



# INCIPE

INSTITUTO DE CUESTIONES INTERNACIONALES  
Y POLÍTICA EXTERIOR

## **CONFERENCIA INTERNACIONAL:**

### **"La Reforma del Consejo de Seguridad de Naciones Unidas: ¿Cuál es el papel de la Unión Europea?"**

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#### **CONFERENCE WORKING PAPER**

#### **UNITED NATIONS AND SECURITY COUNCIL REFORM: PROPOSALS FOR THE FUTURE**

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1. **Introduction – The United Nations and the United Nations Security Council: an Overview**

The end of the Second World War gave rise to a new international system and with it, the formation of the United Nations. The original 50 member states ratified the United Nations Charter on October 24, 1945 . The organization contains two main bodies: the General Assembly, which comprises all member nations, and the smaller Security Council, which has the primary responsibility of maintaining international peace and security, including the mitigation of and response to international conflicts. The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) focuses on mainly peaceful means of conflict management and resolution through negotiations and the dispatch of UN peacekeepers. While members of the General Assembly may participate in discussions in the Security Council, only the Council itself may issue resolutions or directives. UNSC Resolutions under Chapter VII (Action with Respect to Threats to the Peace, Breaches of the Peace, and Acts of Aggression) are binding on all UN members, and can include economic sanctions and/or collective military action<sup>2</sup> [2] .

The UN Security Council currently consists of 15 member states: five permanent members and 10 other members of regional representation that rotate on a 2-year basis. The five permanent members (P5) represent the five main powers at the end of World War II and include China, France, Russia (then the Soviet Union), The United Kingdom, and the United States of America. Due to the significant changes in the international community over the past 60 years, many UN member nations have criticized the UN structure, particularly that of the UNSC, and have thus brought forth proposals regarding potential reform of the UNSC. Many countries in the developing world criticize the Security Council based on the perception of it being an elite “nuclear club”; the P5 nations are the only recognized nations in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) as having the permission to have nuclear arms. The P5 nations also do not

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2 [2] United Nations Security Council, [http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/unsc\\_background.html](http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/unsc_background.html). Accessed online June 11, 2007.

accurately reflect the power and population distribution throughout the world<sup>3</sup> [3] . In addition, the veto power of the P5 presents a strong point of contention coupled with the perceived lack of democracy in the UNSC structure. Within the European Union and the United States , criticism focus on the voting and management systems, with the United States emphasizes management and oversight problems as well as human rights concerns and peace building efforts.

One of the main weaknesses of the UNSC is the apparent disconnect between decision-making and the implementation ability of the Council<sup>4</sup> [4] . This has resulted in decreased legitimacy of the UNSC and of the UN on the whole. The rise in criticisms of the UNSC, emphasized by the increased momentum toward reform, demonstrates the decreasing effectiveness of the current institution. Powerful countries with the ability to act alone or together without the UN, have chosen to do so, as in the case of the 2003 invasion of Iraq by the United States, Great Britain and others<sup>5</sup> [5] . Distrust of the efficiency and ability of the UNSC dictates the need for reform if the international community wants the organization to function as it was originally designed.

## 2. **United Nations Security Council Reform**

There have been many proposals as to how to reform the UNSC; however, there are several that have gained the most publicity and momentum. The four most

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<sup>3</sup> [3] United Nations Security Council. Wikipedia. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United\\_Nations\\_Security\\_Council#Criticisms\\_of\\_the\\_Security\\_Council](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Nations_Security_Council#Criticisms_of_the_Security_Council). Accessed online June 10, 2007.

<sup>4</sup> [4] Laurenti, Jeffery. "What 'reinforcement' for the Security Council?" Chaillot Paper, June 2005 N° 78, *The European Union and the United Nations: Partners in effective multilateralism*. [www.iss.europa.edu/chaillot/chai78.pdf](http://www.iss.europa.edu/chaillot/chai78.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> [5] *Ibid*.

prominent proposals are detailed in the paragraphs below. The developing world, in conjunction with more recent regional powers are the strongest proponents of UNSC reform, with the United States seeking overall reform of the organization rather than the enforcement of significant changes to only the Security Council. The European Union is caught somewhat in the middle with internal divisions among member states providing significant challenges to developing a joint EU policy toward the UN.

**The G4 Nations** - The four nations most strongly campaigning for permanent membership on the Security Council are Brazil , India , Germany , and Japan . Brazil is by far the largest country in South America and therefore argues for membership based on its size and power with respect to the region. India is the largest democracy in the world and one of the most populous countries in Asia . It is also at the forefront of technological innovation, a nuclear power, and believes that that is reason enough for its permanent membership in the Security Council. Germany has changed dramatically since the UN was established after its defeat in WWII and, as well as Japan , is a member of the G-8, the group of the 7 wealthiest countries in the world, plus Russia . Both nations are two of the largest financial contributors to the UN<sup>6</sup> [6] . The G4 nations have included in their proposal one permanent seat for an African nation, and thus their idea for reform has become known as the G4 + 1 proposal. Of the five permanent members, this proposal is currently backed by the United Kingdom and France<sup>7</sup> [7] .

**The G4 +1 proposal** would significantly improve the demographic representation of the Council and distribute power more accurately according to those nations who contribute the most financially to the organization. However, many countries in the

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<sup>6</sup> [6] United Nations Security Council. Wikipedia. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United\\_Nations\\_Security\\_Council#Membership\\_reform](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Nations_Security_Council#Membership_reform) Accessed online June 14, 2007 .

<sup>7</sup> [7] Gardiner, Nile and Brett D. Schaefer, U.N. Security Council Reform is Not in the U.S. Interest. The Heritage Foundation: August 18, 2005 . <http://www.heritage.org/Research/InternationalOrganizations/bg1876.cfm> .

European Union, especially Spain and Italy do not want to see Germany gain a permanent seat out of fear of a coalition of power among the three most powerful nations in the EU: Great Britain, France and Germany. The rest of the EU would then feel even more excluded than it already does from the prestigious UNSC. As such, there has been discussion of exchanging the potential seat for Germany , and possibly the current ones for France and Great Britain , for a collective EU permanent seat. The EU has adopted a joint foreign policy, and a common seat would follow in line with what the EU established post – Maastricht . However, it is unlikely that Great Britain and France are currently willing to give up their seat, nor is Germany ready to stop campaigning for its own permanent seat on the Security Council. The EU is quite divided on this matter, with Italy leading the opposition against both an EU seat and a German seat.

**Uniting for Consensus** – Led by Italy , Pakistan , Argentina , South Korea , and Mexico , this group of almost 40 countries, including Spain and much of the EU, has formed as a direct counter to the proposal of the G4 nations. They would like to keep the 5 permanent members as they are, and increase the number of non-permanent members to 20 for a total increase of 10 seats to the Security Council. The Latin American countries oppose Brazil gaining a permanent seat on the basis that although it is the largest country in South America , it is a Portuguese-speaking country, and therefore not an accurate portrayal of the make-up of the region. Spain , Italy , and the majority of the EU member states oppose Germany gaining a permanent seat in the Security Council for fear of their losing influence to the more powerful European nations on the council.

While increasing the size of the UNSC would improve the demographic representation and democratic nature of the council, there is a significant risk of its losing effectiveness. Part of what makes the UNSC function is that it is a small group of powerful nations and rotational regional representatives from the General Assembly. The more nations that join the UNSC, the more similar it will be to the GA, and therefore, its chances of successful decision-making and implementation will decrease.

The UNSC already has difficulties in implementation and making decisions as a result of the veto power of the P5. Increasing the size by 10 nations could lead to increased disagreement and hamstringing the implementation efforts of the council.

**Kofi Annan, Former Secretary General of the UN** – While presiding as Secretary General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan offered two proposals of UNSC reform coupled under the umbrella of his comprehensive reform proposal entitled “In Larger Freedom”. Known as “Plan A” and “Plan B”, both recommend the expansion of the Security Council to a total of 24 seats. Plan A suggests the addition of 6 new permanent members to the Security Council: the G4 nations plus one African nation and one representing the Arab League. This plan also recommends 3 additional seats filled by non-permanent members. Plan B proposes maintaining the permanent members of the UNSC to the P5, but adding 8 seats for member nations who would sit for 4-year terms with the ability to renew per approval of the General Assembly and 1 additional seat for a non-permanent member with the traditional 2-year term<sup>8</sup> [8] .

<b>Box 5</b>					
<b>Security Council reform: models A and B<sup>9</sup> [9]</b>					
Model A provides for six new permanent seats, with no veto being created, and three new two-year term non-permanent seats, divided among the major regional areas as follows:					
Regional area	No. of States	Permanent seats (continuing)	Proposed new permanent seats	Proposed two-year seats (non-renewable)	Total
Africa	53	0	2	4	6
Asia and Pacific	56	1	2	3	6
Europe	47	3	1	2	6
Americas	35	1	1	4	6

<sup>8</sup> [8] *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> [9] Annan, Kofi, “In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security, and Human Rights for all.” <http://www.un.org/largerfreedom/chap5.htm>. Accessed online June, 10, 2007.

Totals model A	191	5	6	13	24
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Model B provides for no new permanent seats but creates a new category of eight four-year renewable-term seats and one new two-year non-permanent (and non-renewable) seat, divided among the major regional areas as follows:

Regional area	No. of States	Permanent seats (continuing)	Proposed four-year renewable seats	Proposed two-year seats (non-renewable)	Total
Africa	53	0	2	4	6
Asia and Pacific	56	1	2	3	6
Europe	47	3	2	1	6
Ameritas	35	1	2	3	6
Totals model A	191	5	8	11	24

The addition of 6 permanent members, including one from Africa and one from an Arab country in Plan A would not likely find the support needed to enact such reform, especially from the United States . Additionally, tensions could arise between the permanent members with a veto and those without veto power and further destabilize the effectiveness of the council. Plan B would maintain the structure of permanent members with veto powers, and the longer, renewable terms would encourage action instead of the common deadlock passivity of nations on the council. With the chance for re-election, nations would be more likely to actively engage in the UNSC deliberations and reach a solution. The implementation capabilities of the council could improve with such a class of UNSC membership<sup>10</sup> [10] .

### **3. The Position of the United States on the UNSC Reform**

The U.S. has chosen to focus on an organization-wide reform of the UN rather than focusing primarily on the Security Council. The focus on overall problems of the

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<sup>10</sup> [10] Laurenti, Jeffery, “What ‘reinforcement’ for the Security Council?” Chaillot Paper, June 2005 N°78, *The European Union and the United Nations: Partners in effective multilateralism*. [www.iss.europa.edu/chaillot/chai78.pdf](http://www.iss.europa.edu/chaillot/chai78.pdf).

UN represents their desire to increase the effectiveness of the organization, but also illustrates U.S. hesitancy to completely restructure the council. The U.S. has publicly presented a series of seven areas of reform for the UN. The Security Council is included in that list, but the Bush Administration stresses the importance of addressing all areas of reform at once without placing UNSC overhaul at the forefront of reform initiatives. The United States' number one priority in any reform that includes the UNSC remains the effectiveness of the council and its ability to make and implement decisions in a timely manner<sup>11</sup> [11] . According to the 2005 State Department publication, "U.S. Priorities for a Stronger, More Effective United Nations," the seven areas for reform include: 1. Budget, Management and Administration, 2. Peace Building Commission, 3. Human Rights Council, 4. Democracy Initiatives and the UN Democracy Fund, 5. Comprehensive Convention on Terrorism. 6. Development and, 7. Security Council Reform. The below descriptions of reform policy represent the views articulated in the above mentioned document<sup>12</sup> [12] .

**Budget, Management and Administration** – The goals of the U.S. for this first category are to improve the internal oversight and accountability of the organization. This includes identifying and then allocating appropriate resources to high priority programs and offices.

**Peace Building Commission** - The United Nations Peace Building Commission should help in post-conflict reconstruction efforts, specifically in providing humanitarian and development support.

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11 [11] "Statement by Ambassador John R. Bolton, U.S. Representative to the United Nations, on Security Council Reform, in the General Assembly, November 10, 2005." [www.usunnewyork.usmission.gov/05\\_214.htm](http://www.usunnewyork.usmission.gov/05_214.htm). Information Resource Center , Embassy of the United States of America , Madrid , Spain .

12 [12] US Department of State, Bureau of Public Affairs, "US Priorities for a Stronger, More Effective United Nations," June 17, 2005 . <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/48439.pdf>.



**Human Rights Council** – A proposed shift from the large Commission on Human Rights to a smaller, action – oriented Human Rights Council would not include states with human rights abuses. The U.S. feels that any effective and meaningful human rights organization should exemplify the standards that it is trying to set. Human rights are very important for the U.S. government and are a condition for their approval of new Security Council membership.

**Democracy Initiatives and the UN Democracy Fund** – This new program creates a mechanism for democracy promotion and civil society assistance through grants to governmental and non-governmental organizations<sup>13</sup> [13] . The U.S. government believes this program should continue to gain more support from the UN.

**Comprehensive Convention on Terrorism** – The United States feels very strongly about this aspect of reform in light of the terrorist attacks in New York City and Washington , DC on September 11, 2001 . Any comprehensive reform package supported by the United States would include a CCT.

**Development** – The U.S. proposes increased UN encouragement of the promotion of good governance and liberal economic policies in developing countries.

**UN Security Council Reform** – Overall effectiveness of the UNSC is of the utmost importance for the U.S. government, and forms the basis of their opinion regarding any sort of reform of the council. The Bush Administration stresses the importance of a sound human rights and counterterrorism record as a prerequisite for any new member

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<sup>13</sup> [13] “ United States Lists Seven Priorities for U.N. Reform, September 9, 2005 .” U.S. Department of State, Bureau of International Organization Affairs. Fact Sheet. September 9, 2005 . Information Resource Center , Embassy of the United States of America , Madrid , Spain .

of the UNSC, but does not believe that any of the P5 should be removed from the Security Council despite less than perfect records, as some have remarked of China . The United States Department of State issued the following statement in 2005 expressing the administration's position:

*The United States is open to UN Security Council reform and expansion, as one element of an overall agenda for UN reform. We advocate a criteria-based approach under which potential members must be supremely well qualified, based on factors such as: economic size, population, military capacity, commitment to democracy and human rights, financial contributions to the UN, contributions to UN peacekeeping, and record on counterterrorism and non-proliferation. We have to look, of course, at the overall geographic balance of the Council, but effectiveness remains the benchmark for any reform.*

Bureau of Public Affairs, June 20, 2005<sup>14</sup> [14]

The State Department has clearly expressed that the United States is open to Security Council reform and expansion including potentially 2 or 3 new permanent members and 2 or 3 non permanent members. Specifically, the U.S. has expressed its support for immediate inclusion of Japan as a permanent member of the Security Council. The government is also open to the consideration of more long-term renewable seats<sup>15</sup> [15] . However, the U.S. government continues to push for overall reform of the UN, not just of the Security Council. They have attempted to discourage other members of the UNSC and the General Assembly from solely focusing on the UNSC as the point of reform. In order to improve the efficiency and legitimacy of the UN, reform must not be isolated to one institution within the overall organization. The U.S. reform proposal is a comprehensive one that includes the above topics of management and economic

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14 [14] "[U.S. Priorities for a Stronger, More Effective United Nations](http://www.state.gov/r/pa/scp/2005/48332.htm)", U.S. Department of State, 20 June 2005. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/scp/2005/48332.htm>

15 [15] Ambassador Anne W. Patterson, <http://usinfo.state.gov/dhr/Archive/2005/Jun/24-466269.html>. USUN PRESS  
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development, terrorism and peace building efforts, human rights and the prevention of WMD proliferation<sup>16</sup> [16] . U.S. reluctance to focus on UNSC reform without addressing other areas of importance could significantly hamper the attempts of other nations to reform the council unless they are willing to accept the conditions of the United States.

#### **4. Looking Toward the Future**

Internal divisions within the European Union, headed by Germany in one camp and Italy in the other, combined with the strict conditions on U.S. reform proposals and a general distrust of the UNSC on the part of members in the developing world, have significantly hamstrung not only UN reform efforts but the organization's effectiveness. As long as domestic politics constrain the abilities of the United States and EU member countries from sincerely committing to UNSC reform, and UN reform on the whole, such divisions will likely continue to plague an attempt at meaningful reform.

The European Union has traditionally been more supportive of international organizations than the United States , but the disagreements over Security Council reform, specifically over a potential German seat, have reduced the EU's ability to use that support to empower reform efforts. If the EU has a joint foreign and security policy, it would make sense for the body to have a joint EU seat on the Security Council.<sup>17</sup> [17] However, that would require serious discussions at the EU level between the current permanent UNSC members, France and Great Britain , and the rest of the member states on how the EU wants to represent itself at the UN in the most effective manner possible. In order for true UNSC reform to occur, the EU must first decide how it wants to present itself to the international community, and just how joint their foreign and security policy views really are.

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<sup>16</sup> [16] *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> [17] Benner, Thorster and Edward C. Luck, "The US and the EU at the UN: Making the Most of the Ban Years." *Transatlantic Thinkers*. 2007: Bertelsmann Stiftung.

The United States , for their part, needs to publicly show more faith in the organization. This includes active commitment to peacekeeping operations and more transparency in their dealings with the UN. As many in the developing world already doubt U.S. commitment to reform that does not ultimately strengthen the U.S. role in the UN, in order for U.S. reform proposals to resonate positively throughout the organization, the U.S. must demonstrate a stronger desire for the success and effectiveness of the UN<sup>18</sup> [18] . The U.S. focus on reforming all areas of the UN, especially management and efficiency, is vital for successful reform implementation. Joint reform efforts throughout the organization must also include a more demographically representative Security Council, that continues to take in account military and economic power and a strong human rights record.

Ultimately, reform at the Security Council level only is a small step toward UN reform, and does not fix the overall problems of the organization. Distrust, lack of legitimacy of members and the organization itself, and a perceived, if not actual, lack of democracy in the Security Council require that reform reaches a higher level than the current 15-member body. While disagreements exist between and within the European Union, the United States , and the developing world, true UN reform will be difficult to achieve. If UN reform is the ultimate goal, the major powers and those in the developing world need to put aside the mantra of, “let’s agree to disagree” and seriously commit to resolving internal disputes so the United Nations can regain the effectiveness and legitimacy that it was designed to have.

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18 [18] *Ibid.*

For more information on the United States position on U.N. Reform:

- <http://www.usunnewyork.usmission.gov/index.htm>
- <http://www.usunnewyork.usmission.gov/reform-un.htm>
- <http://www.state.gov/p/io/c15031.htm>
- [http://usinfo.state.gov/is/international\\_security/UNGA\\_2005.html](http://usinfo.state.gov/is/international_security/UNGA_2005.html)

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