Forum: United Nations Security Council

Issue: Reformation in the UNSC: More Permanent Members

Student Officer: Eunice Zhang

Overview

The United Nations was created in 1945 after World War II. According to United Nations Chapter 5 Article 23, "The Security Council shall consist of fifteen Members of the United Nations: "The Republic of China, France, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America shall be permanent members of the Security Council." Such a distribution essentially reflected the power structure after World War II. Besides, the rest of the Security Council originally was constituted by elected 6 nonpermanent member states of two-year terms. However, the amendment towards the UN Charter in 1965 stipulated that increasing the nonpermanent membership to 10. Based on the geographic feature, it required five member states from African and Asian countries, one from East Europe, two from Latin America, two from West Europe and other countries. Then, the Republic of China was replaced by the People's Republic of China in 1971. The Russian Federation was recognized as the legal successor states of the Soviet Union after it dissolved in 1991. Since then, the structure of the Security Council have not changed anymore.

However, with the expansion of United Nations membership and decolonization development, the original structure of the Security Council is challenged. More and more member states continuously come up with different proposals on this contested issue: whether the United Nations Security Council should have more permanent members.

There are concerns based on the following reasons:

Firstly, the current structure is not able to maintain equitable representation among geographic regions. Initially, a total of 51 countries signed to join the United Nations in 1945. Currently, the number of member states has almost quadrupled. However, the structure of the Security Council has remained the same. This has resulted in many countries in the African region to complain and protest over the lack of representation within the Security Council.

Secondly, there are noticeable disparities between permanent and nonpermanent members. The prominent difference is the privileged veto power. It forces the P5 to reach an agreement on every

single debated issue, or every resolution and discussion would be meaningless. This weakness of the voting system draws varies dissenting voice. Early in 2009, it already has 140 countries' demand to move the reformation forward.

Furthermore, UNSC's performance on protecting global safety is frequently critiqued.For example, the insecurity across Somalia has made little progress for years. Thus, on 21 August 2019, James Swan, head of the UN Mission in Somalia (UNSOM), warned the Security Council about the growing threat from local terrorism, by mentioning the fatal terrorist attack to government offices in July, which caused multiple officers' injury and death. As a result, innovating the Security Council has been considered a crucial topic that needs to be deeply discussed so that more resolutions can be created.

The first call of reformation took place on March 21st, 2005. The UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan urged an increase in membership to 24 in total to respond to the changing global power. After that, the debate at the United Nations on reformation of the Security Council has been unfolded. Several groups were formed during the discussions.

1. G4 Nations

G4 nations allied together, aiming to support each other and obtain permanent seats in UN Security Council. All of these four states are regularly elected as nonpermanent members. There are four countries have served cumulatively in the UN for 64 years. These member states can be competitive with the Permanent Five, despite their low population or GDP. On 6 July 2005, G4 nations submitted a resolution to General Assembly, titled "Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters". It suggested augmenting six permanent members and four nonpermanent members. Meanwhile, the G4 nations willingly gave up veto power for 15 years long for gaining the permanent seats. In spite of it, the resolution failed.

2. The Uniting for Consensus

The Uniting for Consensus, also known as the "Coffee Club", is comprised of 12 member states. Those countries unite together due to their collective goal ——adding more non-permanent seats in the Security Council because it balances the power structure and raises their own opportunities to be non-permanent members regularly. Meanwhile, they are strongly opposed to G4 nations 'proposals because of the fear of their regional rivals being new permanent members. On 21 July 2005,

through presenting a draft resolution in General Assembly, the Uniting for Consensus suggested to increase the number of non-permanent members to 20, which are elected based on the contribution to the United Nations in peacekeeping and equitable geographical distribution. The P5 remained the same. Unfortunately, this resolution failed as well.

Additionally, there is an interesting fact that Italy once proposed to replace the United Kingdom and France by the European Union in order to enhance security and mutual diplomacy. At last, this proposal was comically vetoed by these two permanent members.

3. The African Union

Obviously, the African group is consists of some of the African countries such as Cote d'Ivoire and South Africa. They asked for two permanent seats and five non-permanent status only for the African regions. Also, they requested that either abolishing all permanent members 'veto power or every permeant member have veto power, since all of them should be equal. Draft resolution was submitted on March 9, 2005.

4. L69

L69 seeks both expansions of the permanent and the non-permanent seats to create a more responsible, transparent and relevant Security Council. They have the appeal as same as the African group to veto power. Most importantly, L69 desires that the Security Council is capable to render a greater representation of the LEDCs, included the islands and small countries.

5. The Arab League

In response to the lack of representation of Arab, the Arab group requests a permanent seat. For now, it has not presented any solution yet.

Key Terms

P5

P5 is the abbreviation of five permanent members, which is assigned based on the victory of World War II. Those permanent nations keep playing an influential role in international stages. Until now, they always maintain most powerful military forces, annually rank at the top of the countries with the highest military expenditures. Also, they all are officially admitted and permitted to develop nuclear weapons under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

Veto

It is a privilege only for permanent members; which enables the member to forbid the draft resolution by its one-vote, regardless of the level of support.

G4 Nations

The G4 nations includes Japan, Brazil, India and Germany. For now, the United Kingdom and France agree the proposal G4 presented. Japan has already obtain the United States and the United Kingdom's support. India has already gained all P5's agreement to join the permanent. Brazil is supported by the US, UK and Russia Federation. Since the war crime of World War II, Japan's request is mightily objected by the People Republic of China, Russia Federation and South Korea. At the mean time, there are couple of European countries opposing the seat for Germany.

The Uniting for Consensus / Coffee Club

This community united for opposing the proposal of increasing the number of permanent members, which is G4 nations stand for. Italian ambassador Francesco Paolo Fulci initiated this union with Pakistan, Mexico, and Egypt in 1995. Soon, Spain, Argentina, Turkey, Canada, South Korea, and approximately 40 more regional countries joined the UFC (Uniting for Consensus). On 21 July 2005, twelve club members submitted a draft resolution to express their common positions.

L69

L69 stands for a group of developing countries respectively from Africa, Latin America, Asia, Pacific and Caribbean regions. The name of "L69" comes from the number of its draft document submitted in 14 September 2007.

The Arab League

It is a regional organization composed of Arab countries which states nearby North Africa and Arabia. So far, a total of 22 countries are in this league, including Kuwait. The organization's major objective is to take the Arab countries' general interest as the first priority to establish a closer relationship and create chances to cooperate among member states in the league.

Important Documents

A/61/L.69/Rev. United Nations General Assembly Sixty-first session
14 September 2007- Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters

(https://undocs.org/A/61/L.69/Rev.1)

A/59/L.68 United Nations General Assembly Fifty-ninth session

21 July 2005 - Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters

(https://undocs.org/en/A/59/L.68)

A/59/L.64 United Nations General Assembly Fifty-ninth session

6 July 2005- Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters

(https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/59/L.64)

62/557. Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters

(https://www.centerforunreform.org/sites/default/files/62%3A557.pdf)

20 November 2018 - United Nations Meetings Coverage and Press Releases

General Assembly seventy-third session

"Member States Call for Removing Veto Power, Expanding Security Council to Include New Permanent Seats, as General Assembly Debates Reform Plans for 15-Member Organ"

(https://www.un.org/press/en/2018/ga12091.doc.htm)

9 March 2005 - Common African Position on Security Council Reform

Draft resolution submitted by the African Union

(https://www.globalpolicy.org/security-council/security-council-reform/41201.html)

https://centerforunreform.org/sites/default/files/link2_0.pdf#overlay-context=

Possible Solutions

The most simple solution is not allowing more permanent members entering Security Council and let the structure remain unchanged. It is acceptable but the chair highly encourages delegates to provide various ways to reform this.

One possible solution is to let, ambitious states who desire to become permanent members persuade the entire committee to vote for them. G4 nations 'intent is so obvious that they should be one of these countries. Presenting what can be contributed, introducing the economic and political influence are potential methods to acquire support. Furthermore, if there will be new members, the upcoming question is the veto power: whether these new states can have that privilege

In addition, consider lopsided power distribution in the Security Council, it is possible that all member states agree to add more permanent members but have not determined specifically which countries. Regional groups probably would make such a decision because there are too many members in the league or union. However, due to limited members in the security council, the lists of future permanent members need to further discuss, as well as the veto power.

Most importantly, every draft resolution on this topic is an informative resolution, that the permanent countries do not have the veto power for this topic If a resolution passes, the Security Council will still maintain the current status for the rest of the conference.

What's more, for informative resolutions, after it has been passed in UNSC, it would be sent to the UNGA to be further discussed and voted. Hence, each resolution is independent and has no effect on other resolutions. It acceptable that two conflicting resolutions are both passed.

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