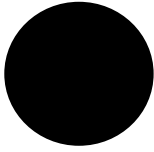


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## Security Council Reform: China Signals Its Veto

*J. Moban Malik*

The long-awaited landmark report on reforming the United Nations will most likely dominate the agenda when the General Assembly convenes next September. Among the high-level panel's 101 recommendations, the most contentious relates to the expansion of the Security Council to 24 members from its current 15, of which 5 permanent members—Britain, China, France, Russia, and the United States—wield veto power. The ten nonpermanent members are currently elected to two-year terms.

Security Council reform has been on the agenda for more than a decade. But member nations have failed to agree on how big the council should become and whether other nations should be given veto powers. No single proposal has ever won majority support. As a result, the Security Council continues to reflect the global power structure of 1945, when the five Second World War victors (the “P-5”) acquired their privileged status. Virtually the only common factor among the five is that all are legal nuclear weapons states under the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. In its present form, the council also remains imbalanced in favor of the industrialized North. Critics have long argued that the council is both undemocratic and anachronistic, and that its effectiveness and legitimacy cannot be sustained unless it is transformed to reflect today's world. To that end, Secretary General Kofi Annan named and nurtured the high-level panel.

However, the reluctance of the P-5 to entertain any change undermining their status remains a major stumbling block. The

report supports the belief that a revamped Security Council should reflect the political, economic, military, and demographic realities of today's world if it is to deal with new threats to international security, notably terrorism, failed states, nuclear proliferation, poverty, and violence. Recent crises—the Kosovo war, the Iraq imbroglio, the humanitarian disasters in Rwanda and Sudan—have given fresh urgency to reform efforts.

Unfortunately, the high-level panel failed to agree on one proposal and instead suggested two options to broaden the membership of the Security Council.<sup>1</sup> Option A would add six new permanent members—the likely candidates are India, Japan, Brazil, Germany, Egypt, and either Nigeria or South Africa—as well as three new two-year-term nonpermanent members. Option B would create a new tier of eight semipermanent members chosen for renewable four-year terms and add one two-year-term seat to the existing ten. Neither option, however, extends veto power beyond the existing five permanent members. That even this panel of 16 eminent diplomats and public servants was unable to agree upon a single model for expansion is indicative of the difficulties that lie ahead. It also reflects a wider reality: the politics and the prospects of Security Council reform do not look very promising, especially in light of China's views, as described below.

India, Japan, Brazil, and Germany have been mentioned most often among the likely candidates for permanent membership. All four nations have been lobbying for years for inclusion. Japan is the world

organization's second-largest financial contributor after the United States, the largest aid donor, a nonnuclear economic giant, and a potential contributor of troops to peacekeeping operations. Germany too makes a significant financial contribution to the U.N. budget. India has asserted for more than a decade that its claim is "natural" and "legitimate" since it is the world's largest democracy and a rapidly growing economic power, and possesses a sizable military establishment willing to share the burden of peacekeeping in some of the world's most dangerous places. The other contenders for permanent membership are regional powers such as Brazil, representing Latin America, and South Africa, Egypt, and/or Nigeria, which could speak for Africa in an expanded council.

Anticipating the report on council reform, leaders of India, Japan, Germany, and Brazil agreed at last year's General Assembly to back each other's bids for permanent seats. The unity of this Group of Four (G-4) has not only added impetus to the reform process but also given critical strength to their claim. Soon after the panel's report was made public, the G-4 delegates met with Kofi Annan to support the panel's Option A and also urged that the new permanent members be given veto power.<sup>2</sup>

Yet the fate of reform depends crucially on the attitude of the existing permanent members. The Bush administration has supported Japan's bid for a permanent seat, but it has reserved its judgment on other potential candidates.<sup>3</sup> Former Clinton administration officials have on several occasions designated India and Japan (along with Brazil and South Africa) as "legitimate candidates" for membership.<sup>4</sup> India has also gained support from three of the five permanent members, Britain, France, and Russia, as well as from other powers (Afghanistan, New Zealand, Mongolia, United Arab Emirates, and Vietnam). Britain, France, and Russia support the inclusion of Germany, Brazil, and one African and/or Islamic country. In

contrast, China has maintained an ambiguous stance on the membership issue and kept its cards close to the chest on the contentious veto issue while periodically calling for reform of the Security Council. A key question is how China, the only Asian member of the P-5 club, perceives bids for permanent membership by its Asian rivals—India and Japan—especially given Beijing's quest for superpowerdom.

Beijing's long-declared position is to support Security Council enlargement provided it "takes due account of the principle of equitable geographical distribution and accommodates the interests of developing countries."<sup>5</sup> Until recently, China had deliberately avoided expressing support for any country. However, in a significant departure, President Jiang Zemin offered encouragement to Germany and Brazil during official visits to those countries in 2002, despite Beijing's stated position that the council is already overrepresented by "rich and white" nations. At the same time, Chinese leaders persistently refuse to endorse India's or Japan's bid, seemingly because doing so might undercut Beijing's role as the sole permanent Asian voice in the council. What distinguishes China from Japan and India is both permanent membership and declared nuclear status, thus making it a far more important player in international forums and the sole Asian negotiating partner of the United States on global security matters. China's Asia strategy thus obliges Beijing to keep Japan and India out of the veto-holding club. Beijing also fears that with Japan and India inside, Washington, when its interests were at stake, could work around Russian intransigence and French resistance, and outweigh Chinese opposition.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, China has always been resentful of Japan's wartime occupation, and suspicious of India's great power ambitions, and has therefore been holding out for the status quo with respect to new Asian membership. In fact, China's vociferous opposition to its Asian rivals' bids may well now be *the*

major obstacle to the realization of their aspirations.

Without elaborating on China's stand on countries seeking permanent membership, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson, Zhang Qiyue, welcomed the high-level panel's proposals on "enhanc[ing] the international collective security mechanism with the U.N. at its core," and emphasized the need for consensus: "Any reform scenario should be discussed by the U.N. members in a democratic manner so that extensive consensus can be reached. The U.N. reform is concerned with interests of every member country, and there are still many differences in this regard."<sup>7</sup> Beijing is well aware of the nature of these "many differences" and how difficult it is to achieve an "extensive consensus" in "a democratic manner" that addresses the "interests of every member country." It is noteworthy that Qian Qichen, a former Chinese foreign minister and still an influential voice in Beijing, was one of the 16 eminent persons named by Kofi Annan to the high-level panel, which included, among others, former U.S. national security adviser Brent Scowcroft and former Russian premier Yevgeny Primakov.

#### *Dragon on the Security Council*

A valuable insight into Chinese thinking is provided in a commentary in the authoritative *Beijing Review* of May 13, 2004, by the Chinese Foreign Ministry analyst, Wu Miaofa, which, for the first time, spelled out "five principles" for reform of the Security Council.<sup>8</sup> A critical scrutiny of these "principles" (in effect, "conditions") reveals them to be self-serving, impractical, contradictory, inconsistent, and antidemocratic—all seemingly designed for the purpose of stalling an expansion of the council that would increase the number of veto-holding permanent members. The "five principles" put in question Beijing's commitment to a multipolar world and also contravene the "five principles of peaceful coexistence" (premised on the equality of all nations, big and small,

first outlined in 1955 during the heyday of Sino-Indian friendship), which are touted by Beijing as the moral basis of sound interstate relations.<sup>9</sup> At best, the Foreign Ministry's analysis provides valuable insight into Beijing's insecurities and fears regarding the gathering momentum for U.N. reform and reflects its core attitudes toward great power relations within Asia. At worst, it is an unconvincing plea for maintaining the status quo.

According to the first principle, "top priority [should be assigned] to achieving equitable geographic distribution" in the Security Council. This is an admirable position, but the implication is that since Asia is already represented by China, adding representation for Africa and Latin America ought to be the topmost priority. This explains Beijing's public support for Brazil's bid. Admittedly, China's support is in part motivated by its desire to forge closer strategic ties with a major Latin American country in America's backyard, and it coincided with Brazilian president Lula da Silva's moves to present himself as an independent regional leader and voice for developing world.

Since developed countries hold a disproportionate number of council seats, the second principle approves "the earnest and legitimate wish of developing countries" for "reasonable representation in the Security Council permanent category." As the council acts most frequently on conflicts in developing countries, it is imperative that it includes new permanent and nonpermanent members from the bloc that comprises a majority of the 191 U.N. member states. A strict application of this principle would exclude Japan but favor the inclusion of India, Pakistan, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Egypt. Significantly, this principle was reiterated by the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson soon after the release of the U.N. panel's report that also urged greater involvement of developing world states: "China has all along supported the U.N. reform and a

broader representation at the Security Council, in particular the representation of developing countries.”<sup>10</sup>

However, this rhetoric does not automatically translate into support for India, the world’s largest developing country. Far from it: Beijing has for a decade adopted a dismissive and even contemptuous attitude toward New Delhi’s campaign for a permanent seat. As a senior Chinese diplomat told his American interlocutor in 2000: “China will never allow India to join the Security Council, certainly not in my lifetime.”<sup>11</sup>

Chinese diplomats also claimed that giving a permanent seat to India would amount to rewarding it for developing nuclear weapons.<sup>12</sup> For its part, New Delhi has maintained that just as the U.S. opposition to Communist China’s membership in the Security Council did not prevent China’s rise, Beijing’s opposition also will not prevent India’s rise as a great power. As recently as June 2004, in an interview with an Indian correspondent, state councilor and former foreign minister Tang Jiaxuan was non-committal about China’s position regarding India’s bid. He said only that “the Chinese government values India’s influence and role in international and regional affairs and is willing to see a greater Indian role in the international arena, the United Nations included.” However, a few months later, during Tang’s October 2004 visit to New Delhi, China’s public position appeared to have softened somewhat, with Beijing now endorsing, for the first time, “a bigger role for India in the international community, *including in the United Nations Security Council*.”<sup>13</sup> This statement prompted the Indian media to jump to the conclusion that China, hitherto ambivalent, was now backing New Delhi’s claims. Some observers even asserted that this represented “a significant shift in Beijing’s India policy since its ‘all-weather ally’ Pakistan has gone on record at the U.N. General Assembly opposing India’s bid.”<sup>14</sup> Nonetheless, not all Chinese voices echoed these sentiments; Foreign

Minister Li Zhaoxing, speaking at a press conference in Almaty on October 22, 2004, avoided a direct response to a question about China’s support for India’s claim for permanent membership, merely stating, “We will discuss the issue of reform in more detail when the high-level report is completed.”<sup>15</sup> Significantly, even Tang had stopped short of explicitly supporting New Delhi’s bid for a permanent seat.

In their talks with Indian leaders, both Tang and Li have reportedly made it clear that China’s support for India’s seat would come “with strings attached.” According to diplomats privy to bilateral negotiations, the Chinese have listed three preconditions: India must oust the Dalai Lama; it must not support Japan’s bid for a permanent seat; and New Delhi should be sensitive to Beijing’s security concerns in building its relations with China’s East Asian neighbors.<sup>16</sup> Two weeks after the release of the high-level panel’s report, Li Wei, a Chinese analyst from an influential think tank, the China Institute of Contemporary International Relations (CICIR), spoke of new benchmarks: “One, India should ensure stability in South Asia [translation: resolve the Kashmir dispute to Pakistan’s satisfaction]; two, it should have friendly relations with its neighbours [translation: abandon great power hegemonic ambitions] and three, it should contribute towards world peace [translation: cease development of nuclear weapons].”<sup>17</sup> These benchmarks are so broad that no government in New Delhi would be willing to accept them as the price for Beijing’s support.<sup>18</sup> Were it to do so, any signs of deterioration in India-Pakistan relations, for example, could be exploited to question India’s suitability for membership. At any rate, Beijing’s conditional support for India’s inclusion comes only if the new entrants are not given the right of veto. Commenting on the Indian foreign minister’s statement after the release of the panel’s report that New Delhi would not accept a seat without a right of veto, Li Shaoxian, vice president of

the CICIR said: “If India sticks to this position, I don’t see India becoming a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council any time soon.”<sup>19</sup>

Since no official change in policy has been announced, the Chinese position on India’s claim to a seat is still veiled in ambiguity, perhaps deliberately so. Beijing continues to reiterate general support for greater representation from developing countries and seems favorably disposed toward Brazil and Germany, and strongly opposed to Japan, but says little about India. It is safe to conclude that China’s position on India is moving in a more nuanced direction, in large part due to China’s broader security concerns over preventing an India-Japan alignment or an anti-China containment coalition led by the United States. Apparently, two key developments—the joint statement issued by the Indian and Japanese foreign ministers in New Delhi in August 2004 on supporting (rather than contesting) each other’s candidature for permanent membership, followed closely by the formation of a united front on the reform issue by the G-4 nations in September 2004—prompted a rethinking of China’s policy on this subject.<sup>20</sup> Seen from Beijing’s perspective, the formation of this “Gang of Four” was a major setback for China’s diplomacy insofar as it brought together on a common platform two of China’s rivals (India and Japan) that Beijing wants to keep out, and two potential allies (Brazil and Germany) that it wants to bring into the council. In realpolitik terms, China can no longer afford to be seen as publicly opposing India’s bid or ganging up with Pakistan, which would only push India toward Japan. Furthermore, since China has long opposed Japan’s gaining leverage in Asia, it may prefer to live with India in an expanded Security Council.<sup>21</sup>

### *The Third Principle*

Acknowledging that “a number of developed and developing countries from differ-

ent regions” are keen on a permanent seat, the third principle cautions that the council is “an organ of fairly high authority and moderate size,” and therefore “its expansion should not go without ceiling or restriction, and that a high degree of diplomatic wisdom and expertise is called for in this regard.” While the Chinese insistence upon “a high degree of diplomatic wisdom and expertise” as a prerequisite for permanent membership is disingenuous, if not insulting, to countries that have a better record of service to the United Nations than China does, the point about “expansion...without ceiling” is valid. Obviously, no one wants an unwieldy council: in both scenarios outlined by the high-level panel, total membership would not exceed 24. Furthermore, Beijing wants aspirants to hold closed-door consultations in regional groupings “until a final consensus is reached through a secret ballot within the regional group.” This would then be “followed by final U.N. examination and approval in accordance with pertinent clauses of the Charter.” (A variation of this formula is also suggested in the U.N. panel’s semipermanent category under Option B.) However, the formula suggested for resolving the membership issue through consensus within different regions is complicated and impractical. And it is easier said than done in the real world of bitter regional rivalries. It would also have the effect of further deepening regional hostility. Just imagine India, Japan, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Pakistan forever fighting for the one semipermanent “second-class” (with the single two-year terms being the “third class”) seat sans veto on the council.<sup>22</sup>

This formula would not only disturb regional cohesion but would also tempt meddling by external powers. Latin American countries would have to decide, for example, which would be better at representing their interests: Portuguese-speaking Brazil or Spanish-speaking Mexico. Which Muslim country would have the right to represent the Organization of the Islamic Conference?

Since all prospective candidates for seats have regional rivals, the P-5 could exploit these rivalries to their advantage. As Secretary General Annan noted in December 2004: "Obviously, there are a group of countries determined to get permanent seats and are campaigning very much for that and there are others in the organization which are determined to prevent them from getting permanent seats."<sup>23</sup> Their identity is no secret.<sup>24</sup> India, for example, faces a concerted Muslim campaign led by its bitter foe Pakistan and Islamabad's patron, China.<sup>25</sup> In post-9/11 backdoor diplomacy with Islamabad, Dacca, Kuala Lumpur and Jakarta, Beijing has offered full support for an *Asian* Muslim country's bid for a permanent seat. The Islamic states are already pushing for Indonesia, Malaysia, or Pakistan. Instead of openly opposing India's bid (as it does in the case of Japan), Beijing relies on "spoiler states" like Pakistan to keep its southern rival off balance. During his 2004 visit to Beijing, Pakistani prime minister Shaukat Aziz claimed to have obtained a firm commitment from Chinese president Hu Jintao that Beijing would not let India gain a permanent seat in the council. When pressed to elaborate, Aziz said: "I cannot disclose what commitment the Chinese side made on the issue."<sup>26</sup>

Given Pakistan's declared preference for Option B (that is, adding a new category of semipermanent members who would be elected for a renewable four-year term), the Chinese president may have made a commitment to support the second proposal, which India and Japan have rejected. In fact, until July 2004, this was the only proposal under consideration by the high-level panel (its chief proponent was none other than China's Qian Qichen), and Option A was included only after strong protests and lobbying by the G-4 nations.<sup>27</sup> Such a stance also kills two birds with one stone: it undermines Beijing's Asian rivals' bids and it further strengthens China's ties with the Islamic countries on whose energy resources Bei-

jing increasingly relies to fuel its economic growth. Furthermore, Beijing takes comfort from the fact that so long as Pakistan remains Washington's key ally in its war on terrorism, the United States would be unlikely to upset Pakistan by supporting New Delhi's bid, which is vehemently opposed by Islamabad.<sup>28</sup>

As for Japan, Beijing says Tokyo still needs to overcome East Asian fears of a Japanese martial resurgence. The dispatch of Japan's Self-Defense Forces to undertake medical and engineering work in southern Iraq may be aimed at bolstering the country's Security Council credentials, but the move is said to have stiffened the opposition of Tokyo's neighbors and wartime victims, China and South Korea, to upgrading Japan's status.<sup>29</sup> Reacting sharply to Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's push for council membership in his September 2004 U.N. address, in which the Japanese leader cited Japan's financial contribution to the world body (which is greater than the combined share of four of the five permanent members, except the United States), China's Foreign Ministry spokesman said that the council was "not a board of directors" and its composition should not be decided "according to the financial contribution of its members." He added: "If a country wishes to play a responsible role in international affairs, it must have a clear understanding of the historical questions concerning itself," referring to Japan's perceived failure to apologize adequately for its aggression before and during the Second World War.<sup>30</sup> China-Japan relations, always prickly, have worsened in recent years due to Beijing's position with respect to a permanent council seat for Japan and increasing Chinese naval incursions into Japan's territorial waters, not to mention the ongoing differences over how school textbooks portray the history of China-Japan relations and Prime Minister Koizumi's visit to the Yasukuni Shrine commemorating Japan's war dead, where Japanese war criminals are also interred. China's

antipathy to Japan's bid is substantial, not least because Japan is China's principal economic and strategic competitor in Asia. Beijing's opposition stems as well from Tokyo's status as America's ally, and the identification of China (along with North Korea) as a possible future threat to Japanese security in Japan's recent National Defense Program Outline.

From China's perspective, support for the German and Brazilian bids is a useful foil to U.S. support for its ally (Japan) and its friend (India). Brazil is also attractive to China because it is likely to be a vocal critic of the United States on both economic and security issues. Smarting from its lack of support for the Iraq war, Washington is lukewarm to Germany's candidacy. In realpolitik terms, Beijing believes Germany and Brazil could be leveraged against the United States, but Japan and India could not be. In any event, the Chinese calculate that just as Pakistan would react furiously if India were granted a seat, Argentina and Mexico would react the same way if Brazil were to win a seat. And so might South Africa and Egypt if Nigeria were to gain a seat, and so on. The result would be stalemate, and the status quo would prevail.

Still, in the unlikely event that regional consensus were reached, the choice of a representative would require "final U.N. examination and approval in accordance with pertinent clauses of the Charter." It is not specified whether this would require the P-5 or the General Assembly's approval, and under what "pertinent clauses." Intriguingly, the high-level panel's report also suggests that a revamped Security Council would necessitate an amendment to the U.N. Charter, which in turn would require the approval of the five permanent members as well as two-thirds of the 191 member states, and then ratification by their legislatures. If so, changing the charter would be nearly impossible. With midsized and smaller countries cool to expansion, since they are bound

to be excluded, it is unlikely that such an amendment would get the necessary votes.

#### *The Fourth Principle*

Fourth, the issue of "whether the newly elected permanent members shall be granted the power of veto" will be determined by "discussion and consensus among the present five permanent members." Ironically, the Chinese advocate limiting the right to veto to the P-5 indefinitely on "historical grounds": "Since the status of permanent membership is deeply rooted in the historical background in the early days of the founding of the U.N. and is in the fundamental interests of the U.N., it is well reasoned that the veto mechanism should remain as it is. No more countries should be granted the power of veto, which is conducive to efficient and smooth running of the Security Council itself as well."<sup>31</sup>

This demand for keeping "the veto mechanism...as it is" because it "is in the fundamental interests of the U.N." is not only a false claim but undermines the very rationale for reform. Obviously, Beijing wants to have its cake and eat it too. It seems ridiculous for a country like China to suggest that the history of the Second World War alone should continue to be the criterion of veto-wielding power, since Beijing has all along been critical of the machinations of the Western powers, and has shown contempt for accords concluded in the pre-1949 era. For Beijing, history appears to matter only when it serves China's interests. Such a stance not only pours cold water on Japanese and Indian aspirations but is inconsistent with the views of U.N. members who have long insisted that the veto power has been abused by the P-5. Among other things, the veto has prevented the Security Council from meaningfully addressing the situation on the Korean peninsula and in the Taiwan Strait.<sup>32</sup> The normative view that the P-5 veto places *power above law* is certainly more valid in the post-Cold War unipolar world than in the era of

bipolarity. It ought to be replaced by a simple majority or two-thirds majority of all members in true democratic fashion. How can the goal of “a just, rational and equitable new international political and economic order,” which China espouses, be achieved so long as any one of the P-5 can block the will of the majority of nations without giving more countries a voice, not just representation, on the council?

Apparently, the status-conscious Chinese fear that such reforms would undermine China’s position as the sole Asian representative on the council and its claim to great power status. The Security Council is the only international forum where the perception of China as a champion of the developing world and Asia is magnified. Chinese policymakers have long described the veto-wielding permanent seat as a “strategic asset,”<sup>33</sup> and Beijing has not hesitated to use it to defend its interests and keep its rivals off balance. For instance, during the Bangladesh war of 1971, and after India’s nuclear tests of May 1998, China used its “strategic asset” to isolate, intimidate, and contain New Delhi. In 1999, Beijing vetoed a U.N. peacekeeping operation in Macedonia to punish the latter’s coziness toward Taiwan. In September 2004, China threatened to veto any move to impose sanctions on Sudan over the atrocities in Darfur and a month later opposed referring the nuclear standoff between Iran and the International Atomic Energy Agency to the Security Council (ostensibly to protect hard-won oil concessions in these pariah states). As a consequence, a squabbling council has given a free pass to authoritarian regimes to pursue repressive policies with impunity. Though many Asian countries would welcome any move that neutralized or balanced China’s ascendancy by elevating Japan and India to the same level in the council, China will not readily surrender its strategic asset and will fight a rearguard battle to keep both out. Unfortunately, neither of the two options recommended by the high-level panel deals

with the veto question because panel members saw “no practical way of changing the existing members’ veto powers”!

### *The Final Nail*

The fifth and last principle in effect puts a final nail in the U.N. coffin by delinking the issue of reform and the democratization of international relations: “[T]he concept of permanent membership and that of democratization of international relations belong to two different categories, with no fundamental links between them.”<sup>34</sup> The Chinese say that “the topic of democratization of international relations deserves full exploration on other occasions,” but apparently not with respect to Security Council reform.

A critical assessment of the Chinese perspective suggests that New Delhi and Tokyo are no closer to their objective of achieving permanent seats on the Security Council than they have been in the past. China will do everything to safeguard its coveted status as a veto-holding, permanent member. Beijing’s rhetoric about a multipolar world and Asian solidarity notwithstanding, China does not want any other major Asian country to sit on the council *as an equal*. Despite deepening economic ties with India and Japan, China’s political relationships with the two countries remain antagonistic. Unless Beijing changes its attitude with respect to Security Council reform, talk of China-Japan-India triangular cooperation will remain meaningless. Moreover, China’s opposition is unsustainable over the long term if Beijing wants to avoid an India-Japan alignment. Beijing’s strategic interests lie in supporting one or the other in order to prevent the two from ganging up against China. There are already some indications that Beijing sees India as the lesser evil.

Convincing China (and the United States) to support the bids of aspirants to permanent council seats will be a monumental diplomatic task. And new permanent members are unlikely to have veto



power because a majority of the U.N. member states are opposed to the creation of a new privileged class of states. As one European diplomat put it, "In essence there has been no shift in the core position of the U.S. and China since the debate kicked off a decade or more ago. This position is that additional Council seats should only be awarded if they do not enjoy the same veto rights as the P-5."<sup>35</sup> Moreover, a "second-tier-permanent-members-minus-veto" proposal has already been rejected by Japan, India, and Germany.<sup>36</sup>

It has been suggested that in a revamped Security Council, the P-5 should be able to use their veto only if they have the support of three nonpermanent members. The veto could also be diluted by requiring at least two of the P-5 to oppose an action. It has also been suggested that council members should be given weighted votes, based on population and economic and military resources. This system works in the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. For important Security Council decisions, a "super majority" of the permanent members' votes, say 80 percent, would be required.<sup>37</sup> Another solution to the veto problem might be to take away the veto from the P-5, rather than giving vetoes to any new permanent members. As Malaysia's premier Mahathir Mohamad said in 1993: "We talk of democracy as the only acceptable system of government. Yet, when it comes to the U.N., we eschew democracy. And the most undemocratic aspect of the U.N. is the veto power of the permanent five. The veto must go."<sup>38</sup> For China, however, this would be unthinkable: its power to veto makes Beijing the object of courtship, since Washington needs China's support in resolving regional conflicts in the Middle East, South Asia, and the Korean peninsula, and in dealing with transnational threats of terrorism and nuclear proliferation.

China has not only become a status quo power as far as the U.N. system is con-

cerned, but its perspectives on reform are strikingly similar to those of the reigning superpower, the United States. China has indeed come a long way since describing the Security Council "as a tool of big power hegemony" in the 1960s. Just as Washington is seen as using the Security Council for its own ends, Beijing is notorious for keeping Taiwan and Tibet off the U.N. agenda and in supporting unsavory regimes (North Korea, Sudan, Iran, and Burma) for narrowly conceived geopolitical and energy interests. At the same time, Beijing and Washington also seek to use the issue of reform to undercut the other, with the United States backing Japan (and perhaps India) and China throwing its weight behind Brazil, Germany, and the Islamic bloc. Should this rivalry intensify, there is every risk that Security Council reform would be fatally compromised.

Should Beijing and Washington fail to respond to the demand for a more democratic international order, there is a danger of the United Nations becoming irrelevant in security matters, as did its predecessor, the League of Nations. If so, the job of resurrecting failed states, of preventing wars, massacres, and genocides, and of constraining tyrants and curbing nuclear proliferation will either go undone or will be done by self-appointed sheriffs with willing and not-so-willing allies. The question the Chinese need to ponder is this: Won't a weak, non-democratic United Nations give more leeway to the United States, an outcome that Beijing says it wants to avoid? ●

## Notes

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9. Denny Roy, "China's Pitch for a Multipolar World: The New Security Concept," *Asia-Pacific Security Studies*, vol. 2 (May 2003), at [http://www.apcss.org/Research/research\\_publications.html](http://www.apcss.org/Research/research_publications.html).

10. Xinhua, "China Backs U.N. Reform: FM," December 2, 2004, at [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2004-12/02/content\\_2287685.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2004-12/02/content_2287685.htm).

11. Author's discussions and conversations with American and Asian diplomats, 2003–04.

12. The Chinese are also aware that the U.S. nonproliferation lobby is firmly opposed to a permanent seat for India unless it signs the nonproliferation and test ban treaties ("Rocca Links UNSC Seat with N-Rollback," *NewsInsight.net*, October 20, 2004, at <http://www.indiareacts.com/nati2.asp?recno=3000&ctg>).

13. Siddharth Srivastava, "Beijing Boosts Delhi's Bid for U.N. Council Seat," *Asia Times Online*, October 26, 2004, at [http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South\\_Asia/FJ26Df01.html](http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/FJ26Df01.html).

14. Indrani Bagchi, "China Backs India for Security Council Seat," *Times of India*, October 21, 2004.

15. "India Told to Wait for Annan's Report on UNSC," *Dawn*, October 23, 2004; "'New Phase' in Sino-India Relations?" *Intelligence Weekly Update*, October 29, 2004.

16. Discussions with diplomats, September 2004. See also, "Out Dalai Lama for UNSC Seat, Says China," *NewsInsight.net*, October 23, 2004, at <http://www.indiareacts.com/nati2.asp?recno=3002>.

17. "India's UNSC Entry without Veto: China," *Dawn*, December 15, 2004.

18. The dominant Indian thinking is not to give in to such "unreasonable demands and conditions" for the Security Council seat, because "the status it gives may well be more illusory than real." It is pointed out that Russia's seat did not prevent the Soviet Union's disintegration, nor has it resolved Chechen terrorism. See C. Raja Mohan, "Does the U.N. Matter?" *Indian Express*, November 30, 2004; and "Rocca Links UNSC Seat with N-Rollback.

19. "India's UNSC Entry without Veto: China." This contrasts with Vladimir Putin's position; the Russian president is on record as saying that India and other new entrants should enter the expanded Security Council with a veto. See Press Trust of India, "Putin Clarifies Remarks on India Getting Veto Power in UNSC," *Hindustan Times*, December 5, 2004.

20. Sultan Shahin, "India, Japan Eye New Axis," *Asia Times Online*, August 24, 2004, at [http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South\\_Asia/FH24Df03.html](http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/FH24Df03.html).

21. Srivastava, "Beijing Boosts Delhi's Bid for U.N. Council Seat."

22. Ramesh Thakur, "How One Council Can Speak for the World," *Japan Times*, November 3, 2004.

23. Quoted in Amit Baruah, "India May Accept Security Council Seat without Veto," *The Hindu*, December 19, 2004.

24. A group of medium-sized powers, including Pakistan, Italy, Mexico, Argentina, and Canada, are strongly opposed to creating new permanent seats for

fear of their exclusion. They favor increasing longer-term semipermanent seats as outlined in Option B.

25. Alan Boyd, "India, Japan Still Shooting for Security Council," *Asia Times*, February 26, 2002; Wilcox, "Yes, a Security Council Seat for India."

26. Bahzad Alam Khan, "China, Pakistan to Strengthen Defence Ties," *Dawn*, December 17, 2004.

27. Chinmaya R. Gharekhan, "Join the Club," *Hindustan Times*, December 7, 2004.

28. Srivastava, "Beijing Boosts Delhi's Bid for U.N. Council Seat."

29. Boyd, "India, Japan Still Shooting for Security Council"; Takehiko Yabe, "Beijing, Seoul Cautious On Tokyo's U.N. Bid," *Asahi Shimbun*, December 2, 2004, at <http://www.asahi.com/english/politics/TKY200412010154.html>.

30. Quoted in J. Sean Curtin, "Japan-China Ties on the Ropes," *Asia Times Online*, October 19, 2004, at <http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Japan/FJ19Dh01.html>.

31. Wu Miaofa, "Restructuring the United Nations," p. 12 (emphasis added).

32. The third potential flashpoint in Asia, the Kashmir dispute, has been discussed in the Security Council and remains on the U.N. agenda. However, the Taiwan and Korean disputes cannot be discussed because of China's opposition.

33. See, for example, Qiao Liang and Wang Xi-angsui, *Unrestricted Warfare* (Beijing: PLA Literature and Arts Publishing House, February 1999).

34. Wu Miaofa, "Restructuring the United Nations," p. 12.

35. Quoted in Boyd, "India, Japan Still Shooting for Security Council."

36. C. Rajghatta, "India Rejects Second Class U.N. Seat," *Times of India*, December 2, 2004; and Editorial, "First Steps toward U.N. Reform," *Japan Times*, December 7, 2004. However, some media reports indicate that despite public remarks to the contrary on the veto issue, the G-4 nations may be ready to accept a permanent berth on the Security Council without a veto initially and then lobby to achieve equal status with the P-5 veto-wielding nations. See Xinhua, "U.N. Poised to Solve Riddle of Security Council Expansion," *People's Daily Online*, December 17, 2004, at [http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200412/17/eng20041217\\_167727.html](http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200412/17/eng20041217_167727.html).

37. See Marcel H. Van Herpen, "Security Council Reform: How and When?" October 8, 2003, at <http://www.inthenationalinterest.com>; and other articles, U.N. reports, and documents at <http://www.globalpolicy.org/security/reform/index.htm#crui>.

38. Mahathir Mohamad quoted in Frank Ching, "Reforming the United Nations," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, November 25, 1993, p. 36; Haider Rizvi, "U.N. Reform: When?" *Inter Press Service*, September 26, 2003.