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“If It Ain’t Broke, Don’t Fix It”?: Analyzing the Politics of the UN Security Council and The Viability of the Group of Four’s Proposal for Reform

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**“If It Ain’t Broke, Don’t Fix It”?: Analyzing the Politics of the UN Security Council
and The Viability of the Group of Four’s Proposal for Reform**

An Honors Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Honors in
Political Science.

By
Marissa McOmber

Under the mentorship of Dr. Barry Balleck

ABSTRACT

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC)’s mandate gives it the unique authority to maintain international peace and security. Made up of ten nonpermanent rotating and five permanent Member States (P5), the UNSC gives this decision making power to less than eight percent of the Member States of the UN at a time, five of whom never change. It has long been argued that the P5 represent a power distribution of the world as it existed in 1945, directly after World War II, and has not kept up with changing membership and power dynamics. This paper analyzes the history of the Council, efforts for its reform, and the legitimacy of the body as a whole by looking at Brazil’s bid for permanent representation through the Group of Four’s proposal.

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Introduction

The premier organ of the United Nations (UN) charged with ensuring international peace and security is the Security Council. Created in 1945, the Security Council (UNSC)'s membership is composed of ten nonpermanent, rotating Member States from all regions of the world which are nominated by their regional organizations and elected by the General Assembly (GA) every two years. The arguably more important aspect of the Council, however, is the Permanent Five (P5) members: the People's Republic of China, France, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (UK), and the United States of America (USA). These countries' seats are guaranteed in the Charter, which provides each with a veto on any substantive issue before the Council. This permanent representation and veto power has been called into question throughout the body's existence, yet reform has only occurred once, in 1966.

The permanent representatives, many States argue, represent an outdated depiction of the distribution of power across the globe as it was immediately following WWII. This antiquated power structure has led to calls for reform from notable individuals and States alike. Former Secretary-General Kofi Annan claimed that "we have not yet achieved the sweeping and fundamental reform that I and many others believe is required [...] I urge you... to have patience to persevere, and the vision needed to forge a real consensus," in his 2005 speech to the UN General Assembly (GA) in which he introduced his plans for reform.¹ Additionally, growing international powers

¹ "Kofi Annan urges bold UN reform," British Broadcasting Corporation, September 15, 2005, accessed December 15, 2014, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/4245924.stm>

and allies of the P5 are publically confirming a preference for regional action over UNSC decisions involving peacekeeping and the use of force. The United States recognizes these debates as problematic, noting that while it is unlikely that Member States which are dissatisfied would launch a “full-scale assault on the UNSC’s legitimacy and seek to undermine its role,” it is not unreasonable to think that those States who desire representation and are not granted it could “reduce their investments in – and diplomatic support for – the institution, depriving the UNSC of needed capabilities and its overall effectiveness.”²

However, the P5 have historically denied the need for formal reform of the Council. In 1991, a US delegate to the UN said “it ain’t broke – don’t fix it” when asked about UNSC reform.³ Because a change to the Council would require passing votes in both the GA and UNSC, acquiescence by all P5 States would be necessary to avoid a veto which would stop any chance of reform. Yet the P5 often hold very different or even opposing ideological views of the United Nations and its function. Therefore, managing to meet the desires of each permanent member of the Council as well as the majority of the General Assembly is a major undertaking.

In order for the Security Council to maintain its ability to influence international peace and security and move forward with other reform movements related to mission fulfillment, it is essential that the global community continue to see the body as legitimate. This legitimacy is most often discussed as a function of membership. The United Nations is being afforded a valuable opportunity through formal reform to make

² McDonald, Kara C., and Stewart M. Patrick. "UN Security Council Enlargement and U.S. Interests." *US Council on Foreign Relations* (December 2010): 10.

³ David L. Bosco, *Five to Rule Them All: The UN Security Council and the Making of the Modern World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 204.

great strides in enhancing its legitimacy. This study provides insight as to the future possibility of reform and expansion of the most powerful international organization in the world.

History of the United Nations and its Reform

At the United Nations' creation in 1945, the Security Council was intended to be the most powerful international body, charged with the "maintenance of international peace and security" and was made up of eleven States from around the world.⁴ Of these eleven States, the five most powerful held permanent seats on the Council as well as a substantive veto on any resolution which interfered with particular foreign policies or views of the purpose of the body. These five States – China, France, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America – represented the power structure of the world at the end of the Second World War. Indeed, these five States were the first to develop nuclear weapons, starting with the United States during the war and ending with China's development of nuclear capabilities in 1964.⁵

However, the world has a vastly different composition than it did in 1945 and many experts question the legitimacy of the United Nations, particularly that of the Security Council, which maintains the authority to deploy military forces, instate sanctions, and generally impose its will upon the world. Only 65 sovereign States existed before the Second World War.⁶ After the war, the world entered a period of rapid State development as a result of a movement toward decolonization. Before the end of the Cold

⁴ United Nations, *Charter of the United Nations*, 24 October 1945, 1 UNTS XVI.

⁵ John Wilson Lewis and Xue Litai, *China Builds the Bomb* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1988).

⁶ "Field Listing: Independence," Central Intelligence Agency, accessed March 14, 2015, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2088.html>. Data compiled by author.

War, another 95 States declared their independence.⁷ Finally, since the breakup of the Soviet Union, there have been 27 additional independent States recognized by the international community.⁸

Clearly, the Charter of the United Nations was written before the population of sovereign States more than tripled, yet very few modifications to the body's founding document have occurred. In fact, only four Articles of the Charter have been amended since 1945. The most recent amendment of the UN Charter occurred in 1973, enlarging the membership of the Economic and Social Council from 27 to 54 Member States.⁹

The only formal expansion of the UNSC was its enlargement in 1966, increasing the amount of nonpermanent seats in the Council from six to ten.¹⁰ However, there has been little change to the structure of the Council or its permanent membership. China's representation changed in 1971 after the split between the People's Republic of China and what is now known as Taiwan.¹¹ Additionally, Russia has held the seat which was reserved for the Soviet Union since the breakup of the USSR since 1991.¹² These changes, though highly political, did not meaningfully change the power structure in the Council as the replacements simply reflected the new reality of the original charter.

Though UNSC membership is one of the major aspects of the Council of any discussion of United Nations reform, it is not the only one. Other topics brought to these conversations include transparency, accountability, integrity, efficiency and flexibility in

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ UN Charter, Introductory Note.

¹⁰ David Bosco, *Five to Rule Them All*, 202.

¹¹ Servicios de Investigación y Análisis, Consejo de Seguridad de Naciones Unidas, by Alma Arámbula Reyes and Gabriel Mario Santos Villarreal, SPE-ISS-03-08 (México, DF: Centro de Documentación, Información, y Análisis, 2008), 14.

¹² Ibid.

order to “deliver results to those most in need, do more with what we have and strengthen accountability.”¹³ These goals are related to the operation of the organization rather than the membership itself and, though all reform issues are interrelated, are often separate discussions. It is, however, important to understand reform priorities as a whole to understand the context of discussions of reform through membership modifications.

¹³ “Strengthening The UN,” United Nations, accessed March 28, 2015, <http://www.un.org/en/strengtheningtheun/>.

Literature Review

Scholars have recognized the importance of reform in both the Security Council's structure and its operations. However, there is debate on how this reform could happen and the limits to potential reform of the body. These limitations are both structural and political and seriously constrain the international community's ability to reform the body. The following scholars have explored the body's membership, legitimacy, and reform plans. This literature discusses both the Council itself and the concept of legitimacy.

The United Nations' History of Expansion

In his 2009 analysis of the Security Council's history and development, David Bosco of American University conducted a deep study of the Council's purpose and outlook moving forward into the 21st century. Bosco claims the 1966 expansion of the Council was a response to threats by a large section of the General Assembly, including those associated with the nonaligned movement, to fill the nonpermanent Council seats with States who would be hostile to the P5 and their interests.¹⁴ The 1966 addition of four nonpermanent seats provided precedence of reform which may be more dramatic. Malaysia was named the GA's president in 1996 and declared that UN reform would be a major priority of the organization; in his speech to accept the yearlong term, Razali Ismael declared that the "whole history of the UN... leading on to the sorry state it is in now, has been that it is used by the major powers" in an appeal to the UN to seriously tackle reform during his term.

¹⁴ David Bosco, *Five to Rule Them All*, 101.

As discussions of reform began, Germany, Japan, India, Brazil, Indonesia, Egypt, Nigeria, and South Africa all voiced a desire to be considered as a potential new permanent member in the Council.¹⁵ The desire for increased permanent representation, especially in regions which were currently unrepresented such as Latin America and Africa, was not a new concept. Even Franklin D. Roosevelt saw a need for more holistic representation in the Council in 1945 when he suggested Brazil have a permanent seat in addition to the existing P5.¹⁶ Regardless of the iteration and combination of States proposed for additional representation, it is clear that the system as it exists is imperfect.

Legitimacy within International Organizations

In *Legitimizing International Organizations*, Dominik Zaum explores the concept of legitimacy in the international sphere and has determined that there are three main reasons why this study is important. The first of these reasons is recognizing and understanding the importance of hierarchy. The hierarchy Zaum speaks of explains how States view themselves in international politics and how they view the recommendations and pressures from non-state actors such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and inter-governmental organizations (IGOs).¹⁷ The second reason is the increased presence of international organizations in the formation of domestic policy. This increased presence constrains States in their development of domestic policies and actions.¹⁸ After Westphalia, the idea of international influence on domestic action is unexpected and complicated. Although, as international organizations such as the UN gain legitimacy and people begin to see themselves as global citizens rather than simply citizens of their

¹⁵ Ibid., 202

¹⁶ Ibid., 203.

¹⁷ Zaum, Dominik. *Legitimizing International Organizations*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

¹⁸ Ibid.

respective states, the global arena has more importance and influence which must be heeded. The third reason is that rapid social evolution has created gaps in legitimacy of international organizations who struggle to keep up with changing social norms and ideas.¹⁹

Zaum specifically discusses the legitimation of the Security Council in this book and analyzes the efforts of the Council itself as well as the individual States which serve on the Council permanently or on a rotating basis as well as States who are simply general members of the United Nations General Assembly. Zaum sees the process of legitimizing the Council as needing improvement in the areas of efficiency in responding to crises, reducing tensions between Member States of the Council, and reconciling the differences in expectations of the Council that different individuals and states may have.²⁰

Terrance Chapman sees the legitimacy of international organizations (IOs) such as the UNSC as coming, in part, from public opinion. Governments have typically felt constrained by public opinion in developing domestic policy. However, Chapman asserts that states which abide by international guidelines and act multilaterally actually experience public opinion benefits.²¹ These benefits come from a perceived advantage to acting in concert with other states. Chapman analyzed public opinion in P5 states, specifically the United States, during military actions taken by the country. The results of this analysis found that when US military actions were taken in conjunction with a UN Security Council resolution, the president's approval ratings rose much more than when

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Terrance L. Chapman, "Audience Beliefs and International Organization Legitimacy,." *International Organization* 63, no. 4 (2009): 733-64.

military operations took place without UN support.²² This suggests that there is a level of legitimacy of the United Nations, specifically the Security Council, which extends to support of the organization's actions.²³

Major Existing Plans for Reform

The Razali Plan, according to Brian Cox, was the “first comprehensive reform plan produced” by the Open-Ended Working Group which convened in 1992 with A/RES/47/62.²⁴ The Razali Plan, now a historical one, proposed adding both permanent and non-permanent seats in a combination of developed and developing States to the Council in the form of permanent seats for developing Member States from Africa, Asia, and Latin America and two “industrialized states” from any region.²⁵ These five permanent Member States would also come with four non-permanent seats from each of the following regions: Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, and Latin America and the Caribbean.²⁶ Razali's plan was one of the first to create a tangible plan for reform, though it failed to address more contentious aspects of reform, including the veto and term limits. Regardless of this, Razali's term as GA president brought UN reform, and that of the Security Council, to the forefront of minds across the world and planted the seed for the reform of the body to be a topic of discussion on the UN's agenda.

After the 1990s, the next major push for reform came from UN Secretary General Kofi Annan in 2003. Annan produced a high-level report once again calling for reform

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Cox, Brian. "United Nations Security Council Reform: Collected Proposals and Possible Consequences." *South Carolina Journal of International Law and Business* 6, no. 1 (September 1, 2009): 103.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid., 104.

which provided readers with two separate proposals for reform: Model A and Model B.²⁷ Model A proposed the addition of six permanent and three non-permanent seats to the Council. The permanent seats, added without a veto, would consist of “two for Africa; two for Asia; one for Europe; and one for the Americas.”²⁸ This model did not, however, specifically determine which countries in the aforementioned regions should fill regional seats. Model B, on the other hand, simply sought to add nine non-permanent seats to the Council, though these additional seats would differ from existing rotating seats.²⁹ Annan’s Model B would create four-year rotating seats which would be immediately eligible for reelection. In contrast, the existing seats have two year terms which do not provide the possibility for reelection immediately following a term.

Annan’s report did not specifically name Member States to be considered for representation. These Models were more specific than other plans which existed at the time, however, in that he provided suggestions for the qualifications for representation. Annan suggested Member States “among the top three financial contributors” or “the top three troop contributors from their regional area to United Nations peacekeeping missions.”³⁰

This suggestion may have provided inspiration to the next major proposal for reform. The Group of Four (G4) consists of Brazil, Germany, India, and Japan who support each other’s bid for permanent representation on the Council. These four States additionally support the addition of two permanent seats to be provided to Africa and named by the African region. Interestingly, if Annan’s suggestion were to be

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid. 105.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ *High Level Panel Report note 100*

implemented, it may very well look like such a proposal. Brazil is the top contributor to the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and India is the third largest DPKO contributor in the world while Germany is the third largest financial contributor to the UN and Japan the second.³¹ These provide justifications to the international community which many consider difficult to dispute.

This is not to say, however, that the Group of Four Proposal is without critics. The most vocal of these critical States have formed together to create the Uniting for Consensus group, also known as the Coffee Club. These States, including Italy, Argentina, Mexico, Canada, Pakistan, and the Republic of Korea, favor reform similar to Annan's Model B. Rather than adding permanent representation to the Council, the Uniting for Consensus group would add ten regional, non-permanent seats. These additions would allow regional groups to find greater representation without giving States permanent seats which may hinder swift decision-making. Many of the Uniting for Consensus group and its allies additionally see the G4 as problematic in their own right. This has created tensions between the two groups which have yet to be solved.

While most plans for reform recognize the need for African representation, few determine what such representation should look like and none include African States as collaborators in finding a solution. The Ezulwini Consensus is the African response to such disparity. The Ezulwini Consensus would expand the Council to 26 – the largest proposed addition. The 11 additions to the Council would include “two permanent and two non-permanent states from Africa; two permanent and one non-permanent state from Asia; one non-permanent Eastern Europe State; one permanent and one non-permanent

³¹ United Nations Peacekeeping, Troop and Police Contributors.

state from Latin America and the Caribbean; and one permanent seat from Western Europe and other states” with permanent Member States being selected from their own respective regional groups.³² The Ezulwini plan is unique in that it is one of the only recent proposals which still seeks to provide a veto to new permanent members.

Obstacles to Council Reform

Ian Hurd aptly notes that “Council reform proposals often look transparently political and self-serving” when discussing opponents to various reform proposals.³³ It can be difficult to distinguish between proposals brought forth as the best possible solution to UNSC deficiencies and self-interested opportunities for national advancement. Hurd sees Italy’s resistance to German representation as “entirely predictable.”³⁴ Additionally, Hurd argues that the argument of legitimacy is a false one. As Hurd sees it, ‘legitimacy’ is a term often used by the international community when discussing UNSC reform without true understanding of what an illegitimate Council would look like. If the Council were truly lacking legitimacy in its current form, Hurd argues, its decisions would not be respected and States would not show a desire to be involved in the body. The lively debates on which States deserve representation seem to confirm the legitimacy of the body.

Additionally, the very nature of the Security Council was to have a small number of States confer to make urgent decisions efficiently. Adding seats to the Council could prove detrimental to the body’s very functioning. Bosco asserts that “at fifteen members, the council is already close to its maximum effective capacity,” referencing the

³² Ibid., 109.

³³ Hurd, 200.

³⁴ Ibid.

unproductive nature of the Council when its sessions focus on speech-making rather than policy and action.³⁵ However, Bosco seems to acknowledge that the body's legitimacy would improve with the addition of new members. Bosco concedes that expansion would bestow legitimacy on the Council, though the value of such legitimacy may be counteracted by the impact expansion might have on the speed of decisions reached.

³⁵ Five to Rule Them All, 256.

Theory

In order to argue that the Group of Four (G4)'s plan is too controversial to pass and Brazil's bid, while compelling, is not strong enough to convince the global community or the P5, I will critically examine the viewpoint that the council 'ain't broke' and determine if there is a chance at reform, specifically through the addition of Brazil as a permanent member of the Council. While reform seems more likely than ever before, due to increased rhetoric of reform and pressure on the P5 by other Member States, the structure and politics of the Council and the international system in general will likely block the G4's proposal, and that of any other group, in the foreseeable future.

How does the Charter allow for structural reform of the Security Council and how would the veto impact such reform? This theory analysis will discuss the history of the veto's inclusion in the Charter and its use, as well as more details about organizational legitimacy and its connection to the Security Council's membership. A more concrete discussion of a reform plan, specifically that proposed by the Group of Four, will use this theory to frame the argument that Brazil will not be added as a permanent member of the Council.

Organizational Membership and Legitimacy

International actors experience both freedom and limitations due to the structure of the international system. Unlike the situation within individual states, there is no overarching international government in the anarchic global system. States are sovereign entities with control of their own territories and no intrinsic connection to other states. This means decisions are difficult to enforce and authority is not inherent, but earned.

This lack of legal authority means international organizations must develop a sense of legitimacy to members which have no legal obligation to continue to abide by the organization's guidelines and decisions. This legitimation is important in maintaining peace in the international system itself.

At one point in time, legitimacy simply referred to military strength of a government and its ability to maintain a monopoly of use of force within the state's borders.³⁶ The Treaty of Westphalia, which granted states sovereignty over their territory and people, has been expanded upon since its coming into effect in 1648. Instead of simply referring to military strength and monopoly of force, legitimacy now refers to a social buy-in from citizens, other states, and non-governmental organizations. This legitimacy can still apply to a state but can also apply to organizations. In the case of the Security Council's legitimacy, one must question whether States Council and the United Nations as a whole, whether the Member States of the organization go to the Council or surpass it, and if the Council carries out its mandate.

The League of Nations, which was the predecessor to the United Nations, was an attempt to create an organization of States which would ensure collective security after World War I. However, the organization failed to do so and was officially disbanded in 1946 after the end of the Second World War. One of the major factors of the League of Nations' demise was its membership. The legitimacy of the body was seriously undermined because not all of the world's major actors were party to the League. Without key players such as the United States, decisions the League made lacked the

³⁶ Max Weber, *Politics As a Vocation*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1965).

weight of international consensus and were easily ignored by the international community.

The Security Council's Membership and the Question of Legitimacy

Any body's legitimacy comes, in part, from its membership. As international power continues to shift between countries, the Security Council risks losing its perceived legitimacy and, therefore, authority if the membership of the Council does not change to reflect that shifting power. Because the world is an anarchic system, the only binding force committing States to Security Council decisions is the perceived authority of the body. The Council in its current formation and make-up risks being perceived as the P5 enacting their will upon States who are not given representation despite large financial contributions, regional power, or cultural influence. Losing legitimacy would be disastrous for the Security Council and the United Nations as a whole. The United Nations' Charter tasks the organization with maintaining international peace and security and the Council is at the heart of this mandate. Without the enforcement of the Council, the entire organization is at risk of falling apart, as was the case with the League of Nations. As a British diplomat noted in 1923 when discussing the League of Nations' true value, "the strongest weapon we have is the weapon of public opinion."³⁷ Public opinion was not in support of the Council around the world, and the League's failed legacy provides a clear demonstration to the international community of the value and necessity of legitimacy in the eyes of all States in the world, not simply some of the most powerful.

³⁷ David Bosco, *Five to Rule Them All*, 11.

The United Nations has been more successful at guaranteeing the participation of the most powerful States, and it did so by providing those who were most powerful at the inception of the UN a veto in the body's most powerful organ – the Security Council. Yet that power distribution has shifted since 1945 without such changes reflected in the UNSC. The United Nations Security Council is a very public example of an organization whose membership comes into question during discussions of legitimacy. Any organization needs to be able to justify its inequalities in membership in order to maintain legitimacy and trust in the eyes of its members. Because of the Security Council's unique authority to impact international security, it is essential for the States of the world to continue to see the Council as legitimate in order to avoid the fate of the League of Nations.

Understanding the Veto and Its Use

The veto has been a point of contention in most discussions of reform of the Council. It is essential to understand the frequency of the use of veto power in order to fully appreciate the calls for reform from around the world. There have been twenty five vetoes in the past fifteen years: 9 of these were cast by the Russian Federation, five by China, and 11 by the United States.³⁸ No vetoes have been cast by either France or the United Kingdom in this time period. In fact, both France and the UK's most recent vetoes were cast in 1989 on the topic of the situation in Panama.³⁹

Twenty-five vetoes in fifteen years is, however, a drastic decrease from veto use in the early years of the organization. By the United Nations' tenth anniversary, 79 vetoes

³⁸ Dag Hammarskjöld Library Research Guides, Veto List in Reverse Chronological Order, updated April 3, 2015, <http://research.un.org/en/docs/sc/quick>. Data compiled by author.

³⁹ Ibid.

had been cast, 77 of which were from the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union cast its 100th veto in the Security Council in June of 1962, just seventeen years after the Council's inception.⁴⁰ Such excessive veto use can be attributed in large part to the Cold War; Richard Hiscocks describes the Soviet veto use during this time period as “without restraint and sometimes little wisdom, but their action was hardly more culpable than the obvious satisfaction of the United States in using the UN as an instrument of Western policy.”⁴¹

While this unfettered use of veto power seriously slowed down following the end of the Cold War, it seems to have drastically affected the world's opinion of the veto entirely. As Bosco notes, the veto was intended to be a “safety valve” to protect only the most vital national interests and objectives, rather than a way to force the Council's hand on a wide variety of resolutions. The use of the veto is often seen to be a self-interested power of the elite P5 which prevents necessary action the Council is mandated to take by the Charter. However, it is more than unlikely that any reform including additional veto-holding seats would ever pass through the Security Council without a veto from any of the existing P5. A single veto to a reform proposal would effectively kill the bid and result in no change to the Council's composition. Therefore, any reform plan needs to both have the support of a super-majority of the General Assembly as well as the outright support of each permanent member.

There are many, however, who dispute the radical nature of the veto entirely. Mingst and Karns note that the ratification of the UN Charter which included the veto in

⁴⁰ Hiscocks, Richard, *The Security Council: A Study in Adolescence* (New York, Free Press, 2007).

⁴¹ Ibid.

1945 was a resignation to the UN's limitations and an understanding that the body could not realistically carry out enforcement against the UN's most powerful members who were, at the time, the P5.⁴² There is a general understanding in the international community that any UNSC reform proposal will not address the veto. A high level panel held in 2005 called for a complete review of Security Council membership and structure to be completed in 2020, which could make decisions for a formal recommendation on reform measures.⁴³

Despite reform being seriously needed, I argue that it is unlikely due to structural constraints within the Council and the GA. Even a state whose membership would increase the legitimacy of the body, such as Brazil, will not gain the support of the P5 and be able to overcome such obstacles to admission, because of the veto and disagreements within regions as to which State should gain permanent representation on the Council. The P5 have a wide range of opinions and policies regarding UNSC reform and will not come to an agreement on such an issue in order to avoid a single veto. Additionally, there is not a consensus within the GA which would allow for a proposal to come to a vote and reach the necessary two-thirds majority. Ultimately, reform is best to occur through operational rather than structural means.

⁴² The United Nations in the 21st Century, pg. 32

⁴³ Center for UN Reform pg. 2

<http://www.centerforunreform.org/sites/default/files/Special%20Paper%20No.%204.pdf>

Research Design

One of the reform proposals with the most traction is that proposed by the Group of Four (G4). This group consists of Brazil, Germany, India, and Japan and is an agreement to support each other country's bid for permanent representation on the Security Council. The G4 also supports the addition of two permanent seats to be given to African States, though there is no consensus regarding which two States would be given such representation. The G4 proposal, initially brought to the UN in 2004, has both been revised and refined and seen extensive discussion in the international arena. Because the G4 has one of the clearest proposals for reform with significant support, it will be used to analyze the politics and likelihood of reform.

However, to conduct an in-depth analysis of the G4 proposal for permanent seats to the Security Council, this paper will focus on a case study of Brazil, the only G4 member in the Western Hemisphere. Brazil is often seen as the least controversial member of the G4, and as such, analyzing its candidacy is an interesting endeavor. Germany's bid is hotly contested by Italy as well as countries which see the possibility of a third Western European seat as problematic. India, though recently endorsed by the United States, is not a signatory of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) and therefore has opponents who find its lack of participation in one of the world's most important security agreements concerning.⁴⁴ Additionally, Pakistan and its allies are staunchly opposed to India's accession to permanent status on the Council. Finally, Japan has clear opponent in China and the Republic of Korea; though Japan's influence in global politics is obvious, its challenge by a member of the P5 makes its permanent

⁴⁴ Bosco, Foreign Policy

representation unlikely. While there are certainly opponents to Brazil's candidacy, and weaknesses in its proposal, Brazil has the least obvious obstacles to its bid, making the study both interesting and enlightening about this possibility for reform.

In conducting this case study, I will look at the main arguments for Brazil's addition to the Council in a permanent capacity, analyze Brazil's contributions to the UN and its influence regionally and internationally, and break down the arguments against the bid by Brazil's strongest opponents. Brazil's financial contributions to the United Nations' operating budget, contributions of personnel and technology to UN peacekeeping, its participation in major international alliances and organizations, and its perception in Latin America are all major factors impacting its proposal. I will also look at the viewpoint of each P5 Member State on the question of Brazil; because reform must have the support of each P5 State in order to not be vetoed, the viewpoints of China, France, the Russian Federation, United Kingdom, and United States are of paramount importance.

Case Study: Brazil

The Case of Brazil

Brazil's inclusion in the G4 is an attempt to give Latin America permanent representation on the Council. However, does Brazil truly represent the interests of Latin America and have the support of the region? Additionally, does Brazil – a Portuguese rather than Spanish-speaking developing State – have the international power to justify its inclusion in the G4 proposal? Former President of Brazil Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva publicly called for reform in 2008 at the United Nations, declaring “The United Nations has spent 15 years discussing the reform of its Security Council. Today’s structure has been frozen for six decades and does not relate to the challenges of today’s world. Its distorted form of representation stands between us and the multilateral world to which we aspire. Therefore I am much encouraged by the General Assembly’s decision to launch negotiations in the near future on the reform of the Security Council.”⁴⁵

Brazil is the fifth largest country in the world and largest in South America, in terms of both territory held and population.⁴⁶ Additionally, Brazil’s economy is rapidly expanding and it was one of the first major international players to recover from the 2008 recession. Brazil’s aspiration for a permanent seat on the Security Council is related to these facts and there are three main tenets to Brazil’s claim to permanent representation in the Council: its financial contributions to the UN’s operating budget, contributions of personnel to UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (UNDPKO) missions, and

⁴⁵ Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva. "Statement by H.E. Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, President of Brazil." Statement to the UN General Assembly, New York City, New York, September 23, 2008.

⁴⁶ The World Factbook 2013-14. Washington, DC: Central Intelligence Agency, 2013 .

membership in notable alliance groups. These three factors, according to Brazil, place the country in a unique position to deserve permanent representation in the Council.

Brazil's Financial Contributions to the UN Operating Budget

Questions about the legitimacy of the P5 in the Security Council often include discussion of the body's finances, as some States associate a financial contribution with being deserving of additional power or representation in the UN. The United States is clearly the largest contributor to the UN's operating budget, providing about 22% of the organization's money.⁴⁷ However, the second and third highest contributors, Japan and Germany respectively, do not hold permanent representation on the Council.⁴⁸ The United Kingdom is the fourth highest contributor at 6.604% and France is the fifth at 6.123%.⁴⁹ China and Russia contribute significantly less and are the eighth and fifteenth largest contributors, respectively, each providing less than 2% of the budget of the United Nations.⁵⁰ Many states question why the power of the veto is not accompanied by a significant fiduciary responsibility to the organization.

Brazil boasts the seventh largest economy in the world according to the International Monetary Fund with a GDP of \$2.24 trillion USD.⁵¹ Brazil also contributed 2.934% of the United Nations' working budget in 2014, making it the 10th largest contributor of the UN's 193 Member States.⁵² This contribution was more than even

⁴⁷ "Assessment of Member States' contributions to the United Nations regular budget for 2013" (PDF). UN Secretariat. 11 February 2013. Retrieved 11 February 2013.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ "World Economic Outlook Database, October 2014." International Monetary Fund. October 2014.

⁵² Assessment of Member States' advances to the Working Capital Fund for the biennium 2014-2015 and contributions to the United Nations regular budget for 2014, ST/ADM/SER.B/889 (27 December 2013), available from undocs.org/ST/ADM/SER.B/889.

Russia's, though Russia is a permanent member of the Council. Certainly permanent seats on the Security Council should not be up for sale, but such major contributions, some argue, signify a deep commitment to the organization and its goals. Brazil's financial contributions to the United Nations have historically been some of the highest of any of the organization's members and have been in the top 15 for more than twenty years.⁵³

Brazilian Contributions to UN Peacekeeping Missions

Brazil has a long history with UN peacekeeping and is the 19th largest contributor of military and police personnel to UN operations, with 1,692 Brazilians actively deployed as of February 2015.⁵⁴ Brazil's contributions to peacekeeping personnel are higher than those of each P5 other than China, which contributes the 11th highest personnel contributions.⁵⁵ Though the P5 are required to pay a premium for peacekeeping missions due to the Security Council's ability to deploy troops, this clearly does not correlate with an equally high personnel contribution. France is the 32nd highest contributor with 920 peacekeepers, followed by the UK with 289 peacekeepers as the 51st highest contributor, USA the 66th with 119 deployed, and Russia as the 77th highest contributor with only 72 deployed peacekeepers.⁵⁶ Additionally, Brazil's contributions

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ranking of Military and Police Contributions to UN Operations, February 28, 2015, http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/contributors/2015/feb15_2.pdf.

⁵⁵ United Nations Peacekeeping, Troop and Police Contributors, <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/resources/statistics/contributors.shtml>.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

are the second highest of the G4, eclipsed only by India whose 8,116 peacekeepers make it the third highest contributor of any UN Member State to UN peacekeeping missions.⁵⁷

Brazilian peacekeeping personnel are currently engaged in ten of the sixteen active DPKO missions in the Western Sahara (MINURSO), Central African Republic (MINUSCA), Haiti (MINUSTAH), Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), Cyprus (UNFICYP), Lebanon (UNIFIL), Abyei Area of Sudan (UNISFA), Liberia (UNMIL), South Sudan (UNMISS), and Cote d'Ivoire (UNOCI).⁵⁸ Since 1956, Brazil has engaged in 46 of 65 UN peacekeeping missions and contributed a total of over 12,000 peacekeeping personnel around the world.⁵⁹ However, Santos and Cravo argue that Brazil's attitude toward peacekeeping changed after MINUSTAH in 2004 to be much more oriented toward leadership roles, favoring missions neither in Portuguese-speaking countries nor in countries directly related to Brazilian interests.⁶⁰ This shift away from non-interventionist policies coincided with a stronger push for UN reform as Brazil has actively pursued permanent representation in the UNSC.

Brazil as a Major International Player

Brazil is part of many notable international organizations and alliance groups in addition to the Group of Four. These international recognitions set Brazil in a position to significantly influence a vote for representation in its favor. This demonstrates not only

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ United Nations Peacekeeping, UN Mission's Contributions by Country, February 28, 2015, http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/contributors/2015/feb15_5.pdf.

⁵⁹ Rita Santos and Teresa Almeida Cravo, "Brazil's rising profile in United Nations peacekeeping operations since the end of the cold war," Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre, March 2014, http://www.peacebuilding.no/var/ezflow_site/storage/original/application/47c24376b182eb29154461520d5ba7e9.pdf

⁶⁰ Ibid.

Brazil's commitment to international leadership but the international community's willingness to collaborate with Brazil as well.

Brazil's membership and participation in international economic and political alliances has placed the country in a position of influence in both South America and the global arena. Some of these groups include the Group of Twenty (G20), the Group of Eight Plus Five (G8+5), *Mercado Común del Sur* (MERCOSUR), and the Group of Seventy-Seven. These groups are primarily focused on economics and development; Brazil's inclusion in such organizations shows its commitment to being a strong player in both the global economy and international politics.

Brazil was also recognized by economist Jim O'Neil in 2001 as one of four countries whose economy would eclipse those of the largest economies in the world (the G7) by 2050.⁶¹ These BRIC countries – Brazil, Russia, India, and China – are seen to have economies which are growing at an accelerated rate when compared to those of the G7. As time passes, many political scientists and economists argue that these four countries will have an unprecedented impact on both the global economy and international politics.

Brazil's Regional Opponents

Latin American news reports and studies provide insight as to Latin perceptions of Brazil as an international actor and representative of the region. Argentina is often seen as Brazil's strongest Latin opponent to the G4 plan for permanent representation.

Argentina is one of the founding members of the Uniting for Consensus (UfC)

⁶¹ O'Neill, Jim (30 November 2001). Building Better Global Economic BRICs, Global Economics Paper No: 66. Goldman Sachs.

movement, also known as the Coffee Club, in which Mexico, Colombia, and Costa Rica are also core members.⁶² This Latin American presence presents significant regional challenge to Brazil's desire to be seen as the sole permanent representative of the region to the Council.

It is, however, important to understand how Brazil is perceived in Latin America to determine whether Brazil truly represents the region's interests. Mexico and Argentina are often seen to be Brazil's largest competitors to permanent representation in the Council, and therefore their opinions on UNSC reform are likely to be taken with high regard by the international community.

The Mexican Center of Documentation, Information and Analysis outlined Mexico's stance on proposals for Security Council reform in 2008, specifically the plan put forward by the Group of Four. Mexico unequivocally opposes Brazil's bid for a permanent seat on the Security Council, advocating instead for the addition of ten nonpermanent rotating seats to the Council which would be assigned based on region.⁶³ This proposal, originally from the Coffee Club, would increase African and Latin American representation significantly without making changes to either the permanent members in the Council or the veto. The report discusses extreme frustration with the Council's current structure, calling the body an anachronism of the era after WWII which no longer reflects the landscape of power that currently exists in the international arena.⁶⁴ The report continues, affirming that while structural reform of the Security Council is

⁶² Global Policy Forum, Background on Security Council Reform, <https://www.globalpolicy.org/security-council/security-council-reform/current-information-and-documents.html>.

⁶³ Centro de Documentación, Información y Análisis Consejo de Seguridad de Naciones Unidas (2008).

⁶⁴ Ibid.

important, the most urgent area for improvement in the Council is in transparency and appropriately carrying out the Council's mandate.⁶⁵

Andrés Malamud, an Argentinian researcher, analyzed the Brazilian bid for permanent representation and Brazilian politics more generally, in *A Leader Without Followers? The Growing Divergence Between the Regional and Global Performance of Brazilian Foreign Policy*. Malamud argues that, though Brazil strongly desires to be considered a regional leader, its neighbors do not follow its direction in the way neighbors of more powerful States do.⁶⁶ Malamud considers leadership to be distinct from the concept of hegemony; while the latter is "the capacity of a powerful state to dictate policies to other states," the former is simply "the capacity to win and influence followers."⁶⁷ This leadership must therefore be accompanied by what Malamud calls "followership."⁶⁸ Malamud sees Brazil as a State which is considered a leader by States outside the region more often than by its own neighbors.

Malamud ultimately argues that this regional resistance means that if Brazil desires global leadership, it will need to achieve it without the support of the region.⁶⁹ This assessment seems to be similar to the policy of Argentina itself, as Argentina's participation in the Uniting for Consensus group demonstrates its opposition to Brazil's rise as a regional leader. While Argentina and Mexico are certainly the strongest and most vocal opponents to Brazil's bid for representation, Brazil maintains strong relations with the rest of the world and may not need the regions support, as Malamud argues.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Malamud, Andrés. "A Leader Without Followers? The Growing Divergence Between the Regional and Global Performance of Brazilian Foreign Policy." *Latin American Politics and Society* (2011): 1-24.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 3.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 20.

Findings

The Vote for Brazil in the Council and the General Assembly

In 2013, David Bosco analyzed how a vote for the G4 may turn out if it were ever brought to the Security Council. In this article, Bosco notes that disagreements between regional bodies in determining their own candidates may benefit the UNSC P5. Because such regional groups cannot come to agreements regarding which countries should be nominated to permanent membership to the Council, the P5 have the ability to seem to support reform without committing to a specific reform plan.⁷⁰ Until the General Assembly can develop a proposal which could garner two-thirds of the body's support, the Security Council will not need to vote on a proposal and will not be required to commit to their rhetoric.

Two thirds of the General Assembly in its current membership would be equivalent to 129 States. This means that any reform plan may only have a maximum of 64 votes against it in order for the plan to pass and therefore move to a vote in the Security Council. Unfortunately for the G4, 75 countries attended a Uniting for Consensus summit in 2009 in which alternatives to the G4 proposal were discussed.⁷¹ This shows, if not outright support for the Uniting for Consensus plan, at least broad support for an alternative plan to that of the G4. While the G4, UK, and France were not invited, China and Russia both sent high-level officials.⁷² Additionally, the United States participated in the summit as an observer.⁷³ While there is no guarantee that all 75

⁷⁰ Bosco, David. "The U.S.-Russia-China alliance on the Security Council." *Foreign Policy*, June 25, 2013.

⁷¹ "Italy hosts ministerial meeting on UNSC reform in Rome." *Japan Policy and Politics*, February 5, 2009.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Ibid.*

attendees of the summit would vote against a G4 proposal, there is a significant chance that the plan could not obtain the required 129 yes votes.

Bosco continues to build upon this separation between P5 members and their approach to UNSC reform, noting that the dynamics of the P5's discussions of formal reform show an interesting divide between France and the UK and China, Russia, and the United States.⁷⁴ The former seem to have committed to supporting specific reform plans while the latter have been less willing to support any one proposal, choosing instead to discuss broad, mission-fulfillment-based reform.

France has historically been the member of the P5 most supportive of formal reform of the Council. One of France's most recent statements to the UN on the subject of reform came in September 2009. Ambassador Gérard Araud stated that any reform "must take into account the emergence of new powers that possess the willingness to assume the responsibility of a permanent seat in the Security Council and that are, in line with the United Nations Charter, able to make a significant contribution to the Council's actions in the maintenance of international peace and security. In this respect, we support the accession of Germany, Brazil, India and Japan to permanent member status."⁷⁵ The United Kingdom is also publicly supportive of formal reform to the Council. In November 2014, the UK clearly stated its position in a speech to the General Assembly, telling the committee, "You are all familiar with the United Kingdom's position on Security Council reform. It has not changed. The United Kingdom supports new

⁷⁴ David Bosco, "The U.S.-Russia-China alliance on the Security Council."

⁷⁵ <https://www.globalpolicy.org/security-council/security-council-as-an-institution/48098.html>

permanent seats for Brazil, Germany, India and Japan, alongside permanent African representation. We also support a modest expansion in non-permanent seats.”⁷⁶

The United States, China, and Russia have been less clear in their desires for UNSC reform. While the United States has recently increased its rhetoric in favor of reform, these statements have not been met with tangible support for any reform plan. In 2009, US Ambassador to the UN Susan Rice stated that

“The United States believes that the long-term legitimacy and viability of the United Nations Security Council depends on its reflecting the world of the 21st century. As such, we will make a serious, deliberate effort, working with partners and allies, to find a way forward that enhances the ability of the Security Council to carry out its mandate and effectively meet the challenges of the new century... I would also note that we support expansion of the Security Council in a way that will not diminish its effectiveness or its efficiency. And finally, the United States will take into account the ability of countries to contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security, and the other purposes of the United Nations.”⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Sir Mark Lyall Grant, “Security Council reform: The UK supports new permanent seats for Brazil, Germany, India and Japan, alongside permanent African representation,” General Assembly, New York City, New York, November 12, 2014, <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/security-council-reform-the-uk-supports-new-permanent-seats-for-brazil-germany-india-and-japan-alongside-permanent-african-representation>.

⁷⁷ Susan E. Rice, “Statement by Ambassador Susan E. Rice, U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations, at an Informal Meeting of the General Assembly on Security Council Reform,” General Assembly, New York City, New York, February 19, 2009, <https://www.globalpolicy.org/security-council/security-council-reform/50009-statement-by-ambassador-susan-e-rice-us-permanent-representative-to-the-united-nations-at-an-informal-meeting-of-the-general-assembly-on-security-council-reform.html>

Ultimately, a vote for Brazil through the G4 would not pass without a veto in the current political climate. The G4 position requires Brazil, Germany, India, and Japan to support each other's bids, and the proposal for one would not come to the attention of the Council without that of the other three G4 members. Yet China would immediately veto any proposal containing Japan in the existing political climate. Therefore, without a serious change of policy on the part of China, Russia, and the United States, the G4 plan seems to be an unrealistic one. However, the P5 are not the States blocking the G4's plan at the present moment. A vote in the Security Council for reform would only occur after two-thirds of the GA agreed to the proposal. Until such an agreement occurs, the P5's policies and desires for reform have little impact.

Outlook of and Alternatives to the Council

The 2020 Review of the Security Council's membership and structure offers a unique opportunity for the UN to make meaningful strides on increasing adequate representation in the body. If significant pressure is placed upon the P5 to support reform actively rather than passively, it is not inconceivable that the Council could be reformed. Ultimately, it is essential for all Member States of the UN to believe in the legitimacy of the Council if the United Nations is to remain a relevant and respected institution. Unequal representation in the Council past the 2020 review date may signify to smaller States that the United Nations' most powerful body undertakes the will of the most powerful rather than for the defense of all States and persons. Therefore, the P5 should find it in their best interests to make concessions in order to bolster the perception of the Council worldwide.

An innovative suggestion for compromise between the Group of Four and the Coffee Club proposals is to instate “dual seating,” as originally named by Professor Louis Sohn, former president of The American Society for International Law. This suggestion would give a permanent seat to two governments who would share the responsibility and coordinate in decision making, while rotating the representative in the Council every two years. Though unlikely to pass, this proposal seems to solve some issues of competition for regional supremacy, as is the case in Latin America and Africa.

In what could be seen as a response to decreased confidence in the Security Council, many States have been showing preference to regional organizations rather than the United Nations system. The European Union, founded in 1993, has increased in both membership and reach in the 21st century. Many of its Member States, such as Poland, have publically shown deference to these regional organizations rather than the UN, due to perceptions of increased power and influence in the decisions made at the regional level.

Conclusions

Reform of the Security Council is not a new debate, and there is no easy solution to the issue. The global community agrees that the body is not as representative as it should be, both in terms of geography and distribution of global power. However, there is no consensus in how to solve such an issue. Additionally, the structure of the Council itself is detrimental to any pursuits of reform, as even a single veto from any member of the P5 would end the proposal’s chances at adoption. The veto allows any member of the P5 to vote against any measure which would dilute their power, influence or prestige.

These limitations are written into the Charter itself, making structural reform much more difficult than reprioritization and enhanced mission fulfillment.

Brazil is an ideal case study to demonstrate such constraints; though Brazil has few major opponents to its bid for permanent representation, is economically strong, and makes major contributions to both the UN operating budget and DPKO, it is unlikely to receive a permanent seat on the Security Council. Brazil's alliance with Germany, India, and Japan provides it with vast support for its bid. However, this grouping has also pitted Brazil against the opponents of the other G4 members as well as its own regional rivals.

This resistance to structural reform is not to say, however, that the body will become obsolete. The UN and the Security Council are both major institutions in the international arena. The concern is not with the body's existence but its ability to carry out its mandate effectively and with the respect of the world's most and least powerful States. The 2020 High Level Review will be an important opportunity for States to discuss their desires for reform, find similarities, and compromise to make the Security Council represent the state of global power that it did at its creation. As pressure on the P5 to reform intensifies, concessions may become a more feasible solution.

Somehow we must be able to show people that democracy is not about words, but action.

-Eleanor Roosevelt, India and the Awakening East (1953)

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