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Diplomacy in a Challenging Global Environment

A Research Report

COMMITTEE: Security Council

QUESTION OF: The Question of the Reform of the Security Council

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Introduction & Background

The United Nations Security Council is one of the six main organs of the United Nations. It was originally created in the wake of World War II, in the hopes of fostering and maintaining international peace and security. It is the only organ of the United Nations that has the power to sanction action, which must be followed by all other member states involved. In addition to this singular power, the Security Council is also charged with recommending the admission of new Members to the United Nations, investigating any plausible threat to international security and deciding if military action is needed, and creating economic decrees like embargos or bans.

The Security Council consists of fifteen member nations, five of which are permanent members and the other ten who hold elected positions. The five members who hold permanent positions are France, the United Kingdom, China, Russia, and the United States. These members are often referred to as the Permanent Five, or P5, who each exclusively holds the power to veto any resolution in discussion. The remaining ten elected members each serve two-year

nonconsecutive terms, along with the fact that they are not granted the veto power that the P5 is. Every year, five of the ten non-permanent members are elected by the General Assembly for their two-year term. The ten positions are apportioned by region, with five members for the African and Asian States, two for the Latin American and Carribean States, two for the Western European States, and one for the Eastern European States.

Although the United Nations Security Council was created in the 1950s with its main goal to maintain international peace, the representation and structure of the Council have been called into question in recent years. Calls for structural reform have been circulating, causing scrutiny from various regions of the world. Looking at the structure of the Security Council, many nations have little to no representation in the Council, resulting in many areas not having a voice in security-related discussions. Further, there are no permanent members from the Indian, Latin American, or African states.

In addition to the 'lack' of representation the Security Council holds, the P5's veto powers have also been called into question. Russia has vetoed over 100 resolutions since the SC's establishment, and China's use of the veto power has picked up in recent years. Many resolutions regarding Syria and all parties involved with it are vetoed and dismissed quickly, thus prompting the Security Council to make little headway with the issue. In addition to this, it has been perceived that the use of the veto power has been a method for the P5 members to indirectly tie in international grudges from decades ago. Because of the increasing use of the veto power by the P5, many tensions between members have developed, making it difficult for the Security Council to pass many resolutions.

What are the Specifics of the Permanent Five's Veto Powers?

Since the creation of the Security Council in 1945, the powers held by the Permanent Five have been highly debated. Each member of the P5 exclusively holds the powers of vetoing any resolution, even with a majority vote in its favor. Since its establishment in 1945, the veto power has been recorded 290 times. Recently, these powers have been viewed as a detriment to the Security Council and any headway that could have been made in meetings. The number of vetoed resolutions have been increasing for the past eight years, resulting in 2018 ending with three vetoed resolutions and only 54 resolutions passing. In comparison, 2017 bore 61 passed resolutions. Throughout history, Russia has used its power 141 times, most often from stopping resolutions involving the admission of new members to the United Nations. Recently, Russia has used its veto power 17 times since 2011, the majority of which involved situations where Syria or Russia's actions in Ukraine were highlighted. China has used its power only 14 times, seven of those times since 2011. Most of the recent seven vetoes were made alongside vetoes from Russia. The United States has used its power 83 times throughout history, three of which were in the past 14 years. Most commonly, the resolutions the United States has vetoed concern the security and interests of Israel. The United Kingdom has used its power 32 times, and France has used its veto 18 times. Both the UK and France have not used their powers since 1989.

Why has Representation in the Security Council come into Question?

The Security Council was created as the United Nations' leading peacekeeping body, with a wide variety of powers bestowed upon it. Amongst the various powers that the Security Council holds, it exclusively has the right to encroach upon national sovereignty when action is

deemed necessary. Because the Security Council holds the power to do this to any domain, it has been deemed important that the representation in the Council reflects the current geopolitical positions of the world. This has come into question lately, as the Security Council was created in the 1940s, and many nations feel that the geopolitical standings of the world have shifted since then. Since its original establishment in the 1940s, 142 new countries have been added to the United Nations. Places like Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Carribean do not have the representation that is thought to be needed to properly reflect the world's composition. In addition to this, the representation of Germany on the Security Council has been increasingly debated in recent years. The German Government has changed considerably since the 1940s, becoming a large advocate for multilateralism and has made considerable contributions to the United Nations since then. Many nations have expressed the view that in the chance of expansion or reform of the Security Council, Germany would be a 'natural candidate' for a permanent position.

Past Efforts to Solve This Problem

As expressed previously, many nations have various feelings towards the debated reform of the Security Council. In 2005, Germany, India, Japan, and Brazil created the 'G4' proposal. These four nations have expressed that they each support one another in the bid for permanent seats on the Security Council. This proposal included many elements that expanded the Security Council, with the main appeal of increased representation. This proposal, or resolution, stated that their reform would introduce six new permanent seats to the Council. In comparison to the five permanent seats of the current Council, the proposal planned on adding two seats each for

Asia and Africa, one seat for the Western European and Others Group, and one seat for Latin America and Caribbean Group. Continuing, the proposition also called for the addition of four non-permanent seats, one each for Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Eastern Europe. Lastly, the proposal calls for the review of the reform 15 years after it is entered into force. The reasoning behind this point is to see how effective or ineffective the reform has been in the span of 15 years, in the chance that another reform is needed. The G4 proposal was not the only significant resolution drafted as the African States of Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal, and South Africa also entered a proposal for the reform of the Security Council in 2005. This draft resolution is very similar to the G4's, with minor changes in how increased representation would be split. It addressed that there would be 11 new seats on the Security Council, increasing the number of seats from 15 to 26. This would bring in six new permanent seats on the Council and five non-permanent seats. Both of these drafted resolutions have made it a significant point to expand the Council to be more inclusive and to better represent the current geopolitical standings of the world.

Possible Solutions

The main concern involving the reform of the Security Council is how the structure will be affected. Many nations have made it clear that reform needs to take place, most noticeably to show accurate geopolitical standings and to show the progression the world has made since the 1940s. The questions to consider when addressing this is how an increased representation could coexist with the already standing chairs on the Council and determining the extent and definition of the veto powers. The priority of this reform should be to target any areas of the current debate

and to address them as fully as possible. Peace should be kept through this process as this reform is not intended to alienate any nation from the Security Council or from the United Nations as a whole. Take into consideration other drafted resolutions that have addressed this reform. It is essential for this reform to go smoothly and peacefully as it will be one of the only major changes to the Security Council since its establishment in the 1940s.

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