



DUKE UNIVERSITY MODEL UN CONFERENCE XXVII

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SAMPLE POSITION PAPER

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The United Nations Charter of 1945 was the product of a nascent Europe, recently ravaged by the second World War, slowly preparing to relinquish its imperialistic grasp on the southern hemisphere. When the Charter was drafted, its framers created a structure for the United Nations that built upon the League of Nations, which was established at the behest of American President Woodrow Wilson to deal with the political restructuring of Europe and the chaos that resulted from World War I. In 1944, the two worst conflicts in world history, claiming tens of millions of lives, had just occurred in Europe and also throughout Asia and thus it was imagined that the United Nations would be tasked with maintaining peace and spearheading reconstruction in post-war Europe, providing an open forum for debate amongst the many newly empowered European governments, and in managing the many problems sure to result in such a drastically remapped and traumatized post-conflict world. The United Nations was also entrusted with implementing the gradual decolonization of Africa, an idea also first forcefully expressed by Woodrow Wilson in his “Fourteen Points” of 1918.¹

The United Nations Charter that established instrumentation of the United Nations heavily favored the victors in WWII and rigidly reflected the political situation of 1944.² Adequate provisions were not implemented to represent the many underdeveloped regions of the world. Both Africa and Asia were horribly underrepresented amongst the original 51 members of the UN.³ The Security Council, the Organization’s most powerful body, and the only one granted the power to enforce its rulings via military force or economic sanctions was tightly controlled by the veto power of the five permanent members – none of whom was located in the southern hemisphere. These arrangements for UN power sharing were suitable to the time in which they had been drafted.

¹ Wilson, Woodrow. 1918. “Fourteen Points”. In Perry, Marvin et. al. 2003. Sources of the Western Tradition. pp. 315-316

² Luck, Edward C. 2003 Stayin’ Alive...

³ “Growth in UN Membership.” 2005.

However, over the past 60 years the global balance of power has changed dramatically. Decolonization has created a host of new nations and a swarm of new issues that the United Nations must currently confront. Over 140 nations have become members of the UN since 1945, now bringing the total number of nations represented to 191.⁴ Conflict in Europe has subsided and the UN has found its focus now shifted to Africa, which still struggles to rid itself of the remnants of imperialism. Relative strengths of countries have shifted since 1945, and new regional powerhouses claim greater representation and desire more clout within the UN itself. With each passing day, the UN must face new problems on a much larger scale. The old framework of the UN, while suitable at one time, is no longer sufficient to fulfill the role of the UN in the 21st century. The Charter of the United Nations has become an anachronism that must be modified into a flexible mechanism more reflective of the current global situation and more able to meet the needs of the post-modern world.

The Security Council, the most important and forceful working body of the United Nations must be able to act quickly and efficiently upon sensitive issues of critical importance. However, in recent years, the Security Council has found itself dealing with a drastically increased workload and a shift in its focus.⁵ Currently, over half of the issues debated by the Security Council involve the African Region,⁶ yet Africa is underrepresented on the Council. Developing nations, which often have fates decided by the council are also restricted with respect to their voice on the council even though they constitute over 2/3 of the general assembly.⁷ In order to increase the efficiency of the Security Council, and to ensure its status as the principal and most important working body of the United Nations, reforms must be implemented that take into account global changes over the past 60 years.

China supports an increase in the membership of the Security Council that will augment the number of voices and perspectives heard at sessions. Most important in the reform is the addition of seats for nations in the African continent and for developing countries; both groups of nations to which the Security Council is often forced to direct action. To this measure, China proposes the addition of new non-permanent rotating seats on the Security Council, which will raise representation. Top priority should be given to developing nations to occupy these seats.⁸ By increasing the representation of small and medium sized nations, a greater legitimacy and efficacy will be granted to the Security Council. An increase in membership will not only give the Security Council more manpower and authority but also increase transparency to the world. By increasing participation and extending the sharing of Security Council power, the Security Council will be better received and will be able to extend its reach. Images of a secretive body that often only acts in the interest of the developed world will be dispelled by designating

⁴ "Growth in UN Membership." 2005.

⁵ "Statement by Ambassador Wang Yingfan, Permanent Representative of China to the UN, At the Security Council Open Debate on the Follow-up to the Security Council Summit Meeting." 2001.

⁶ Falk, Melissa. 2005. Security Council: United Nations Reform...

⁷ "Statement by Ambassador Wang Guangya on Security Council reform at the 59th session of the General Assembly." 2005.

⁸ "Position Paper of the People's Republic of China on the United Nations Reforms." 2005.

slots specifically for Africa and the rest of the developing world and thereby extending greater participation to all.

It is important that Security Council reform not be rushed. Rather, it must be based upon open discussion and reasoning amongst all members of the UN. A general consensus must be achieved in order to maintain the status of the Security Council as a credible decision making body with legitimate and enforceable powers. To this end, no premature decision should be enforced, and no deadline should be set by which a reform proposal must be implemented. Only through debate, negotiation and compromise may legitimate and widely accepted reforms be implemented. Although the Security Council is the most empowered UN body, excessive time should not be consumed with quickly drafting its reform policy. Rather, the Security Council must be placed in broad perspective with the rest of the United Nations, and other topics must be given equal consideration while reform is being discussed. At the September Summit, too much focus was placed on Security Council reform and as a result, reform of the rest of the UN architecture, and the many other issues to be discussed at the summit were largely neglected.⁹ Reform must be taken slowly rather than rashly; the recent flurry of activity focused on Security Council reform has only served to generate increased numbers of differing but inherently similar proposals with respect to reform. China believes that nations can and must reconcile their differing opinions and reach consensus on a single effective plan. For this reason, the People's Republic of China has not submitted its own specific proposal to add to the maculated cluster of ones already submitted by other nations.

Instead of a rigid proposal describing the exact number of spots to be added, the Peoples Republic has prepared a series of guidelines and tenets to which it believes any reform must address. The exact manner in which these guidelines should be implemented should be achieved through consultation, multilateralism and consensus amongst the GA.

China believes that any reform proposal must focus primarily on increasing representation of the developing world and Africa on the Security Council which will foster increased multilateralism in maintaining peace and security. It is important that when devising a selection process for new representatives, all nations be treated equally. Representation should not be assigned based on percent contribution to the UN budget, population, GDP or regional "powerhouse status."¹⁰ Rather, spots should be allocated to a particular continent or region from which all countries be given equal opportunity. All new spots on the Security Council should be non-permanent – but length of term is up to the decision of the United Nations. Representation should be geographically uniform, and all regions should have proportionally equal representations on the council. The proposed idea of regional rotation is meritorious of serious consideration because it will increase the representative span while keeping the physical size of the Security Council small, yet effective. By extending representation China believes that transparency will also be increased as a byproduct as well as global receptiveness to the Council's decisions. China, holding the same position as the other four permanent members, is not willing to

⁹ "Statement by Ambassador WANG Guangya, Permanent Representative of China to the UN, at the 60th GA Session on Security Council Reform." 2005.

¹⁰ "Statement by Ambassador WANG Guangya, Permanent Representative of China to the UN, at the 60th GA Session on Security Council Reform." 2005.

relinquish its veto power, or to grant additional vetoes. Any new permanent Security Council memberships would only serve to create an intransigent working model, which would again need reform after several decades.

The course that reform takes will determine the future effectiveness of the United Nations as a body. Therefore it is extremely important that the world agree on a suitable reform plan before it is implemented. This is a task which must not have a set deadline or time course. Rather the United Nations and Security Council must carefully, prudently and slowly consider each aspect of reform and only vote after multiple rounds of substantive debate have occurred. Security Council reform holds great promise if it is done correctly. It will be able to usher in a new era of unparalleled cooperation at the UN, and will allow pressing international issues to be quickly and effectively addressed. It is China's most sincere hope that these reforms do great benefit to the United Nations and the future world.

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