



«THE BOSPHORUS ROUNDTABLE»

International Roundtable Consultation SOVEREIGNTY AND COERCION

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The ongoing armed conflicts in Europe and West Asia have again made painfully obvious that the United Nations Organization is unable to fulfill its basic purpose, “to maintain international peace and security.” The Security Council’s paralysis in disputes that touch upon the vital interests of a permanent member is not by accident, but by design. While affirming the principle of “sovereign equality of all its Members,” the organization’s Charter nonetheless puts a small group of states virtually above the law. Using the provisions of Article 27, the four states whose governments drafted the Charter plus France (the P5) can protect themselves and any of their allies against the coercive power of the Council, the body that was meant to take “prompt and effective action” for the maintenance of international peace and security. This has been the reason why never in the history of the world organization any of those states was held accountable for breaches of the peace.

Thus, the authority vested in the Security Council under Chapter VII of the UN Charter has been compromised for the sake of the power politics of its permanent members. For the P5, and for them alone, sovereignty means the **right to coerce** and the **privilege not to be coerced**, while all the others must accept that they are subject to the supreme authority of the Council. The *inconsistency* between the principle of sovereign equality (Article 2[1] of the Charter) and the voting privilege of Article 27(3) has led to a – *de facto* and *de jure* – system of “**sovereign inequality**.”

Following up on last year’s roundtable in Vienna (Austria) on “Responsibility in International Relations,” the International Progress Organization would now like to focus on the contradiction in the UN Charter between the principle of *sovereign equality* of states and the special *voting privilege* granted to the organization’s founders, and discuss the implications of this inconsistency for world order.

