



General Assembly Plenary

Topic 2: Reforming Membership and Voting in the Security Council¹

26 September 2013

The Security Council (SC) was created by the United Nations (UN) Charter, which came into effect on October 24, 1945. The SC shares responsibility with the General Assembly (GA) for the UN's primary goal of maintaining international peace and security. Provisions in the UN Charter, however, demonstrate that "the founders envisioned the SC as the UN's premier body, charged with the most essential security tasks."² This is evident in three ways. First, the GA can address issues related to international peace and security *only* if they are not currently under consideration by the SC. Second, GA resolutions are simply recommendations, while Security Council resolutions are binding. When a state joins the UN, it agrees to abide by SC decisions. Finally, unlike other UN committees, the SC can take steps to enforce its decisions. Thus, although they are both charged with addressing international peace and security, the SC has much more authority than the GA. The UN budget is the only exception to this authority; the GA exercises full control in that area.³

The Security Council not only plays a unique role in the United Nations. It also has a unique structure, as it has five permanent member states with veto power. These states, known as the P-5, are the United States, Russia, China, the United Kingdom, and France. The total membership of the SC consists of 15 states, ten of which are elected biannually by the GA based on a geographical distribution system. In general, five elected seats go to Africa, two seats each go to Latin America and Western Europe, and one seat goes to Eastern Europe.⁴ Rotating members have a vote but do not have a veto.

In addition to giving the SC priority on issues related to international peace and security, the founders also gave the Council important tasks related to the operation of the UN. For example, the UN Secretary-General is appointed and new Member States are admitted to the UN "by the General Assembly upon the recommendation of the Security Council."⁵ Similarly, approval by both the SC and GA is required to appoint judges to the International Court of Justice.⁶ The issue of UN reform is much the same. To revise the Charter, the GA and SC must both call for a review conference. Any resulting amendments require a two-thirds vote in the GA and ratification by "two thirds of the Members of the United Nations, including all the permanent members of the Security Council."⁷

Together, these provisions mean that the Security Council in general and the P-5 in particular have both short-term and long-term control over much of the UN. In principle, this would seem to give the P-5 countries considerable weight to alter the UN to their advantage. In fact, however, disagreements among P-5 members mean

¹ This background guide was written by Karen Adams, Montana Model UN Faculty Advisor, Kedra Hildebrand (2010), and Nicholas Potratz (2013). Copyright 2013 by Karen Ruth Adams.

² Karen A. Mingst and Margaret P. Karns, *The United Nations in the 21st Century*, 3rd edition (Bolder: Westview 2007), p. 27.

³ United Nations, "Charter of the United Nations," June 26, 1945, Chapter IV, Article 12; Chapter V, Article 25; Chapter VII; and Chapter IV, Article 19, available online at <http://www.un.org/aboutun/charter/>.

⁴ Mingst and Karns, *The United Nations in the 21st Century*, p. 25.

⁵ "Charter of the United Nations," Chapter XV, Article 97; and Chapter II, Article 4.

⁶ International Court of Justice, "Statute of the International Court of Justice," Chapter I, Article 4, available at <http://www.icj-cij.org/documents/index.php?p1=4&p2=2&p3=0>

⁷ "Charter of the United Nations," Chapter XV, Article 97; and Chapter II, Article 4.

Montana Model UN High School Conference

that the SC is often stymied. For example, from 1945-1990, the SC was largely paralyzed by the Cold War between the US and the Soviet Union. When the Cold War ended, many observers hoped that it would be able to act more decisively and become more inclusive. In the ensuing 20 years, many Charter amendments related to Council membership have been discussed, but not one has been passed by the GA and approved by the P-5.

From its first meeting in 1946 to the present, the SC has been strongly criticized. Most of the criticisms relate to the veto power of the P-5 countries. If just one P-5 member objects to a SC draft resolution, the resolution will fail. This gives P-5 countries the ability to evade criticism of their own policies and to target countries with whom they disagree.⁸ The results are seen in three ways. First, the P-5 members often hold closed-door meetings to decide which issues should be put on the agenda and to draft resolutions for the approval of the full Council, which they allegedly treat as a “rubber-stamp.”⁹ Second, when rotating members are able to put items on the agenda during the month-long presidency of the Council that each member enjoys, the P-5 are able to veto draft resolutions that are not to their liking. For example, the US vetoes resolutions critical of Israel,¹⁰ while Russia and China veto sanctions against governments such as Iran, Sudan, and Syria.¹¹ As a result, the Council has failed to take action on many severe and persistent security problems.¹² Third, the P-5 is quick to act on issues that threaten their interests (such as the 1990 invasion of oil-rich Kuwait by Iraq)¹³ but slow to act on issues that do not affect them (such as the 1994 genocide in resource-poor Rwanda).¹⁴

According to critics, the SC has double standards and is unwilling to act in the interest of global peace and security.¹⁵ For example, the SC has only recently passed its first significant resolution related to the situation in Syria, a resolution focuses on chemical weapons disarmament, not ending the civil war that has killed more than 100,000 people.¹⁶ Can the GA draft and pass a resolution that would make the Security Council more effective? How should such a resolution be crafted to gain the approval of the P-5?

⁸ David Grubin, “Kofi Annan: Center of the Storm (Security Council),” *PBS.org*, (2002); available at <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/un/who/security.html>

⁹ James A. Paul, “Security Council Reform: Arguments about the Future of the United Nations System,” *Global Policy Forum*, February 1995; available at <http://www.globalpolicy.org/security/pubs/secref.htm>

¹⁰ Julie Stahl, “Israel Concerned Security Council Reform Could ‘Water Down’ US Veto,” *Cybercast News Service*, 21 September 2004; available at <http://www.globalpolicy.org/security/reform/cluster1/2004/0921waterdown.htm>.

¹¹ Rick Gladstone, “Friction at the U.N. as Russia and China Veto Another Resolution on Syria Sanctions,” *New York Times*, 19 July 2012; available at http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/20/world/middleeast/russia-and-china-veto-un-sanctions-against-syria.html?_r=0

¹² “Sudan/UN Security Council Special Session Acknowledges Failure to Protect People of Sudan,” *African Press Organization*, 18 June 2008; available at <http://appablog.wordpress.com/2008/06/18/sudan-un-security-council-special-session-acknowledges-failure-to-protect-people-of-sudan-africa-action-demands-international-community-uphold-promises-to-stop-genocide-in-slow-motion/>

¹³ “UN Security Council Resolution 678, Iraq / Kuwait,” *Council on Foreign Relations*, November 29, 1990; available at <http://www.unis.unvienna.org/unis/pressrels/2000/ga1737.html>

¹⁴ Global Policy Forum, “Rwanda,” available at <http://www.globalpolicy.org/security/issues/rwanindx.htm>

¹⁵ “Security Council’s Expanded Role, ‘Double Standards’ among Issues Raised as Fourth Committee Concludes Discussion of Peacekeeping Operations (UNIS/GA/1737),” *United Nations Information Service*, (November 13, 2000), available at <http://www.unis.unvienna.org/unis/pressrels/2000/ga1737.html>

¹⁶ Colum Lynch and Anne Gearan, “U.N. Security Council unanimously passes Syria chemical weapons resolution,” *Washington Post*, 27 September 2013, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/un-approval-near-on-syrian-chemical-arms/2013/09/27/da007544-27aa-11e3-9372-92606241ae9c_story.html

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History and Current Events

To understand the challenges of and possibilities for Security Council reform, one must understand the origins and privileges of the Council, as well as past efforts to reform Council membership.

Origins and Privileges of the Security Council

When the United Nations was formed in 1945, the World War II Allies (the US, UK, France, Russia, and China) were concerned, above all, with limiting the possibility for war. After all, in just 45 years, the world had seen two terrible wars. Together, World War I and World War II killed 78 to 90 million people.¹⁷ The Allies gave the official name of their alliance (the United Nations) to an organization they created to replace the League of Nations, which had failed to prevent the outbreak of World War II. As scholars Karen Mingst and Margaret Karns explain,

The participants agreed that the organization would be based on the principle of the sovereign equality of members and that all “peace-loving” states would be eligible for membership, thereby excluding the Axis powers -- Germany, Italy, Japan, and Spain. It was also agreed that decisions on security issues would require unanimity of the permanent members of the Security Council -- the great powers.¹⁸

The Security Council was created by the United Nations Charter, which came into effect on 24 October 1945. According to the Charter, the UN has three purposes:

1. To maintain international peace and security, and to that end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace, and to bring about by peaceful means, and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations which might lead to a breach of the peace;
2. To develop friendly relations among nations based on ... equal rights and self-determination of peoples;
3. To achieve international co-operation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character, and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights...¹⁹

Responsibility for each of these goals is shared between the General Assembly, in which each member state has one vote, and a council with limited membership. The SC shares responsibility for the first goal (international peace and security) with the GA, especially the General Assembly First Committee (disarmament and security). Responsibility for the second goal (equal rights and self-determination) is shared by the GA and Trusteeship Council.²⁰ Responsibility for the third goal (international economic and social cooperation, and human rights) was originally shared by the GA and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Since 2006, responsibility for the human rights portion of the third set of goals has rested with the GA and the new Human Rights Council (HRC).²¹

¹⁷ Milton Leitenberg, “Deaths in Wars and Conflicts in the 20th Century,” Cornell University Peace Studies Program Occasional Paper #29, 3rd ed., August 2006, available at <http://www.cissm.umd.edu/papers/files/deathswarsconflictsjune52006.pdf>.

¹⁸ Mingst and Karns, *The United Nations in the 21st Century*, p. 27.

¹⁹ “Charter of the United Nations,” 26 June 1945, Chapter I, Article 1.

²⁰ The Trusteeship Council suspended operations in 1994, when Palau, the last remaining United Nations trust territory, became independent. United Nations Trusteeship Council, <http://www.un.org/documents/tc.htm>.

²¹ United Nations Human Rights Council, website, <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/>. See also “Charter of the United Nations, Chapter XIII, Article 87.

Montana Model UN High School Conference

Although the SC, Trusteeship Council, ECOSOC, and HRC are each charged with supervising the achievement of one UN goal, these councils have very different capabilities. Specifically, the SC is much more powerful than the others. The UN Charter gives the SC both the authority to decide what constitutes a security matter and the ability to demand compliance from UN member states on such matters. In addition, SC resolutions do not need to be passed by any other UN committee to go into effect. By contrast, the other councils simply make recommendations to the GA. Their resolutions do not go into effect until the GA passes them. Even then, they are simply recommendations. Thus, the SC trumps all of the other UN councils and committees.

Previous Efforts to Reform the Council

When the Allies formed the SC in 1945, it had 11 members -- six rotating members plus the P-5. In 1965, the GA and SC agreed to increase the number of rotating members to 10 for a total of 15 SC members at one time. The increase in rotating members occurred after former European colonies in Africa and Asia obtained independence, joined the UN, and began to vote in the GA.²²

It was not until 1992 that the GA again gave serious consideration to SC reform. After the Cold War, Germany and Japan (which were originally excluded from the UN because of their attacks on other states during World War II) began to advocate for permanent seats on the SC. The two countries argued that they should be granted status as permanent members of the SC, citing their participation in the Gulf War coupled with the fact that they were, respectively, the “second and third largest contributors to the regular budget of the UN.”²³ The push by Germany and Japan created a platform for open debate in the GA regarding SC reform and led to numerous other states seeking elusive entrance into P-5 membership. As the debate continued, the GA quickly became divided on the issue, and regional rivalries formed over how expansion of the SC should proceed.²⁴

In September 1992, India and 35 other Non-Aligned states tabled a GA draft resolution expanding the SC, which had resulted in deadlock within the GA. In the summer of 1993, the GA instead passed resolution A/RES/48/26, which set up an “Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters related to the Security Council.” In 1998, progress was further stymied when the GA passed resolution A/RES/53/30, which stipulated that any resolution expanding the Council would need at least a 2/3 majority to pass.²⁵ The logic of this voting rule is that since Charter amendments must be ratified by 2/3 of UN member states (including all of the P-5), draft resolutions calling for amendments should also require a 2/3 majority to avoid wasting time.

In the mid-1990s, frustrated with the stalemate regarding SC membership, UN member states began to pursue alternative concepts of Security Council reform. This time, states that were not on the Council and had no chance of gaining permanent seats sought to improve their access to and understanding of P-5 deliberations by improving “transparency, accountability, and participation” in the Council’s working methods. Reforming the SC’s working methods requires a simple majority vote on an SC resolution, as opposed to the 2/3 majority of the GA and SC (with no P-5 vetoes) needed to change the UN Charter.²⁶ Proposals have included changing the Council’s rules of procedure and requiring more public meetings.²⁷ No substantial changes have passed due to strong resistance both from the P-5 and states seeking permanent membership in the Council.

²² Global Policy Forum, “Security Council Reform,” <http://www.globalpolicy.org/security-council/security-council-reform.html>, accessed 25 June 2013.

²³ Jonas Von Freiesleben, “Reform of the Security Council,” in *Managing Change at the United Nations*, Center for UN Reform of the Security Council, April 2008; p. 1; available from <http://www.centerforunreform.org/node/23>

²⁴ Von Freiesleben, “Reform of the Security Council,” p. 3.

²⁵ Von Freiesleben, “Reform of the Security Council,” pp. 4-5.

²⁶ Von Freiesleben, “Reform of the Security Council,” p. 4.

²⁷ Global Policy Forum, “Security Council Reform: Membership including Expansion and Representation,” available online at <http://www.globalpolicy.org/security/reform/cluster1index.htm>

Montana Model UN High School Conference

In 2003, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan encouraged the GA to once again take action on Council membership. Specifically, In December 2004, his High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change proposed two models for enlargement, both of which would expand the SC to 24 members. According to researcher Jonas Von Freiesleben,

Model A proposed adding six new permanent seats, but with no veto power, and three new two-year term elected seats. Model B created a new category of eight seats, renewable every four years, and one new two-year nonrenewable seat. Apparently the Panel would have preferred not to include the addition of permanent members, but according to one ambassador, the Secretary-General “strong-armed” the panel into including that option out of fear of alienating Germany and Japan in the upcoming summit.²⁸

Of the two, Model B received the most support because it did not increase the number of permanent seats. The group that supported this proposal was known as the Coffee Club and was comprised of Italy, Argentina, Colombia, Mexico, Kenya, Spain, Pakistan and South Korea, among others. Supporters of Model A, called the G-4, consisted of Germany, Japan, India, and Brazil.²⁹

In his March 2005 report, “In Larger Freedom,” Annan again urged the GA to expand the SC.³⁰ According to many analysts, Annan pushed hard for reform because he was concerned by the UN’s loss of prestige when the US and UK invaded Iraq in 2003 without SC approval. But, after the 2005 World Summit (a special session of the GA attended by heads of state and foreign ministers), proposals to reform membership and voting in the SC were abandoned due to continuing P-5 resistance both to reform in general and to the admission of particular states to permanent membership. For example, US President George W. Bush refused to support the G-4 proposal giving a permanent seat to Germany because Germany had opposed the US war in Iraq.³¹

In March 2006, a group known as the Small Five (S5) composed of Switzerland, Singapore, Jordan, Costa Rica, and Liechtenstein resumed the effort to reform SC working methods. Their GA draft resolution A/60/L.49 sought to achieve more accountability and transparency in the Council, asking the SC to consult with all GA Member States on resolutions and requesting that the P-5 explain every veto decision to the GA. This proposal encountered resistance from both the P-5 and Member States seeking a permanent seat.³² Even if it had passed the GA, however, it would have simply been a recommendation to the SC unless the SC adopted it as its own resolution.

Recent Committee Work on This Topic

Since 2008, the GA has established and renewed annual informal plenary sessions on SC reform. These meetings, known as the Intergovernmental Negotiations (IGNs), have become the primary venue for discussing SC reform. Although a number of proposals have been discussed at the IGNs and in GA meetings, none has acquired the requisite number of supporters to reach a 2/3 majority.³³

At present, there are five main proposals, each supported by a particular group (or bloc) of countries. A recent report from the current Chair of the IGNs (Afghanistan’s Permanent Representative to the UN, Zahir Tanin),

²⁸ Von Freiesleben, “Reform of the Security Council,” p. 5.

²⁹ Von Freiesleben, “Reform of the Security Council,” p. 5.

³⁰ Global Policy Forum, “Security Council Reform: Membership.”

³¹ Von Freiesleben, “Reform of the Security Council,” pp. 7-8.

³² Von Freiesleben, “Reform of the Security Council,” p. 8.

³³ “Letter of the Chair of the Intergovernmental Negotiations on the question of equitable representation on an increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters,” United Nations website, 25 July 2012, available at <http://www.un.org/en/ga/president/66/Letters/PDF/Security%20Council%20Reform-PGA%20letter%2027%20July.pdf>.

Montana Model UN High School Conference

reveals that the blocs have budged little in response to more than five years of negotiation.³⁴ The blocs and their proposals are as follows:

- **The G4.** This is the most recognized bloc on SC reform. It is comprised of Germany, India, Brazil, and Japan and has support from other UN member states as well. The G4 proposes to add six permanent seats (one for each of its core members and two for African states), as well as an additional four non-permanent seats (one seat each for Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, and Latin America). The group states that after 15 years, Member States should review the reforms, at which point states will discuss giving the new permanent members veto powers. To improve working methods, the G-4 believes that public meetings and records should become the norm in the SC, while closed meetings and confidential documents should be used only in exceptional circumstances. It also supports improving communications and coordination between the SC and Troop Contributing Countries (TCCs).³⁵
- **The Executive Council of the Africa Union (AU), also known as the Committee of Ten (C10):** In 2005, this group developed a reform package known as “The Ezulwini Consensus,” which focuses on expanding Africa’s representation. It does not discuss permanent seats or voting for UN member states from other regions except to say that the SC should be expanded to 26 members and that working methods should become more transparent, with more public SC meetings, more effort to consider the positions of countries not in the SC, more consultation with non-state actors such as transnational corporations, and reduced emphasis on military responses to security problems.³⁶ The Ezulwini Consensus calls for the addition of two permanent seats and the retention of five non-permanent seats for African states. The group opposes the veto in principle but requests that all permanent members of the SC be given the veto so long as the veto exists. Therefore, the AU/C-10 would be willing to accept either a proposal that creates African permanent seats and eliminates the veto or a proposal that adds African permanent seats and eliminates the veto for the P-5. The AU also proposes that it be the body that determines which African states become SC members.³⁷
- **The Coffee Club, now also known as Uniting for Consensus (UfC):** Since Model B failed in 2005, this group (which includes Italy, Argentina, Colombia, Mexico, Kenya, Spain, Pakistan and South Korea) has shifted from supporting the addition of permanent seats to adding only rotating seats.³⁸ According to UfC, permanent seats result in a Council that is unrepresentative and unresponsive to the needs of Member States and that favors individual states’ interests. The group proposes the addition of only rotating seats to the SC and either extending the term-lengths for rotating seats or allowing for two terms of reelection. It also supports a limiting the use of the veto and the veto’s eventual elimination.³⁹ The group argues that adding more permanent members now will encourage the continued expansion of permanent members in the future, meaning that the SC could have an unwieldy body of 30-35 members in 15 years.⁴⁰ The UfC favors

³⁴ “Third revision of the text of the Intergovernmental Negotiations on the equitable representation and increase in the membership of the Security Council and other matters related to the Council,” United Nations website, 5 April 2013, available at <http://www.un.org/en/ga/president/67/letters/pdf/Security%20Council%20Reform%20Informals%20-%202012%20April%202013.pdf>.

³⁵ “Third revision of the text of the Intergovernmental Negotiations.”

³⁶ “Third revision of the text of the Intergovernmental Negotiations.”

³⁷ African Union, “The Common African Position on the Proposed Reform of the United Nations: ‘The Ezulwini Consensus,’” Council on Foreign Relations website, 7 July 2011, available at <http://www.cfr.org/world/common-african-position-proposed-reform-united-nations-ezulwini-consensus/p25444>.

³⁸ Von Freiesleben, “Reform of the Security Council,” pp. 3, 5.

³⁹ “Third revision of the text of the Intergovernmental Negotiations.”

⁴⁰ “General Assembly 65th session: 48th plenary meeting.”

Montana Model UN High School Conference

giving regions more power in membership decisions and in consultation on security issues.⁴¹ Members of the G4, particularly Germany, have criticized the group for failing to consider the widespread calls for more permanent seats and taking a “band-aid” approach by solely increasing non-permanent seats.⁴²

- **The L69:** This group, comprised of approximately 40 countries from Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia, and the Pacific, seeks a reform plan similar to that of the G-4. The L69 proposes adding six permanent members (four for the G4 and two for Africa) and several non-permanent members, expanding the SC to the “mid-twenties.” The group further supports a non-permanent seat reserved for small developing countries, in addition to coordination from regional groups to ensure the continual representation of small developing states. The L69 calls for better working methods, including improved transparency and greater SC respect for the GA “in both letter and spirit.”⁴³ The L69 differs from the G4 in seeking the veto for the new permanent members, although it argues that the veto should be used more sparingly and with greater consideration of its consequences than has been the case from 1945 to the present.⁴⁴ In June 2012, India (a member of the G-4) announced that it supports both the G-4 and the L69.⁴⁵
- **Accountability, Coherence, and Transparency (ACT):** This group was launched in May 2013 by 21 countries, including the members of the S5 group that focused on working methods.⁴⁶ The ACT hopes to reform the practices of the SC to bring more informal discussion of security issues so that the SC can stop responding “responding reactively and incrementally to evolving crises” and instead become strategic and proactive about preventive diplomacy and peacebuilding. The group does call for an increase in SC members gives priority to the goal of improving working methods.⁴⁷ Members also aim at creating true discussion in the SC, rather than “pre-scripted debates,” and hope that the SC can play a stronger role in holding people accountable for serious international crimes by discouraging the use of the veto for genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity, as well as improving the SC’s relationship and coordination with the International Criminal Court.⁴⁸

⁴¹ “Third revision of the text of the Intergovernmental Negotiations.”

⁴² “General Assembly: Statement by Ambassador Wittig on Security Council Reform,” Permanent Mission of Germany to the United Nations. 15 November 2012, available at http://www.new-york-un.diplo.de/Vertretung/newyorkvn/en/_pr/speeches-statements/2012/20121115-wittig-on-reform.html.

⁴³ “L.69 Statement by Ambassador Raymond Wolfe, Permanent Representative of Jamaica at the joint debate of the 67th session of the UN General Assembly on agenda item 117,” United Nations website, 15 November 2012, available at <http://www.un.org/en/ga/president/67/letters/pdf/Security%20Council%20Reform%20-%20Chair%20letter%20-%202017%20January%202013.pdf>.

⁴⁴ “Statement by H.E. Ambassador Herman Schaper Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the United Nations on behalf of Belgium and the Netherlands to the General Assembly on the issue of ‘L69 proposals for Security Council Reform,’” Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Netherlands to the United Nations website, 13 March 2012, available at <http://netherlandsmission.org/article.asp?articleref=AR00001329EN&categoryvalue=statements&subcategoryvalue=>.

⁴⁵ Dipanjan R Chaudhury, “India Changes Tack to Security Council Reform,” *Global Policy Forum*, 25 June 2012, available at <http://www.globalpolicy.org/security-council/security-council-reform/51713-india-changes-tack-to-secure-un-security-council-seat.html>

⁴⁶ William Pace, “21 Member States Launch New Initiative to Improve the Working Methods of the Security Council,” Center for UN Reform Education, 12 May 2013, available at <http://www.centerforunreform.org/node/500>

⁴⁷ “Launch of the ACT Group,” Norway Mission to the United Nations website, 2 May 2013, available at <http://www.norway-un.org/Statements/Other-Statements/Launch-of-the-ACT-group/>

⁴⁸ Pace, “21 Member States Launch New Initiative.”

Montana Model UN High School Conference

The permanent five members of the Security Council disagree on the necessary reforms to the SC. During the IGNs, the United States has supported the expansion of both permanent and rotating seats. The US has added the caveat, however, that additional permanent seats must designate specific countries and should not have the veto. This stands in contradiction to the C10, which wants to choose the permanent African members itself and extend the veto to all permanent members. France and the UK support the accession of the G4 and two African states as permanent members to the SC, as well as adding rotating seats.⁴⁹ They have been ambiguous about their positions on veto powers, suggesting that states should create an “interim” proposal to facilitate progress in SC reform (such as temporarily rotating seats that will become permanent), with details to “emerge from negotiation.” China has supported increasing the size of the SC, emphasizing that new seats should go to small and medium sized developing states. It has not said, however, whether these countries should have permanent or non-permanent positions.⁵⁰ Russia supports maintaining a balance between transparency and effectiveness by improving relations between the GA and SC. It contends that expanding the Council beyond a manageable size (20 members) and infringing on the veto will inhibit the functioning of the SC, not improve it.⁵¹

At the February 2013 IGN, the L69 and C10 collaborated on a draft resolution, suggesting that it is possible that they could overcome their differences over membership, the veto, and regional representation and reminding observers that, if developing countries could unite, they would have enough votes to meet the 2/3 (129 state) requirement in the GA. But many developing countries have joined the UfC bloc and do not want to create additional permanent seats or provide veto powers.⁵² Moreover, the need for 2/3 approval by the SC with no veto by a P-5 member remains.

During the IGNs, there have increasingly been calls to reform the IGN process itself, which is informal and does not provide for votes, resulting in recurring arguments with no progress.⁵³ In response, IGN Chair Zahir Tanin has suggested that:

“1) Member States could explore a variety of reform models including expansion in both categories, interim and intermediate options. 2) Member States could task the Chair at the annual decision on Security Council reform to draft a concise working document. 3) In case there would be sufficient progress in the intergovernmental negotiations . . . , a high-level meeting could be held, to assess the state of play and propose ways to keep the process moving forward.”⁵⁴

The second and third suggestions were opposed by the C10 and the UfC, while the second was supported by the G4 and L69. Progress clearly hinges on compromise and negotiations between blocs, yet India and the Africa group have resisted negotiated solutions using intermediate proposals (e.g. creating rotating seats that might become permanent in the future). At the end of the 2013 meeting, Tanin noted that if talks continue to stall, it may be time to place “negotiations on strategic hold.”⁵⁵

⁴⁹ “Third revision of the text of the Intergovernmental Negotiations on the equitable representation and increase in the membership of the Security Council and other matters related to the Council,” United Nations website.

⁵⁰ “General Assembly 65th session: 48th plenary meeting.”

⁵¹ UN News and Media Division, “[‘We Have Only Ourselves to Blame’ for Lagging Progress on Security Council Reform, General Assembly Told as it Convenes Debate On Council’s Report, Working Methods.](http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2012/ga11313.doc.htm)” UN Department of Public Information, 15 November 2012, available at <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2012/ga11313.doc.htm>.

⁵² “Draft Resolutions on Security Council Reform: Growing Convergence among Developing Countries?” Center for UN Reform Education, 4 March 2013, available at <http://www.centerforunreform.org/node/496>.

⁵³ “Draft Resolutions on Security Council Reform: Growing Convergence among Developing Countries?”

⁵⁴ “No Strong Support for Drafting of Concise Working Document: Chair Proposes to Put Negotiations on ‘Strategic Hold,’” Center for UN Reform Education, 7 May 2013, available at <http://www.centerforunreform.org/node/497>.

⁵⁵ “No Strong Support for Drafting of Concise Working Document.”

Montana Model UN High School Conference

If the SC remains stymied on serious threats to peace and security, some analysts predict the demise of the UN and its replacement by a new organization, such as a modified G-20. Thus it could be argued that the P-5 have the most to gain from SC reform.⁵⁶ Any new organization would be unlikely to give them and only them a veto. For example, the G-20 operates on consensus, meaning that each member state effectively has a veto.

Yet the G-20 is far from being a ready replacement for the UN Security Council. Its 20 member states are more diverse than the P-5, accounting for approximately two-thirds of the world's population and 90% of the world's production.⁵⁷ But the G-20 includes just a few developing countries, and only the most developed among them. Moreover, historically the G-20's focus has been on economic, not security issues, and the organization exists apart from the UN secretariat, which provides research to the SC and administers UN peacekeeping forces.

Despite early expectations that Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon would avoid the issue of SC reform, since beginning his second term in 2012, he has spoken on the issue, urging Member States to accelerate negotiations and find a consensus on reforms to SC membership, voting, and working methods.⁵⁸

In September 2013, the Indian ambassador to the UN used his speech at the High Level GA meeting to promote the G4's call for SC reform by the 70th anniversary of the UN in 2015. According to him "more than 120 of 193 U.N. member states support changes to the current structure."⁵⁹

Conclusion

Since the 1960s, Security Council reform has been a recurring and contentious topic among GA members. Because little has been accomplished, the charges of SC double standards and inaction in the face of conflict and insecurity remain. Can the GA find a way to reform the SC so that the Council becomes more effective and the UN remains the central organization in international affairs?

In developing your country's position on this issue, consider the following questions:

- Is your country a permanent member of the SC? If not, is it currently or has it been a rotating member?
- How has your country been affected by the membership and voting rules of the SC? For example, has the SC ever intervened in the affairs of your country? If so, when and why? If not, why not? Has your country ever called for an intervention that the SC was unwilling to take, or opposed action that it authorized?
- What has been your country's historical position on changing the number of SC members, making new seats permanent, giving new members a veto, and adding particular states to the Council? Does your country support any of the major blocs on SC reform?
- What kind of procedural and other, non-membership reforms to the SC would your country support?
- What types of reform are likely to be supported by the P-5 and by 2/3 of GA members?
- Would your country be concerned if a new organization, such as the G-20, replaced the UN and SC as the primary venues for international negotiation? Why or why not?

⁵⁶ Bruce Jones and Richard Gowan, "The United Nations' Reformer-in-Chief," Brookings Institution, Up Front Blog, 21 September 2010, available at http://www.brookings.edu/opinions/2010/0921_united_nations_jones.aspx

⁵⁷ Colin I. Bradford, et al., "Global Governance Breakthrough: The G20 Summit and the Future Agenda," Brookings Institution Policy Brief Series #168, December 2008, available at http://www.brookings.edu/papers/2008/12_g20_summit_bradford_linn.aspx

⁵⁸ "Letter of the Chair of the Intergovernmental Negotiations on the question of equitable representation."

⁵⁹ Paraphrased by Associated Press, "India Upset Over UN Security Council Paralysis," 23 September 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2013/09/23/world/asia/ap-un-india-security-council-reform.html?ref=world>

Montana Model UN
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Recommended Reading

Bradford, Colin I., *et al.* “Global Governance Breakthrough: The G20 Summit and the Future Agenda.” Brookings Institution Policy Brief Series #168. December 2008. Available at http://www.brookings.edu/papers/2008/12_g20_summit_bradford_linn.aspx

This article provides good background on the G-20, which some see as a rising competitor to the SC. For more recent articles on the G-20, search the *New York Times* website.

Center for UN Reform Education. “Security Council Reform.” Available at <http://www.centerforunreform.org/node/23>.

This web site provides excellent, recent information on the GA’s recent attempts to reform the Security Council, including reports of the Open-Ended Working Group on Security Council Reform and the article cited in footnote 22 by Jonas Von Freiesleben.

Glennon, Michael J. “Why the Security Council Failed.” *Foreign Affairs*. May/June 2003. Available from Infotrac High School.

This article discusses the inability of the SC to prevent the US and UK from invading and occupying Iraq in Spring 2003 and argues that this was just the most recent of many instances in which the UN has failed to live up to its promise of promoting international peace and security.

Global Policy Forum. “Security Council Reform.” Available at <http://www.globalpolicy.org/security-council/security-council-reform.html>

This website provides access to many articles and documents on Security Council reform, including recent proposals from particular countries.

“Security Council Report.” Web site. Available online at http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/site/c.gKWLeMTIsG/b.1074741/k.84B6/MISSION_AND_PURPOSE_IN_FULL.htm

This Columbia University web site monitors the Security Council. It is an excellent source for information on the Council’s recent activities and challenges. See also the 2013 Montana Model UN guide on the SC committee history and structure at <http://www.cas.umt.edu/mun/HSconference/topicGuides.cfm>

Swart, Lydia. “Reform of the Security Council September 2007-May 2013.” Chapter 1b in *Managing Change at the United Nations* [updated], 7 May 2013. Available at <http://www.centerforunreform.org/node/499>, accessed 27 June 2013.

This chapter from a publication issued by the Center for UN Reform Education provides an overview of how the process of negotiating Security Council reform has changed in the last six years. It also discusses some of the blocs’ positions in general.

“Third revision of the text of the Intergovernmental Negotiations on the equitable representation and increase in the membership of the Security Council and other matters related to the Council.” United Nations website, 5 April 2013. Available at <http://www.un.org/en/ga/president/67/letters/pdf/Security%20Council%20Reform%20Informals%20-%202012%20April%202013.pdf>.

This text contains the most recent proposals at from the Intergovernmental Negotiations on Security Council reform. It provides an excellent source to read the specific positions of both blocs and specific countries on Security Council reform. Also see UN news briefings on recent plenary debates regarding Security Council reform (available at <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2012/ga11313.doc.htm> and <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2012/sc10831.doc.htm>).