

**AN INVESTIGATION OF PROPOSALS TO IMPROVE THE
UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL: STRUCTURAL
REFORM AND RECONCEPTUALIZING EFFORTS OF STATE
AND NON-STATE ACTORS**



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ABSTRACT

While much has been said about the shortcomings of the UN Human Rights Council, improvement of the body's efficiency and efficacy has received few considerations. Recognition that there is considerable room for improvement at the Council inspired an investigation into proposals aimed at changing the structure and substance of the body. This thesis is based on extensive research which found that shifting trends in the international political landscape, the Obama Administration's renewed commitment to human rights and US Council membership, and the approaching mandated 2011 review of the Council's mechanisms and work combine to create a unique context conducive to producing positive change at the Council.

The research included over twenty interviews with international state and non-state actors working in or around the Council. The interviewees reflect various sectors of stakeholders, and different regional perspectives. The research recognized, and article discusses, the difficulties of creating change at the Council given the realities of international politics, and the lack of scholarly attention which the Council has received. While the Council receives significant criticism, the article reiterates that the Council is a unique space in which states, who are ultimately the implementation vehicles of rights standards, discuss serious human rights issues. The research concludes by noting that if stakeholders recognize the usefulness of the body, and utilize this unprecedented window of opportunity, significant change at the Council is plausible.

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