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The Challenges of Security Council Reform

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The issue of reforming the United Nations Security Council acquired new urgency in the wake of disputes over the war in Iraq. The acrimony of the dispute and the ultimate failure of the Security Council to reach agreement, seriously undermined the perceived legitimacy of the Council. However, although the crisis brought the issue of reform to the fore it was not the first time that such reform had been discussed. Almost since the founding of the UN, the structure of the Security Council has been a point of contention for those who believe that they are effectively disenfranchised within the system. Together the twin problems of Security Council effectiveness and equitable representation have come together to strengthen the case for reform. This paper places current attempts at Security Council reform into historical context and assesses the challenges that these reform proposals face.

The issue of reforming the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) acquired new urgency in the wake of the bitter disputes over the war in Iraq. During negotiations the United States warned that the Security Council risked irrelevancy if it did not act to confront blatant violations of its own resolutions. Others implicitly contended that the Security Council should not allow itself to be used simply as a rubber stamp for a policy position already pre-determined by one its members. In the eyes of many, the acrimony of the dispute and the ultimate-failure of the Security Council members to reach agreement seriously undermined the perceived legitimacy of the Council in

particular and the United Nations more generally. In the words of Kofi Annan (2003) "rarely have such dire forecasts been made about the UN."

The Security Council crisis, precipitated by the Iraq war, brought the issue of reform to the fore but it was not the first time that such reform had been discussed. Almost since the founding of the UN, the structure of the Security Council has been a point of contention for those who believe that they are effectively disenfranchised within the UN system. Countries that do not hold a privileged position as a permanent member complain that the Security Council does not represent the general UN membership and that its voting rights are highly skewed. The list of criticisms aimed at the UNSC has been summarized by Luck (2005):

> It is undemocratic and unrepresentative. It is inequitable in its composition, its decision-making rules, and its working methods. It is largely unaccountable and unresponsive to its obligations towards other principle organs, particularly the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). As a result, it lacks credibility and legitimacy....

From this perspective, the Security Council's waning legitimacy has less to do with Iraq than it has to do with a perceived lack of equity. The problem is rooted in process rather than policy. The underlying assumption of most, if not all reform efforts, is that the exclusionary nature of the UNSC reduces its legitimacy and therefore undermines support for its decisions. Improve representational equity and UNSC effectiveness will be enhanced. This conclusion however omits one very important factor for it ignores the realities of the UNSC power structure. Clearly any reform, if it is to be successful, must also take into account the interests of the five veto-wielding permanent mem-

bers (P5). UN Charter amendments must be approved by the P5 and it is unrealistic to expect they would vote to undermine their own authority.

The issues of equity, efficiency and legitimacy, and the interests of the P5 are therefore central to UNSC reform and are the focus of this paper. These issues constitute the main impediments to successful UNSC reform and provide a useful gauge by which to assess recent reform proposals. Whether UNSC reform will ultimately prove to be successful remains to be seen, but it is clear that the undertaking will not be easy. The historical record indicates that making adjustments to UN practice have been arduous and Charter amendments have been exceedingly rare.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF SECURITY COUNCIL REFORM

The UN was born out of World War II and is a reflection of the global power structure in place at that time. Planning for the new world body began before the war's end in a series of meetings held among allied powers, but much of the groundwork had already been laid by the U.S. Department of State. As early as 1940, post-war policy proposals that included the establishment of an international organization were being promoted by the United States. These became more concrete in 1942 when representatives of twenty-six nations signed the *Declaration by the United Nations* in Washington, D.C., that pledged to fight the Axis powers collectively, pending the establishment of a more permanent system of general security. This was the first time that the term "United Nations" had been used, but the structural details of the organization would be left to later negotiations. Discussions continued at conferences held in Moscow and Tehran during 1943, Dumbarton Oaks, Washington D.C., during 1944,

and at Yalta in 1945. The UN Charter was finalized during a two-month conference held in San Francisco in 1945.[1]

The history of the founding of the UN has continued relevance for today's discussion on Security Council reform, because much of the criticism that is leveled at the UNSC stems from its initial structure. Contrary to popular belief, the UN was not established on the elusive footing of idealistic hopes and dreams, but rather on the practical and vigorous give-and-take of power politics. Certainly, major powers sought to maintain international peace and security, but they were only willing to do so if their sovereign rights were protected and if they were accorded special privileges. Nor was the UN founded on democratic principles. Rather it was intended that the UN represent sovereign states, which may or may not be democratic, not the peoples of the world (Schlesinger 1997).

The UN structure that emerged from San Francisco contained six main organs, but only the Security Council (UNSC) was vested with significant power. UNSC membership was neither representative of the entire body, nor democratic in its deliberations. Membership was limited to eleven countries and only five of them had permanent seats with veto power. The permanent five members, China, France, Soviet Union, U.K. and U.S., assumed such privileges as a precondition for participation. As Senator Tom Connally of Texas, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations stated to critics of the veto, "You may go home from San Francisco—if you wish—and report that you have defeated the veto...But you can also say 'We tore up the Charter" (Schlesinger 2004).

That the other member states reluctantly accepted this ultimatum was based on a realistic assessment of international poli-

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[1] For a detailed account of the negotiations surrounding the drafting of the UN Charter see Schlesinger (2004).

tics. It was clear that if the UNSC was to achieve results then it must have great power support. The League of Nations had been undermined by the refusal of the United States to join. It was also limited by a thoroughly democratic but unworkable tenet that gave every country a veto. The lessons then were clear to all-- the great powers had to be involved and they had to be permitted special privileges. As Evans (1993) notes,

> to convince the permanent members to adhere to the Charter and the collective security framework embodied therein, a deliberate decision was taken to establish a collective security system that could not be applied to the permanent members themselves.

The organization that was born in San Francisco therefore emerged as a hybrid of two seemingly incompatible systems. On the one hand it contained features reminiscent of the 19th century Concert of Europe, in which great powers were accorded special privileges and responsibilities in policing the continent. On the other, it displayed Wilsonian characteristics that gave smaller powers representation. Within the UNSC the 'concert' model was manifested in the P5, while the Wilsonian model was represented by the non-permanent seats that were to be rotated among lesser powers (Laurenti 1997).

The UNSC structure remained unchanged for twenty years, until 1965 when its membership was expanded from eleven to fifteen members. The number of permanent members remained unchanged, but non-permanent seats were increased from six to ten. This first reform of the Security Council was precipitated by a large influx of new member states in the immediate post-war period, largely due to de-colonization. In the fifteen years after its founding, the UN more than doubled in size and pressure to recognize this new reality became the catalyst for reform. Of particular concern was the need to recognize African and Asian

states that previously had no Security Council representation. Negotiations settled on regional representation for non-permanent seats: five seats for Africa and Asia, two from Latin America and Caribbean, two for Western Europe and other states, and one for Eastern Europe (Bennett and Oliver 2002).

Proposals for further Security Council reform emerged periodically throughout the 1970s and 1980s, but it was not until the 1990s that such suggestions gained greater urgency. Calls for reform surfaced against the backdrop of a radically changed global political system. The end of the Cold War brought with it new hopes that the UN in general, and the Security Council in particular, could be revitalized. Indeed, as the Security Council became increasingly active in the early 1990s, especially with regards to peacekeeping, it appeared that a new era of international cooperation had dawned. Changes in the bipolar structure of global power had a significant impact on discussions related to UNSC reform. With the collapse of Soviet control in Eastern Europe, why designate separate seats for Eastern and Western Europe? Moreover, the number of UN members had greatly increased since the last Security Council reform in 1965, increasing from 117 to 192 today.[2] A strong case for representation was also made by Germany and Japan, which were now major contributors to the UN budget and important economic and political players on the world stage. Finally, calls for UNSC reform were reinforced in Secretary General Boutros Ghali's ambitious *Agenda for Peace* published in 1992. Although this report focused primarily on ways to strengthen the UN's capacity to maintain peace, it nevertheless provoked discussion on the broader issue of Security Council reform.

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[2] Nevertheless, the proportion of UNSC seats, as a percentage of total membership, has been declining since 1945. At the UN's founding, UNSC seats represented 21% of total membership. After the first expansion in 1965 this figure was 13%, today it is 8%.

THE CHALLENGES OF REFORM

Despite numerous calls for Security Council reform that have been heard over the decades, adjustments have remained somewhat limited. Some of the difficulties in reforming the UNSC stem from its original structure and some are of more recent origin. In either case, the disparate goals of all of the UN member states, large and small, powerful and weak will not be easy to satisfy, and significant challenges remain.

Equitable Representation

Geographic representation in the UNSC is heavily tilted in favor of the Global North. Four out of five permanent seats are allocated to developed countries, and this imbalance becomes more obvious when examined in terms of UN membership growth. Most of the growth in UN membership has occurred among African and Asian states. So that today, developing countries constitute more than two-thirds of the UN membership.

Procedures for electing nonpermanent members to the UNSC contribute to the distortion. Elections for nonpermanent seats are held by the General Assembly in pre-determined regional groupings. For individual countries, selection depends on being elected by a regional group, or waiting one's turn in a rotational system. Whether a particular country gets the chance to serve on the UNSC is therefore partially determined by the size of the regional group in which it holds membership. Clearly, this structural arrangement gives countries in smaller groups a higher probability of being selected. For instance, since the last UNSC enlargement in 1965 Italy, a member of the Western Europe and Others Group (WEOG, with 28 members[3]) has served five times,

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[3] This figure does not include Israel, which has been partially admitted to WEOG on a temporary basis beginning in May 2002 but only in connection with elections to UN bodies
Note continues

while Nigeria, the leading participant in the Africa group (53 members) has served on the UNSC only twice.[4] Advocates for reform maintain that this system undermines the principle of sovereign equality of all member states established by the Charter and fails to provide equality of opportunity for all countries to serve on the main UN institutions.

Much of the acrimony surrounding the question of UNSC reform centers on the issue of equitable geographic representation, but in terms of Charter provisions this emphasis is somewhat off track. Article 23 that governs UNSC membership refers to equitable geographic distribution of seats not equitable representation. This is an important distinction for it is obvious that the former can be obtained without the latter. How representative is Saudi Arabia or Iran, for instance, of the entire continent of Asia? Moreover, the Charter stipulation for equitable distribution follows other provisions apparently deemed more important. The specific Charter reference states that in selecting non-permanent members to the UNSC, due regards should be "specially paid in the first instance to the contributions of Members of the United Nations to the maintenance of international peace and security and to the other purposes of the Organization, and also to equitable geographic distribution" (UN Charter 1945, Article 23). Equitable geographic distribution seems like an after thought; the founders of the UN apparently endorsed capability over parity. The Security Council was never designed to be the democratic arm of the UN. Instead, that designation was granted to the Gen-

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held in New York. Israel is the only UN member state that is not a full member of any regional group.

[4] A full list of countries elected to the UNSC can be found at http://www.un.org.

eral Assembly, where egalitarianism is enshrined in the principle of one country-one vote.[5]

Efficiency and Legitimacy

The optimum size of any decision-making body is the size that maximizes internal efficiency, while retaining its external legitimacy. Too small and it may lose the support of those for whom it operates. Too large and deadlock becomes a real possibility. Achieving a balance between these two poles is the key.

It would seem that a very limited expansion of the UNSC would aid expeditious decision-making, particularly in times of crisis. The UNSC has primary responsibility for maintaining global peace and security; it cannot afford to be hindered by excessive debate and speechmaking. Moreover, a smaller Council would make it easier to reach agreement on resolutions. Currently, nine out of fifteen votes and the concurrence of the permanent members are required to pass a resolution. If the UNSC is increased significantly, the result could be a Council that is only marginally more representative, but considerably more cumbersome.

On the other hand, the question of efficiency is not purely a numbers game. Efficiency must also be viewed in terms of political influence. A larger Security Council that is at least perceived to be more representative, and therefore more legitimate, should find it easier to gain support for its decisions. The question of efficiency therefore cannot be separated from the issue of legitimacy. Projecting legitimate authority is vital for UNSC success for it has no means to enforce its decisions. Once military action is authorized, the UNSC must rely on the cooperation of member

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[5] It should be noted however, that although the General Assembly is based on the principle of one country, one vote, its power is largely limited to making non-binding recommendations. A notable exception relates to recommendations on the UN budget.

states to implement that mandate. As a result, a larger Council could conceivably be more effective than a smaller one. Although it may be easier to build consensus in a smaller arena, if that agreement excludes important dissenting voices, then it is a false consensus that will be less likely to generate support.

For some member states legitimacy is synonymous with representation. For others it is tied to efficiency and effective response. These positions appear incongruous but are not necessarily mutually exclusive. While it seems contrary to the interests of existing members, especially the P5, to increase the size of the UNSC could be advantageous if new members also bring additional resources. The history of Security Council actions demonstrates that mandates are often delayed for lack of resources or seriously underfunded. Expanding the UNSC to include countries that are able and willing to contribute to the maintenance of peace and security could increase available resources and be an acceptable trade-off that would offset the inefficiencies generated by increased size.

Permanent Five Interests

The UN was founded on a compromise between the great powers to manage and protect their interests and their special status was embodied in the veto. Since it is inconceivable that any P5 member would voluntarily relinquish this privilege, the national interests of the P5 will continue to dominate UNSC action, or inaction, for the foreseeable future. The interests of the permanent five are most obviously displayed in the use of the veto. Since the founding of the UN until January 1997 the veto has exercised 261 times. However, its use has been declining in recent years.[6]

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[6] 207 of these vetoes occurred before 1986 (http://www.un.org).

In order to be implemented, a UNSC reform proposal must receive two-thirds support from the General Assembly and the approval of nine existing members of the Security Council, including ratification by all five permanent members. The positions that the P5 countries take regarding UNSC reform is therefore of ultimate importance. Not surprisingly, none of the P5 has stated a preference for expanding veto power to additional member states. This would simply add the potential for further obstructionism. So with discussion of veto power effectively off the table, the permanent five have narrowed the range of possible options that can be considered.

Of all the P5 members, none is more important to the UN than the United States. The US was instrumental in founding the organization and is currently the largest contributor to the UN budget.[7] The attitude of the US government is crucial not only for the viability of UNSC reform, but also for the success of the UN more generally. The US emerged from the Cold War as the unrivaled superpower. This preeminence of American military might conditions its responses toward the UN. During the early 1990s, when the world was emerging from the Cold War, George H. W. Bush found the UN to be a useful multilateral tool with which to pursue US interests abroad, especially regarding Iraq. However, as US supremacy became increasingly apparent throughout the 1990s, a retreat from multilateralism also became obvious. When George W. Bush took office in 2000, the progress towards unilateralism accelerated, exemplified in the *National Security Strategy* (2003), which proclaims, "we will not hesitate to act alone."

The implications of this shift in US policy toward unilateralism are serious for the UN. The UN cannot hope to operate for

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[7] Although the U.S. is subject to the highest budget assessment, its payments are currently in arrears.

very long without US financial and military support. To a large extent then, UNSC reform involves recognizing the interests of the US, and keeping the US committed. No reform will occur if it is contrary to US interests. Kofi Annan has implicitly recognized this imperative. In his "fork in the road" speech to the General Assembly, Annan (2003) noted "it is not enough to denounce unilateralism, unless we also face up squarely to the concerns that make some states feel uniquely vulnerable, since it is those concerns that drive them to take unilateral action." UN reform, in all of its manifestations, will only succeed if it recognizes and embraces the political power realities of the early 21st century.

SECURITY COUNCIL REFORM PROPOSALS

Most of the reform proposals now on the table emerged after the divisive Security Council debates over Iraq. However a major study, known as the Razali Plan was published prior. The Razali plan was produced by the *Open-Ended Working Group on the Questions of Equitable Representation on an Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters Related to the Security Council,* which began deliberations in 1993 and reported during 1997.[8] The report was named after the President of the General Assembly, Razali Ismail from Malaysia. The main recommendations of the Razali plan included the expansion of the UNSC to twenty-four members, with new permanent and non-permanent seats. A comparison of the Razali plan with the current composition of the UNSC is displayed in Table 1.

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[8] This panel was established in 1993 under General Assembly resolution 48/26.

Table 1
Current Security Council and Razali Plan

	Current Security Council	Razali Plan
Permanent		
Number	5	10
Held by	• China • France • Russia • UK • US	• 5 Africa and Asia • 2 L. America & Carib. • 1 E. Europe • 1 W. Europe & others
Non-Permanent		
Number	10	14
Held by	• Current, plus • two industrialized countries • one each from Asia, L. America, Africa	• Current, plus • one each from Asia, L. America, Africa, and Eastern Europe
Total	15	24

The Razali plan aimed to broaden geographic representation on the UNSC and make it more equitable. The number of permanent seats would be doubled to ten, but taking into account the interests of the P5, Razali did not envisage veto power for the new members. Two of the new permanent seats would be allocated to industrialized countries, which, it was widely believed would be Japan and Germany, since these countries are second and third largest contributors to the UN budget respectively. Asia, Latin America, and Africa would each receive one additional permanent and one additional nonpermanent seat, while Eastern Europe would be allocated one more nonpermanent seat only.

Despite years of consultations and much negotiated compromises with representatives of 165 countries, the Razali Plan was never put to a vote. Opposition came from several sources. Developing countries, led by the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) argued that under the Razali plan industrialized countries would further dominate the UNSC. Since the plan was to be introduced in stages, and only the final stage would have to be approved by a two-thirds majority, the NAM was especially alarmed by the prospect that Japan and Germany would gain permanent seats "through the back door" (Borantonos and Magliveras 2002, 26). They argued that such an action would violate Article 108 of the Charter, which requires approval of two-thirds of the General Assembly for Charter amendments. However, some of the most vociferous opposition came from the so-called "Coffee Club," led by Italy. The Coffee Club was a group of middle-sized states from across all regional groupings that collectively came together to oppose any new permanent seat additions. The club was particularly concerned about the possibility that regional rivals would gain these seats. As a result of strong opposition, momentum for Security Council reform came to a halt, with the exception of a commitment included in the Millennium Declaration (2000) that obliged member states to "intensify their efforts to achieve comprehensive reform of the Security Council in all its aspects."

The Security Council crisis precipitated by fundamental disagreements over Iraq resurrected the reform debate. Secretary General Kofi Annan (2003) declared that the UN had reached a "fork in the road...no less decisive than 1945, when the United Nations was founded." He went on to present a case for UN reform that included appeals to make the UN more representative and relevant for 21st century requirements. To examine reform options, Annan appointed a sixteen member High Level Panel of "eminent persons" in September 2003. One of the man-

dates of the panel was to recommend changes necessary to ensure effective collective action, including a review of the principal organs of the United Nations.

The panel presented its final report, *A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility*, to the Secretary-General on December 2, 2004. Included in the report's 101 recommendations, were two specific proposals on UNSC expansion (see Table 2).

Table 2
High Level Panel Reform Proposals

Region	No. of States	Permanent (continuing)	Proposed New Permanent	Proposed 2-year Nonpermanent	Total
Model A					
Africa	53	0	2	4	6
Asia pacific	56	1	2	3	6
Europe	47	3	1	2	6
Americas	35	1	1	4	6
Totals	191	5	6	13	24
Model B					
Africa	53	0	2	4	6
Asia pacific	56	1	2	3	6
Europe	47	3	2	1	6
Americas	35	1	2	3	6
Totals	191	5	8	11	24

The High Level Panel followed Razali in recommending an increase in UNSC seats to twenty-four, but departed from Razali's specific recommendations regarding how they should be allocated. Model A would add six new permanent seats and three new nonpermanent seats, while Model B would add a new second tier of eight four-year renewable seats plus one additional nonpermanent seat. In both cases the objective was to create a balance among all geographic areas, with six seats being allocated to each region. These regional divisions differ from both

the Razali proposals and from current UNSC arrangements. For the first time, Africa would gain an independent entitlement to six seats—an obvious improvement over current arrangements that allocates just five seats to be shared by a 'gentleman's agreement' among the entire Africa-Asia region.

The High Level Panel left decisions on which countries should be assigned the new seats to the General Assembly. However, it did recommend that preferences for the longer term seats be given to those countries that "are among the top three financial contributors in their relevant regional area to the regular budget, or the top three voluntary contributors from their regional area, or the top three troop contributors from their regional area to United Nations peacekeeping missions" (High Level Panel, 2004, clause 254). This point was reiterated a year later by Kofi Annan, in his report, *In Larger Freedom* (2005).

The panel recommended no change in the veto held by the five permanent members. Despite recognizing that the veto is both anachronistic and "unsuitable for the institution in an increasingly democratic age" (High Level Panel, 2004, clause 256), panel members could not envisage any practical means by which the veto could be eliminated. They did request however that permanent members refrain from using the veto in cases of genocide and large-scale human rights abuses. The panel also recommended that processes to improve transparency and accountability be incorporated and formalized in the Council's rules of procedure (clause 258).

Although Models A and B seemed to offer something for everyone and had the advantage of not challenging the authority of the P5, criticism and alternative proposals emerged very quickly after the publication of the High Level Panel's report. During summer 2004 three additional proposals appeared that added to the High Level Panel's recommendations (see Table 3).

Table 3
Alternative UNSC Reform Proposals

Group	New Perma-nent Seats	New Non-Permanent Seats	Total Security Council Seats	Veto power Extended?
G4	6	4	25	Maybe
African Union	6	5	26	Yes
Uniting for Consensus	0	10	25	No

On July 6th, Germany, Japan, India, and Brazil (G4) submitted their proposals to the General Assembly as the culmination of an intense, coordinated campaign to lobby for new permanent seats. By acting together and representing several continents it was hoped that they would increase their chances of receiving the two-thirds support in the General Assembly that would be required. The G4 framework envisages enlargement of the UNSC to include six new permanent seats, two each for Africa and Asia, one for western states, and one for Latin America and Caribbean. The proposal also included provisions for four non-permanent seats, one each for Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and for Eastern Europe. A decision on the granting of veto power would be postponed until a review conference was held 15 years following Charter amendment.

A week after the G4 proposal was introduced, the African Union (AU) presented a draft resolution that was similar to the G4 proposals but with a couple of important differences. The AU argued that veto power should either be abolished for all or extended to include incoming permanent members. If extended, the power should be limited to only the most vital areas related to peace and security. The African states also sought an additional nonpermanent seat for Africa.

A third major proposal came on July 21st from the Uniting for Consensus group, comprised of most of the old Coffee Club members.[9] The latest proposal includes two alternative models that would each add an additional ten nonpermanent seats assigned to individual states.[10] Both of these variations would retain the current regional groupings, rather than the new regional groupings created by the High Level Panel.

Italy broke slightly with the other Uniting for Consensus members in suggesting that rather than seats being allocated to individual countries, regional groups should have operational management to prevent the national occupation of the new seats. As the Coffee Club had argued before, all of the members of the Uniting for Consensus group strongly oppose the addition of any new permanent seats.

A somewhat different approach to reform was presented to the General Assembly by Costa Rica, Jordan, Lichtenstien, Siganpore, and Switzerald (known as the S-5) during March 2006. Rather than focusing on the contentious issue of expansion, this group was primarily concerned with improving the working methods of the Council. They made nineteen specific recommendations that emphasized the need for greater transparency within the UNSC as well as improved communications between the Council and the general membership. Regarding use of the veto, the S-5 recommended that a permanent member should explain its veto at the time of its use. Then that explanation should be circulated as a Security Council document to all members of the

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[9] The Uniting for Consensus U.S. membership is comprised of Argentina, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, Italy, Malta, Mexico, Pakistan, Republic of Korea, San Marino, Spain and Turkey.

[10] The two proposals are known as the Green and Blue Models. The Green Model is similar to the High Level Panel's Model A, but creates new regional groups. The Blue Model is a variation of the High Level Panel's Model B, in that it creates a new category of longer terms seats, but it also expands the number of two-year seats.

UN. In addition, the S-5 echoed the High Level Panel by stating that permanent members should refrain from casting a negative vote in cases of genocide, crimes against humanity, and serious violations of international humanitarian law (General Assembly, 2006a).

Although the S-5 report, in the words of one Japanese delegate "captured wide attention" and was viewed as a "meaningful first step" (General Assembly, 2006b), it does little to solve the key issues of equity and representation. Moreover, the response of the P5 was lukewarm at best. In a *Note from the President of the Security Council on Improving Working Methods* (Security Council, 2006) the UNSC pledged to increase transparency and increase consultations; however it made no mention of altering the conditions under which the veto would be used. The S-5 were also reminded by US Ambassador John Bolton that the "Charter gave the Council sole authority over its own working methods" (Bolton 2006).

Constraints Imposed by Regional Rivalries

Although almost all UN members have stated that they are in favor of some degree of Security Council reform, resistance to the proposals thus far presented has been significant. Opposition is clearly rooted in P5 self-interest, but it can also be found in the form of regional political rivalries. It has been relatively easy to reach agreement that reform is needed, especially among countries that feel disenfranchised. Yet, consensus on which countries should benefit from reform remains elusive.

Despite having some legitimate claims the G4 countries face considerable challenges in winning their desired permanent seats. The case made by the Japanese and German governments rests on the value of their financial contributions as the second and third largest contributors to the UN budget respectively. Both countries positions were reinforced through much of the

1990s, because they could count on the support of the Clinton administration, but this endorsement weakened with the George W. Bush presidency. While the US still favors a Japanese seat, it refused to endorse a German candidacy following disagreements over the Iraq war. The Japanese claim is still far from assured because of opposition from China. The Chinese government has given its tacit support to a grassroots campaign conducted on popular Chinese web sites that seeks to block Japan's bid. More explicitly, the Chinese government stated that reform should focus on increasing the representation of developing countries only, and called the G4's push for an early vote "dangerous and divisive" (Kahn, 2005).

The G4 plan is also opposed by the Uniting for Consensus group. That group came into existence primarily as a reaction to the G4 reform campaign. As an indication of the acrimony of the discussion, some members of the Uniting for Consensus group have accused the G4 of trying to hijack the reform process for their own benefit. Pakistan described the four countries as "seekers of special privileges and power masquerading as the champions of the weak and disadvantaged" (Akram, 2005). At the same time, Italy accused the G4 of using aid money to buy votes and demanded an investigation into their "improper and unethical behavior" (Lederer, 2005). Committee sessions became so heated that Secretary-General Kofi Annan urged nations "to calm down" when debating enlargement of the U.N. Security (Leopold, 2005). The most serious blow to the hopes of the G4 came in August 2005 when Washington and Beijing reached an agreement to work in "parallel" to block the G4 plan. They have not stated whether or not they are willing to use veto power, but clearly this is an option. Although officially, the US supports a permanent seat on the Security Council for Japan, it rejects the G4 plan, the only serious proposal that would make this a reality.

The US does not want Brazil, Germany, and India to gain permanent seats.

Disagreements among regional rivals with regards to UNSC reform also plague the African continent. The front-runners for the permanent seats in the AU proposal are South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya, Egypt, Libya and Senegal, but the AU has been unable to devise a clear plan to decide on which countries to choose. In keeping with the High Level Panel's recommendation that consideration should be given to countries that contribute most to the United Nations financially, militarily and diplomatically, the AU stated that it would establish criteria to ensure that the selected countries would be representative of Africa and would have the capacity to act. Such decisions, however, are far from straightforward. What does it mean to be a representative of Africa? Based on population Nigeria would be the first choice, but Nigeria has been an unreliable financial partner. It is a chronically late contributor to the UN budget and has a large national debt. Libya may be regarded as being more representative, Muammar Gaddafi is widely viewed as the father of the African Union, but this choice would likely face opposition from outside of the AU. By contrast, another front-runner Egypt, is considered more favorably in the Global North but been accused by some of not being African enough (Okumu, 2005)

With the AU being unable to make a final decision, some African countries have sought partnerships with member states from other regions and on the Security Council. South Africa has engaged in negotiations with Brazil, India, and Japan. Nigeria has moved closer to China and Russia, while Egypt is hoping for US support. France has backed Senegal but its candidacy will likely face strong opposition from China since Senegal has established diplomatic relations with Taiwan (Okumu, 2005). Of all prospective candidates, South Africa seems to be the top con-

tender for one of the African seats but regional rival Nigeria is still working frantically to undermine its chances.

The Uniting for Consensus group is most concerned with blocking the addition of new permanent seats. It favors ten non-permanent seats only. This position therefore brings them into direct opposition with both the G4 and the AU which seek the addition of permanent seats. The Uniting for Consensus group has been accused of obstructionism as it has sought to block G4 attempt to bring the issue to an early vote. While the UC group has accused the G4 of undue haste, the G4 points out that discussions on reform of the Security Council have been on going, in earnest, for well over a decade (Oshima 2005). The G4 therefore maintains that failure to act would not only mean that an historic opportunity for meaningful change would be missed, it would also undermine the legitimacy of an already discredited Security Council. A representative of the G4 from Brazil also noted that restricting the expansion of the Council to non-permanent members would risk increasing the disparity in the Council's composition (Sardenberg 2005).

Many of these divergent positions were clearly expressed during the 2005 World Summit and during consultations held in the General Assembly plenary during July 2006. The positions are summarized in Table 4. The data include only the positions of those who spoke during these sessions and the co-sponsors of the main proposals.

Table 4 confirms that there is little support for maintaining the status quo with ninety-seven percent, including all of the P5, in favor of expanding the number of UNSC seats. However, there appears to be limited agreement beyond that point. Support for the G4 and African Union proposals is fairly evenly split, but only the G4 plan has some P5 support. It is also worth noting that whereas the G4 proposal draws support from countries

across most of the regional groups, the African Union plan finds support from the African group only.[11]

The addition of new permanent seats is also widely supported but there is disagreement over which countries should be granted such seats. It is of particular significance that the P5 differs on this issue. There is consensus among the P5 however

Table 4
Member State Positions on UN Reform

Proposal	Percent Favoring	P5 Support
Support at 2005 World Summit		
G4	34.4	France
G4 with conditions	8.8	UK
African Union	37.7	None
Uniting for Consensus	13.3	None
Postpone vote	5.5	China Russia US
Support at 2006 Plenary		
UNSC Expansion	97	China France Russia UK US
New Permanent seats	69	France UK US
Extend veto to new seats	13	None

Source: Author compiled from information from http://www.reformtheun.org.

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[11] The G4 plan is supported by countries that are members of the following groups: Asia, Eastern Europe, Latin American and Western Europe and Others.

with regards to the veto. No P5 member has expressed support for extending the veto to new members or limiting its current use.

Despite agreement on some reform proposals, none has managed to garner unequivocal support. The need to preserve self-interest has thus far proven stronger than the need to break with the status quo. So what is feasible at this stage? Yet another report presented to the General Assembly during April 2007 endeavored to address this question. The report, produced by five "facilitators" appointed by the General Assembly in February, was designed to elucidate "notions of the way forward" based on a series of closed-door consultations with member states (Facilitators 2007). In their report, the facilitators recognize that since an "ideal" solution may not be possible at this stage, a transitional approach could be used to break the deadlock. They suggest specifically that members discuss creating an intermediary arrangement that would expand the number of nonpermanent seats as well as extend their time limits. The question of permanent seats would be temporarily set aside and the new arrangement would be subject to review at a pre-determined date. This approach has the advantage of avoiding the most contentious issue concerning the allocation of permanent seats, but it contains little that is new and is unlikely to be the catalyst for change. Despite pleas by the facilitators for members to remain flexible on the issue of Security Council reform, statements made in response to their report indicate that all parties remain firmly entrenched.[12]

CONCLUSION

The history of UNSC reform demonstrates that the institutional structures created by the great powers in 1945 are not easily altered. Despite being widely recognized as unrepresentative

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[12] For a list of statements concerning the facilitators report please see http://www.reformtheun.org

and anachronistic, there are currently few realistic possibilities for reform. The strongest case for reform has been made on the grounds of equity. In composition, the UN is a very different place today than it was in 1945. Many of the more recent members continue to argue that their voices are being excluded. Countries such as Japan and Germany make significant contributions to the UN budget. Yet, their formal political power does not match their economic contributions.

The very broad level of support for UNSC membership expansion seems to indicate that the equity problem may be remedied by adding nonpermanent seats. This action would have the benefit of increasing geographic representation, and perhaps legitimacy, without much cost to permanent members. Indeed, if these countries also brought resources that they were willing to contribute to UN operations, then the presence of additional nonpermanent members would also add value. The unknown of course, is whether member states that have long held out for permanent seats would be willing to settle for less.

Successful UNSC reform must also strike a balance between national and collective interests. Although problems and potential solutions have become increasingly global in nature, the UN continues to operate on a Westpahlian model based on sovereignty and self-interest. In such a world, multilateral cooperation is possible but it must be based on shared and obvious benefits. This is especially true when it comes to gaining the support of the P5. The United States for instance, has made it abundantly clear that it is more concerned with reforming the UN to better deal with weapons of mass destruction and terrorism than with the niceties of equitable representation on the Security Council. It is therefore vital that the UN tackle such concerns earnestly, for the United States as well as other important players have come to view broad UN reform and specific Security Council reform as a package deal.

Finally, the failure of member states thus far to reach agreement on UNSC reform despite years of effort is not surprising in the historical context. It is worth repeating that the UN Security Council was never intended to be democratic or equitable. The original structure of the UNSC was set up to protect and promote the interests of the P5. In all likelihood this arrangement will continue. The dispute over the Iraq war clearly demonstrated that the UN cannot prevent a major power from acting according to its own national interests. This is what the founders originally intended and that reality will remain with or without reform.

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