

This study has found that charges of politicisation, within the discourse of the UNSC concerning action, have several different functions for which are utilised by the targeting states. Through a discourse analysis of a year of meeting records of the P5 in the UNSC regarding both the questions of Palestine and Syria, it was possible to look at the function of these charges, which resulted in the conclusion that none of the proposed hypotheses can be rejected. Instead it can be proposed that the function of these charges is multifaceted. Overall, the invocation seems to not only highlight national interests, but also moral considerations as well

as legal questions. States were found to use these charges in a manner that highlighted not just one specific point of their target that is politicised. These findings suggest that a politicisation charge can thus be asserted to be a hypernym for several different accusations within UNSC discourse.

Despite the fact that none of the hypotheses can be rejected, it is interesting to note some variations in the function of the invocation of the charges of politicisation in the typical cases that were analysed for this thesis. Within the case of Palestine, the P3 seldomly used charges of politicisation in order to argue in favour of inaction, but used them abundantly within the case of Syria in order to target Russia. The P2 used these charges consistently across both cases analysed, to both argue in favour of inaction and action. However they, especially Russia, were found to use charges that fit into the realist hypothesis more habitually than either of the other functions. Overall, charges of politicisation were used more often in order to justify action, rather than preventing action.

Limitations

It is important to acknowledge three of the limitations of this research in specific. First of all, although the usage of a discourse analysis remains the best way to analyse the function or motivation behind a certain statement, the analysis itself does suffer in validity due to it being largely interpretative and susceptible to researcher bias (Halperin & Heath, 2017, p. 373). Consequently, it is important to be transparent about this drawback of discourse analysis. Nevertheless, this method remains the best way to derive an answer to the research question. The second limitation of this research pertains to the time frame that was opted for within this thesis. Although it makes the findings very relevant, it can also pervert the findings. This is the case in particular because this time frame ranges from a time period after which Russia invaded Ukraine, which has led to higher animosity levels between the P3 and Russia, especially on the international stage. However, the rectification of this brings us to the third point, namely the time and word limitation of this thesis. Due to these, this thesis was limited within its scope, with regards to both the actors that were analysed as well as the cases it looked at.

Future research

Previous research focussed largely on the consequences of politicisation structurally within the UN and UNSC as well as the consequences of a charge of politicisation within other UN bodies. This thesis's focus on the function of a charge of politicisation within UNSC discourse opened another, underdeveloped and underexplored, avenue of research regarding the phenomenon of politicisation. This research has set the first step into an analysis of the function of charges of politicisation within the UN, however it remains limited within its scope due to the aforementioned limitations. Therefore, future research with a larger scope of case studies and extended timeframe, such as longitudinal research, is warranted. In addition, research regarding the function of the invocation of charges of politicisation for non-permanent members of the UNSC could also prove to be an interesting lens to research. Lastly, the legitimacy that states gain, or lose, in the eyes of other actors through the use of these charges of politicisation could prove to be an interesting avenue in order to analyse the consequences of invoking these charges. Hopefully, through further research, it is possible to discover more facets of this pervasive charge that continues to arise within the UNSC's discourse.

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