Projecting General Assembly Voting Records onto an Enlarged Security Council: An Analysis of the G4 Reform Proposal

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Abstract
The paper examines the distributive and collective effects of the United Nations (UN) reform proposal by the Group of Four (G4) which envisions a 25-member Security Council with four additional non-permanent and six additional permanent members. Academic scholars and affected states have argued that adding more (veto) players to the Council would reduce the voting power of the five current permanent members (P5) and undermine the effectiveness of the body as a whole. Projecting General Assembly voting records of current and proposed permanent members from 1991 to 2017 onto an enlarged Security Council, our analysis suggests that the chance to pass a favorable resolution increases for most P5 members and that in most scenarios such a Council would pass not less but more resolutions. This should be of interest to UN members, and G4 countries in particular, as it allows them to argue more forcefully for the implementation of their proposal.

Policy Implications
• A Security Council modeled after the G4 proposal by Brazil, Germany, India and Japan is likely to be not only more representative but also more effective than the existing one.
• China and Russia are likely to benefit from the G4 proposal. If the two permanent members cannot implement an even more favorable reform proposal, they should give up their resistance and support the G4 initiative.
• The chance of the UK and France to pass a favorable resolution is likely to increase under the G4 proposal. The two permanent members should therefore continue their support for the proposal.
• The only permanent member that stands to lose from the G4 proposal is the US. G4 countries are therefore well advised to direct their persuasive efforts towards the US.

In 2020, the United Nations (UN) was celebrating its 75th anniversary. While membership of its main deliberative organ, the General Assembly, has grown from 51 to 193 states over the years, the composition of its most powerful organ, the Security Council, still reflects the geopolitical situation of 1945, nourishing calls for structural reform. In 2005, Brazil, Germany, India and Japan, among other states, drafted a resolution that calls for four additional non-permanent and six additional permanent seats. Ever since, the so-called Group of Four (G4) has regularly met to renew its demand for Security Council reform (see, for example, Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2018; German Federal Foreign Office, 2019; Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2020) and has repeatedly addressed the General Assembly to convince other states of its reform proposal (see, for example, Permanent Mission of Japan to the UN, 2019; Permanent Mission of the Federal Republic of Germany to the UN, 2018; Permanent Mission of the Federal Republic of Germany to the UN, 2020). The probably greatest hurdle to reform is the five current permanent members (P5) which, fearing a loss of power and a less effective Council, have sent mixed signals. However, there is little evidence as to what extent and in what direction a Security Council modeled after the G4 proposal would change the balance of power among its members and the effectiveness of the body as a whole.

The fundamental problem with studying the distributive and collective effects of recent UN reform proposals is that these proposals only exist on paper. Since they cannot be studied in practice, scholars have fallen back on a priori studies that measure the formal voting power that follows from the proposed rules of the institution (Hosli et al, 2011; Volacu, 2018). The ability to see a favorable resolution passed (unlike the ability to see an unfavorable resolution rejected, which, for the P5 members, remains unaffected by the G4 proposal), however, also depends on the preferences of the members of the institution: A member whose preference is shared by a critical number of other members has greater voting influence than a member who cannot find enough like-minded members to form a winning coalition (O’Neill, 1996, p. 222). In contrast to a priori studies, which have to resort to the implausible assumption that all conceivable preferences and coalitions are equally likely, we conduct an a posteriori study that projects past voting records in the General Assembly onto an enlarged Security Council.
Whereas *a priori* studies come to the conclusion that the voting power of all P5 members decreases under the G4 proposal (Hosli et al., 2011, pp. 172, 179; Volacu, 2018, p. 259), our analysis of the voting coherence of current and proposed permanent members suggests that the chance to pass a favorable resolution increases for most P5 members. Moreover, while *a priori* studies report that the probability to reach decisions decreases with increased membership (Hosli et al., 2011, pp. 172, 179–180), our comparison of a fictitious 5-member Security Council (composed of the five current permanent members) and a fictitious 11-member Security Council (composed of the five current permanent members and the six proposed permanent members) shows that in most scenarios more resolutions are passed in the latter. This should be good news for the G4 countries, as it implies that a Security Council modeled after their proposal is not only more representative but also more effective than the existing one.

The paper is divided into four sections: Section 1 discusses recent UN reform proposals and examines the positions of the P5 on the proposal by the G4. Section 2 reviews existing studies on the distributive and collective effects of the G4 proposal. Section 3 outlines the design, rationale and limitations of our own study. Section 4 analyses General Assembly voting records of current and proposed permanent members with a view to their distributive and collective effects in an enlarged Security Council. In the conclusion, we present our findings and give recommendations for future research.

**Background**

In this section, we outline current UN reform proposals and explain why we selected the proposal by the G4. Afterwards we examine the positions of the P5 on that proposal.

**Reform proposals**

Proposals to change the institutional design of the Security Council are almost as old as the Council itself. The only successful reform dates back to 1963, when the number of non-permanent seats was increased from six to ten. In the thirty years that followed the expansion of 1963, which came into effect in 1965, there were only sporadic calls for further enlargement. Adding more seats to a Council that was already paralyzed by the vetoes of, initially, the USSR and, later, the US appeared little promising. This changed after the end of the Cold War when decisive Security Council action, for the first time in its history, became feasible. In 1993, the General Assembly decided to convene an open-ended working group on Security Council reform. In 1997, the chairman of that working group, Razali Ismail, submitted a reform proposal that envisioned, among other things, four additional non-permanent and five additional permanent seats. Although the proposal did not seek to extend the veto right to the new permanent members, it met with fierce opposition of a number of middle powers, nicknamed the Coffee Club, who argued that the five existing permanent members were more than enough. After the failure of the Razali proposal, Secretary-General Kofi Annan commissioned a panel of independent experts to reconcile the different positions. Unable to reach a common position, the so-called High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change offered two models: Model A drew on the Razali proposal in that it envisioned a 24-member Council with three additional non-permanent members and six additional permanent members without veto right. Model B was more in line with the demands of the Coffee Club in that it envisioned a 24-member Council without any additional permanent members. Instead, it proposed one additional two-year term non-permanent seat and established a new category of eight renewable four-year term non-permanent seats.

In the lead-up to the 2005 World Summit, when the proposal by the High-level Panel, in one mode or the other, was supposed to be adopted, countries that sought a permanent place at the table or wanted to prevent other countries from permanently sitting at that table started to coordinate with each other. India and Brazil, the most populous countries in Asia and the Americas without a permanent seat, and Japan and Germany, the largest donors of the UN without a permanent seat, decided to support each other’s claim to permanent membership. As the G4, they drafted a resolution that, similar to Model A, called for a 25-member Council with four new non-permanent seats and six new permanent seats, the latter being allotted to two Asian countries, one European country, one country from the Americas and two African countries (Security Council Report, 2005a). With the two Asian seats, the European seat and the American seat filled by themselves, they asked the African Union to name two countries that would fill the remaining two African seats. Unable to agree on the two countries that would join the G4, the African Union drafted an own resolution that called for a 26-member Council with five new non-permanent seats and six new permanent seats, whereby two seats in each category would be reserved for African countries (Security Council Report, 2005b). More controversially, the African Union insisted on extending the veto right to the six new permanent members immediately upon amending the UN Charter. Fearing that this would not receive the support of the five current permanent members, the proposal by the African Union, in turn, was one that the G4 could not agree on. On top of that, the Coffee Club, which reappeared as the Uniting for Consensus group, drafted a resolution that, broadly in line with Model B, called for a 25-member Council with ten additional two-year term non-permanent seats (Security Council Report, 2005c).

Notably, this proposal did not envision additional permanent seats, as Argentina, Italy, Pakistan and South Korea—the group’s leading members—sought to prevent their regional contestants of Brazil, Germany, India and Japan from becoming permanent members (von Freiesleben, 2013, p. 3). With not only two, but three contending proposals at its disposal, and no consensus in sight, none of the three draft resolutions was put to a vote before the General Assembly. And yet they remain the closest calls to Security Council reform ever since 1963.
Of these reform proposals, and later ones by the L69 group and Caribbean Community that both call for a 27-member Council with six additional non-permanent and six additional permanent seats with veto rights, the proposal by the G4 is the most elaborate one, as it allots the permanent seats not only to regional groups, but also to specific countries, namely, Brazil, Germany, India, Japan and two African countries, with Egypt, Nigeria and South Africa as the most likely candidates (von Freiesleben, 2013, p. 10; Swart, 2013, p. 44). Our choice to test this proposal and disregard the others, then, is not an ideological but a pragmatic one: it is the only proposal that saves us from the – probably impossible – task of anticipating who the additional permanent members of a howsoever reformed Council would be.

P5 positions on G4 proposal

Security Council reform is a two-stage process. In a first stage, a reform proposal requires a two-thirds majority in a formal plenary meeting of the General Assembly. Whether the proposal by the G4 would garner the support of the requisite 129 countries if it was put to a vote is unclear. According to Gunther Pleuger, former German permanent representative to the UN, 145 to 155 countries would have voted in favor of it in May and June 2005 (Richter, 2006). When the African Union and UNITAID for Consensus group came up with their very own proposals in July 2005, though, this support seemed to wane. After July 2005, only 32 of the 151 countries whose preferences are known endorsed the proposal by the G4 (Hellmann and Roos, 2007, p. 21). Be that as it may, the second stage constitutes an even bigger hurdle in that it requires the ratification of the then amended Charter by two-thirds of the UN member states that, crucially, must include the P5. In the following, we assess how the P5 have positioned themselves to the proposal by the G4 in general and to the proposed P5 positions on G4 proposal

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On what grounds do the P5 members oppose or support the G4 proposal? China, to begin with, takes the position that ‘Security Council reform should give top priority to increasing the representation of developing countries’, providing them with ‘more opportunities to take turns to serve in the Security Council and participate in its decision-making process’ (Permanent Mission of India to the UN, 2015). As greater representation, on the face of it, decreases the Council’s ability to promptly and resolutely react to international crises, China also seeks to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the Council by limiting the number of both, thematic items on its agenda and additional permanent members at its table – an indirect rejection of the G4 proposal to add six permanent members (Center for UN Reform Education, 2009). In any event, China insists that reform must be based on a broad consensus, which explains its involvement in the Uniting for Consensus group and its opposition to other reform proposals that it has described as ‘immature’ (cited in Swart, 2013, p. 53).

The ‘foremost priority’ of the US, on the other hand, ‘remains ensuring its [the Security Council’s] effectiveness’ (Global Policy Forum, 2005). As John Bolton, permanent representative to the UN during the Bush Jr. administration, made clear: ‘Discussion of reform and expansion of the Council must emphasize the need to strengthen not weaken the Council’s ability to act’ (Global Policy Forum, 2005). Since ‘too large an expansion would risk making it unable to quickly address challenges to international peace and security’, Bolton and subsequent US diplomats have argued for a ‘modest expansion’ of the Council (Global Policy Forum, 2005). According to Nicholas Burns (2005), Under Secretary of State during the Bush Jr. administration, this would translate into ‘two or three additional non-permanent seats’ and ‘two or so new permanent members’, expanding the Council to 19–20 seats (cited in Nicholas Burns, 2005). More unequivocally, William B. Richardson, permanent representative to the UN during the Clinton administration, stated that the US has ‘no flexibility above and beyond 20–21 seats on a reformed Council’ and that it ‘would oppose any resolution calling for higher numbers’ (cited in Schaefer, 1997). The 19–21 seats proposed by the US, of course, fall way short of the 25 seats proposed by the G4.

Like China and the US, Russia seeks to maintain the ‘compact composition of the Security Council in order for it to provide an adequate and prompt reaction to new challenges’ (Permanent Mission of India to the UN, 2015). Seeing a trade-off between expansion, on the one hand, and effectiveness and efficiency, on the other hand, Russia insists that maximum membership should not exceed a reasonable level of low twenties (Permanent Mission of India to the UN, 2015). This, again, is an indirect rejection of the G4 proposal and, in fact, other reform proposals that call for 25, 26 or 27 members.

Despite its support for the G4 proposal, the United Kingdom insists that enlargement must ensure that the Council’s effectiveness is not compromised, fearing that ‘too great an increase in size risks a cumbersome and slow decision-making process, undermining the Council’s ability to respond appropriately and quickly to issues of international peace and security’ (United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 2016). It therefore supports a ‘modest
expansion’ that ‘balances representation with effectiveness’ (United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 2016), leaving open how exactly that balance would be constructed.

While France, too, wants to maintain and even strengthen the Council’s effectiveness, it seeks to do so not by limiting membership to the low twenties – in fact, France supports a Council with membership ‘somewhere in the mid twenties’ (Permanent Mission of India to the UN, 2015) – but by limiting the use of the veto, suggesting that the P5 should voluntarily suspend their veto in cases of mass atrocities.

Summing up, all current permanent members but France have voiced concerns over an enlarged Security Council’s ability to take decisive and timely action. A concern with effectiveness and efficiency, however, is certainly not the only reason for the majority of the P5 to reject the reform proposal by the G4. To uncover their ulterior motives, one has to go beyond official statements and consider current permanent members’ relations to the proposed permanent members.

As noted above, China has argued for a better representation of developing countries, raising hopes on the notoriously underrepresented African continent. In order to keep its influence in Africa, though, China has been careful not to side with any particular African candidate. Nor has it taken a clear stand on the candidacy of Germany. This cannot be said of the two Asian candidates, which China more (Japan) or less (India) openly opposes. Anxious not to antagonize its BRICS partners, China has officially announced its support of Brazil and India but continues to publicly denounce its arch-enemy Japan.

Japan’s bid, in turn, has received the warm support of the US. In its attempt to endow American allies with permanent seats, the US also backed the candidacy of Germany until the country fell from grace over its opposition to the US-led invasion of Iraq. American presidents have signaled lukewarm support for the candidacies of Brazil and India and have been silent on the African candidates, insisting that any consideration had to be ‘country-specific’ (Permanent Mission of India to the UN, 2015).

Russia has repeatedly expressed its support for developing countries from Africa, Asia and Latin America in general, and for India and Brazil in particular. In January 2020, foreign minister Sergey Lavrov reiterated Russia’s ‘position that India and Brazil absolutely deserve to be on the Council together with an African candidate’ (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2020). Russia has been less vocal on the candidacies of Japan and Germany.

Germany, in turn, can count on the support of the UK and France. When shortly after its reunification, Germany began to demand a permanent seat for itself, France’s first reaction was all but enthusiastic. With the increasing integration of Europe in the early 1990s, though, the French turned into fervent supporters of a German permanent seat, not only because they became less wary of their former enemy, but also because they saw it as a way to stifle nascents debates about a common European permanent seat (von Freiesleben, 2013, p. 2).

The UK, too, was initially hesitant towards Germany’s bid for a permanent seat but slowly realized that German permanent membership was a re-assurance of its own permanent membership (von Freiesleben, 2013, p. 2). Against this background, it does not surprise that the UK and France endorse Germany’s G4 initiative and, as such, Brazil’s, India’s and Japan’s bids for permanent membership. That the G4 proposal also envisions two permanent seats for – most likely anglo- and francophone – African countries makes their support only stronger.

**Literature review**

Having inquired into the essence and received echo of the G4 proposal, this section reviews the literature on the distributive and collective effects of that proposal.

A *a priori* studies on the distribution of voting power within a reformed Security Council and the decision-making capacity of such Council are now widely established. After Shapley and Shubik (1954) came up with an index of evaluating the voting power in a committee system, Schwödiauer (1968) and Junn and Park (1977) used that index to compute member states’ relative voting power in the pre- and post-1965 Security Councils. Further indices have been developed by Banzhaf (1965) and Coleman (1971) and applied to current Security Council reform proposals by Hosli et al. (2011) and Volacu (2018).

According to their calculations, the individual voting power share of P5 members, defined ‘as the probability that the Council would have changed its vote, had that member changed its vote’ (O’Neill, 1996, p. 225), would decrease from 16.69 per cent in the actual Security Council to 14.44 per cent (Volacu, 2018, p. 259) and 12.51 per cent (Hosli et al., 2011, pp. 172, 179) in a Security Council modeled after the G4 proposal.\(^2\) Measuring the likelihood that a randomly selected coalition among the members of the Security Council can form a winning coalition, that is, reach decisions, Hosli et al. (2011, pp. 172, 179–180) arrive at a decision probability of 2.59 per cent for the actual decision-making regime and of 1.84 per cent for the decision-making regime under the G4 proposal.

A *a posteriori* studies, on the other hand, seek to estimate the voting influence of current permanent members within a reformed Security Council by considering their voting coherence with proposed permanent members in the General Assembly. So far, voting coherence in the General Assembly has mainly been analyzed to measure the cohesion of EU (Galariotis and Gianniou, 2017; Jin and Hosli, 2013; Rasch, 2008) and BRICS (Ferdinand, 2014; Hooijmaaijers and Keukeleire, 2016; Kursun and Dal, 2017) members’ voting behavior. To our knowledge, there are only two studies that examined voting coherence in the General Assembly with a view to a current permanent member’s influence in a reformed Security Council: in 1997, when the Razali proposal made headlines, Schaefer (1997, p. 6) compared the General Assembly voting records of potential permanent members with that of the US for the year 1996, concluding ‘that U.S. foreign policy priorities will meet even more opposition in an expanded Security Council than is currently the case’. In 2005, when the G4 proposal attached specific
country labels to the new permanent seats, Schaefer and Gardiner (2005) repeated this study by comparing the General Assembly voting records of the proposed permanent members with that of the US for the period of 1999 to 2004. With Germany and Japan voting against the US half of the time, and Brazil, India, Egypt, Nigeria and South Africa more than 70 per cent of the time, the two authors conclude that Security Council expansion would ‘dilute U.S. influence in the Council, and likely result in a Council less supportive of the United States on many key issues’ (Schaefer and Gardiner, 2005, p. 2). Their conclusion that Security Council expansion would also ‘weaken its [the Council’s] ability to meet its mandate’ (Schaefer and Gardiner, 2005, p. 5), however, is empirically unfounded. While it is intuitive to think that ‘any enlargement of the Council would make it more unwieldy and subject to conflicting interests contributing to gridlock that will paralyze the Council and decrease the probability that it will act quickly or effectively to address threats to international peace and security’ (Schaefer and Gardiner, 2005, p. 5), the authors present no empirical evidence to support their claim.

We seek to expand the two studies by Schaefer (1997) and Gardiner and Schaefer (2005) in three distinct ways: first, we compare the voting records of the proposed permanent members not only to the US but to all five current permanent members. Second, we do so not only for a single year or a few years but for the much longer period of 1991 to 2017. Third, we empirically test the hypothesis that an enlarged Security Council is a less effective one.

Methods

In this section, we outline the design, rationale and limitations of our study, justify our selected countries, time period, resolutions and votes, and describe how we calculate the voting coherence and decision thresholds.

In order to study the G4 proposal’s distributive effects, we compare the General Assembly voting records of current and proposed permanent members. Current permanent members whose voting records exhibit a high degree of convergence with those of proposed permanent members can be expected to gain from Security Council enlargement as the probability to form a winning coalition increases. Conversely, current permanent members whose voting records exhibit a high degree of divergence with those of proposed permanent members can be expected to lose from Security Council enlargement as the probability to form a winning coalition decreases.

In order to inquire into the G4 proposal’s collective effects, we project the General Assembly voting records onto a fictitious 5-member Security Council that is composed of the five current permanent members (P5 Council) and onto a fictitious 11-member Security Council that is composed of the five current permanent members and the six proposed permanent members (P11 Council). Comparing the number of resolutions that pass the required decision threshold of approximately 60 per cent allows us to establish the relative decision-making capacity of the two Councils. Unable to determine the quality of passed resolutions, 3 we take the quantity of passed resolutions as an indicator for the effectiveness of the two Councils.

While this constitutes a fresh and, in our assessment, fruitful method to assess the performance of various decision-making regimes, one must not forget that the votes are not Security Council votes but General Assembly votes and that the P5 and P11 Councils are substantially smaller than the actual 15-member and proposed 25-member Councils.

Whereas a negative vote by a P5 member in the General Assembly can be easily overruled, in the Security Council it is tantamount to a veto. Moreover, whereas a resolution in the General Assembly does not amount to much more than a recommendation, a resolution in the Security Council has legally binding character. The two factors, and the fact that voting in the Security Council is often preceded by (in)formal negotiations that have the character of a pre-selection process (O’Neill, 1996, pp. 229–230), might explain why there is usually greater accord in the Security Council than in the General Assembly: a comparison of Security Council and General Assembly voting records of the US, UK, France, Russia, China, Brazil, Germany, India, Nigeria and South Africa in 2011 (the year in which all proposed permanent members but Japan and Egypt sat in the Security Council) shows that all ten countries cast more affirmative votes in the Security Council than in the General Assembly. 4 Conversely, there was not a single country that cast more negative votes in the Security Council than in the General Assembly.

Accordingly, voting coherence and decision-making capacity in the actual and proposed Security Councils can be expected to be higher than in our fictitious P5 and P11 Security Councils that draw on General Assembly voting records. Because voting coherence in the actual Security Council tends to be not only higher than in the General Assembly but also proportionally so – the US State Department’s (2019, p. 8) report on UN voting practices in 2018 reveals that, by and large, Security Council members who exhibit a comparatively small voting coherence with the US in the Security Council, whereas Security Council members who exhibit a comparatively high voting coherence with the US in the General Assembly also exhibit a comparatively small voting coherence with the US in the Security Council, whereas Security Council members who exhibit a comparatively high voting coherence with the US in the General Assembly also exhibit a comparatively high voting coherence with the US in the Security Council – and because in our projection we only compare the fictitious P5 Security Council to the fictitious P11 Security Council – and not the actual Security Council to the fictitious P11 Security Council, or the proposed Security Council to the fictitious P5 Security Council – a higher voting coherence and decision-making capacity in the actual and proposed Security Councils do not seem to have an overly distortive effect on our results.

Considering proposed permanent members’ Security Council votes instead of General Assembly votes does not seem to be a feasible option for the following reasons: first, in contrast to General Assembly voting records, which have been compiled by Voeten and Merdzanovic (2009) for the years 1946–2008 and by Voeten et al. (2018) for the years 2009–2017, Security Council voting records, especially before
1996, are not that readily available. Second, some proposed permanent members only served three or four times as non-permanent members in the Security Council, with some of these terms going back to the 1940s, providing us with too little (recent) votes to draw meaningful conclusions about their (actual) voting behavior. Third, the proposed permanent members never served as non-permanent members at the same time, as a result of which there are no Security Council resolutions that all proposed permanent members voted upon, and, hence, no votes that can be projected onto a fictitious P11 Security Council. Fourth, Security Council votes are often the result of specific pressures, threats, incentives, side-payments and ‘hidden vetoes’ during the Council’s (in)formal negotiations (Nahory, 2004), whereas General Assembly votes tend to reflect countries’ pure and pristine voting intentions, making the latter more indicative of countries’ general voting behavior.

The probably greatest limitation of our study is that we are not able to depict non-permanent members. This is simply because the 14 non-permanent members in a Security Council modeled after the G4 proposal are not known to us. All we know is that, according to the G4 proposal, four of these non-permanent members are from Africa, three from Asia, three from Latin America, two from Eastern Europe and two from Western Europe and other states (Security Council Report, 2005a). Thus, we restrict our analysis to the current permanent members (US, UK, France, Russia and China) and the proposed permanent members that are more (Brazil, Germany, India and Japan) or less (Egypt, Nigeria and South Africa) known to us.

We have chosen the time frame of 1991 to 2017. We do not examine voting records before 1991, as one of the countries under consideration, Russia, only came into being that year. We do not study voting records after 2017, because these data are not that easily accessible and processable. The 27 years in between constitute a sufficient time period for several election cycles to have taken place in democratically constituted countries. This time period, for example, saw three US presidents from the Republican Party and two from the Democratic Party, serving for eleven and sixteen years, respectively. Should foreign policy agendas differ among the two parties and five presidents, these differences are likely to cancel each other out. In general, though, a country’s foreign policy, unlike its social or economic policy, seems to be fairly consistent over the course of different administrations. This being said, the current populist-liberal divide in domestic politics may make itself felt in international politics, reshaping international alliances and, hence, voting patterns in the future.

In our study of General Assembly voting records, we analyze a total of 1,788 resolutions (including votes on paragraphs and amendments) that were adopted between 1991 and 2017 and a total of 21,456 votes that were cast by the countries under consideration. This, however, is only a fraction of the actual resolutions and votes: the dataset by Voeten and Merdzanovic (2009) and the updated version by Voeten et al. (2018), which this study draws on, only comprise voting records of passed resolutions. Votes on unsuccessful resolutions are not part of this study. Furthermore, the data only include passed resolutions with a recorded vote. Around two-thirds of the resolutions in the General Assembly are adopted unanimously without taking a vote and hence not subject to this study. As we are particularly interested in resolutions that pass in one Council but fail in the other, the two restrictions do not constitute a serious problem: resolutions that fail in the General Assembly are likely to also fail in our P5 and P11 Councils where the hurdles to pass a resolution are considerably higher (a qualified majority of approximately 60 per cent as compared to a simple majority in the General Assembly). Moreover, resolutions that are adopted by consensus in the General Assembly will also be adopted in our two modeled Councils. Including them would only elevate the voting coherence without providing additional insight. Lastly, in our computation of voting coherence we exclude all resolutions during whose adoption in the General Assembly one or both members of the pair were absent, and in our computation of decision-making capacity we exclude all resolutions during whose adoption in the General Assembly at least one P11 Council member was absent.

We compute the voting coherence between two countries by awarding one point for every pair of congruent affirmative, abstaining or negative votes.5 Adding the points together, dividing the sum with the total number of dyadic votes and multiplying the ratio with one hundred leaves us with the percentage of coherent votes.

Assuming that no permanent member makes use of its veto right, the required decision threshold in the current 15-member Council stands at 60 per cent (9/15 = 0.6). While the P5 Council allows us to keep the decision threshold of 60 per cent (3/5 = 0.6), the P11 Council forces us to count the number of decisions for a decision threshold of 54.55 per cent (6/11 = 0.5454545454545) and 63.64 per cent (7/11 = 0.6363636363636) threshold demanded by the G4 for a 25-member Council (Security Council Report, 2005a), whereas the 63.64 per cent threshold is reflective of the 63.64 per cent (7/11 = 0.6363636363636) threshold before 1965 when the Security Council only had eleven members.

Results and discussion

Table 1 displays the percentage of current and proposed permanent members’ affirmative, abstaining and negative votes in the General Assembly from 1991 to 2017. While all countries but the US cast more affirmative than abstaining and negative votes, the current permanent members cast fewer affirmative (55.75 per cent) and more abstaining (19.13 per cent) and negative (25.12 per cent) votes than the proposed permanent members (81.5 per cent, 13 per cent and 5.48 per cent, respectively). In the following, we assess what this holds for the voting influence of the current permanent members in an enlarged Security Council and for the decision-making capacity of an enlarged Security Council as a whole.
Distributive effects

Below, we present and discuss the average and annual shares of congruent votes of the five current permanent members and the seven applicant states (A7) from 1991 to 2017.

Figure 2 shows that China-A7 voting coherence was relatively stable over time, which might be due to China’s single party system. After 2010, the number of congruent votes cast by China, on the one hand, and Brazil, India, Egypt, Nigeria and South Africa, on the other hand, converged, indicating that the five developing countries are increasingly speaking with one voice. Figure 1 demonstrates that China’s advocacy for greater African representation makes good sense, as Egypt (88.27 per cent), Nigeria (86.09 per cent) and South Africa (82.24 per cent) voted with China more times than any other applicant state. With South Africa being closely followed by India (82.17 per cent) and Brazil (82.09 per cent), China’s official support of its BRICS partners makes just as much sense. China’s silence on Germany’s bid and its opposition to Japan’s bid seem also reasonable, given that the two developed countries voted with China in only 50.27 per cent and 56.3 per cent of the resolutions, respectively.

Figure 3 illustrates that under the presidencies of Clinton and Obama from 1993 to 2000 and 2009 to 2016, respectively, US-A7 voting coherence was generally higher than in the years when presidents from the Republican party were in office. Under all administrations, though, the number of congruent votes was comparatively small, which is due to the large number of negative votes cast by the US.

Table 1. General Assembly votes of selected countries in percent (1991–2017)

|        | CHN | USA | RUS | UK | FRA | BRA | EGY | GER | IND | JAP | NGA | ZAF |
|--------|-----|-----|-----|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| affirmative | 84.63 | 20.95 | 66.55 | 52.52 | 54.12 | 92.05 | 89.77 | 61.47 | 79.51 | 64.98 | 92.05 | 90.66 |
| abstaining | 10.44 | 14.7 | 24.45 | 21.05 | 25 | 7.9 | 7.6 | 21.96 | 14.02 | 25.09 | 6.52 | 8.01 |
| negative | 4.93 | 64.34 | 9.01 | 26.44 | 20.88 | 0.05 | 2.64 | 16.57 | 6.47 | 9.93 | 1.43 | 1.33 |

Figure 1. P5-A7 average shares of congruent votes (1991 to 2017)

Figure 2. China-A7 annual shares of congruent votes (1991 to 2017)
the one hand, and Brazil, India, Egypt, Nigeria and South Africa, on the other hand, lies somewhere between 13.36 per cent and 18.23 per cent. Considering that even Germany, whose bid the US supported until 2002, and Japan, whose bid the US continues to support, only voted with the US in 41.21 per cent and 33.09 per cent of all resolutions, respectively, the US must be expected to lose from Security Council enlargement.

Figure 4 reveals that Russia-A7 voting coherence reached its peak in the mid 2000s, when the G4 initiative gained momentum. Russia’s war with Georgia in 2008, the dispute over Syria since 2011 and the conflict with Ukraine since 2014 seem to have led to a decrease in the number of congruent votes. While Germany and Japan once had the highest voting coherence with Russia, after the turn of the millennium they became the two countries with the smallest number of congruent votes. Against this background, Russia’s silence on the two countries’ bid for a permanent seat is only consequential. India, which in the 1990s had the lowest voting coherence with Russia, became the country with the largest number of congruent votes in the 2010s. Russia’s support of India’s bid can be construed as a reward for this.

Collective effects

Below, we present and discuss our projection of General Assembly voting records onto a fictional P5 Council, which is composed of the five current permanent members, and a fictional P11 Council, which is composed of the five current permanent members and the six applicant states (A6) of Brazil, Germany, India, Japan, Egypt and Nigeria.7

As Figure 5 for the UK and Figure 6 for France are almost identical, they will be discussed together. The two countries’ voting coherence with Brazil, India, Egypt, Nigeria and South Africa slightly decreased from the late 1990s to the mid 2010s. Their voting coherence with Germany and Japan, in contrast, remained on a high level. Given that Germany and Japan voted with the UK in 84.45 per cent and 73.71 per cent of all resolutions, and with France in 85.39 per cent and 73.58 per cent of all resolutions, respectively, the two permanent members have a clear interest to see Germany and Japan joining their ranks. This cannot be said of the other applicant states, whose voting coherence with the UK ranges between 42.72 per cent and 50.83 per cent and with France between 41.56 per cent and 52.33 per cent.
threshold of 60 per cent (second column) and the number of resolutions that pass in a P11 Council with a required decision threshold of 54.55 per cent (third column) and 63.64 per cent (fourth column). Under the lower and higher threshold, more resolutions pass in the P11 Council (482 and 431, respectively) than in the P5 Council (401). This is because A6 states tend to cast more affirmative and fewer abstaining votes than P5 members: there are 82 resolutions that have a 54.55 per cent majority in the P11 Council but no 60 per cent majority in the P5 Council and 40 resolutions that have a 63.64 per cent majority in the P11 Council but no 63.64 per cent majority in the P5 Council. Conversely, there is only one resolution that has a 60 per cent majority in the P5 Council but no 54.55 per cent majority in the P11 Council and only ten resolutions that have a 60 per cent majority in the P5 Council but no 63.64 per cent majority in the P11 Council.

| Number of resolutions passed | 401 | 482 | 431 | 439 | 390 |
|-------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Number of resolutions failed  | 1,387 | 1,306 | 1,357 | 1,349 | 1,398 |
| . . . because of no majority   | 114 | 33 | 84 | 33 | 82 |
| . . . because of P5 veto       | 1,273 | 1,273 | 1,273 | 1,273 | 1,273 |
| . . . because of A6 veto       | - | - | - | 43 | 43 |
| Total number of resolutions   | 1,788 | 1,788 | 1,788 | 1,788 | 1,788 |
| Share of resolutions passed   | 22.43% | 26.96% | 24.11% | 24.55% | 21.81% |
The fifth column shows that even if the A6 states were granted a veto right (which, according to the G4 proposal, will be decided after 15 years), the number of passed resolutions in a P11 Council with a required decision threshold of 54.55 per cent would be greater than in a P5 Council with a required decision threshold of 60 per cent. This is because A6 states tend to cast fewer negative votes than P5 members: only 43 out of 1,788 resolutions (2.4 per cent) fail because of an A6 veto (and 37 of these because of a veto by India). In contrast, 1,273 out of 1,788 resolutions (71.2 per cent) fail because of a P5 veto.

In sum, the P11 Council with a required decision threshold of both 54.55 per cent and 63.64 per cent has a greater decision-making capacity than the P5 Council with a required decision threshold of 60 per cent. This even holds for the P11 Council with a required decision threshold of 54.55 per cent when the A6 states possess a veto right.

**Conclusion**

In this paper, we examined the distributive and collective effects of the UN reform proposal by the G4 which envisions a 25-member Security Council with four additional non-permanent and six additional permanent members.

While the G4 proposal does not affect P5 members’ capacity to block a resolution, it more or less strongly affects their capacity to find enough allies to pass a favorable resolution. Our analysis of P5 members’ voting coherence with A7 states suggests that China and Russia are likely to benefit from the G4 proposal. If the two countries cannot implement an even more favorable reform proposal, they should give up their resistance and support the G4 initiative as their A7 voting coherence (China: 75.35 per cent, Russia: 65.21 per cent) is considerably higher than their P5 voting coherence (China: 41.81 per cent, Russia: 51.67 per cent). This also holds true if we compare their congruent affirmative votes with A7 states (China: 62.37 per cent, Russia: 57.27 per cent) to their congruent affirmative votes with other P5 members (China: 38.5 per cent, Russia: 39.33 per cent). The G4 proposal seems to have fewer tangible effects for the UK and France, whose A7 voting coherence (UK: 55.37 per cent, France: 56.52 per cent) is only slightly lower than their P5 voting coherence (UK: 60.55 per cent, France: 59.77 per cent). Given that that their A7 voting coherence of affirmative votes (UK: 45.79 per cent, France: 46.4 per cent) is slightly higher than their P5 voting coherence of affirmative votes (UK: 38.21 per cent, France: 38.81 per cent), the chance of the UK and France of passing a favorable resolution actually increases under the G4 proposal. The only P5 member that stands to lose from the G4 proposal is the US, whose A7 voting coherence (21.97 per cent) is significantly lower than its P5 voting coherence (36.54 per cent) and whose A7 voting coherence of affirmative votes (15.69 per cent) is slightly lower than its P5 voting coherence of affirmative votes (16.2 per cent). The G4 countries are therefore well advised to direct their persuasive efforts towards the US.

Our projection of General Assembly voting records onto a fictitious P5 Council and a fictitious P11 Council demonstrates that in most scenarios the latter Council has greater decision-making capacity than the former one. Extending the P5 Council to a P11 Council increases the share of passed resolutions from 22.43 per cent to 26.96 per cent under a required decision threshold of 54.55 per cent and from 22.43 per cent to 24.11 per cent under a required decision threshold of 63.64 per cent. Further extending the P11 Council to a 25-member Council as proposed by the G4 is unlikely to decrease the share of passed resolutions: a glance at the voting patterns of General Assembly members shows that they are similar to those of the A6 in that members cast way more affirmative (83.7 per cent) than abstaining (11.7 per cent) or negative (4.6 per cent) votes (Ferdinand, 2014: 380). Adding 14 of those members to the P11 Council would make it even more likely that the abstaining votes of P5 members are overruled by the affirmative votes of other Council members. In any event, to reach the intended size of the proposed 25-member Council and the actual 15-member Council, we not only have to add 14 non-permanent members to the P11 Council, but also ten non-permanent members to the P5 Council. Filling up the P5 and P11 Councils with non-permanent members is unlikely to reverse the share of passed resolutions in the two Councils given that decision thresholds are adjusted accordingly.

Even though we did not inquire into the quality of resolutions, our finding that the quantity of passed resolutions increases with increased membership casts doubt on the popular view that an enlarged Security Council is a less effective one, as it has been advocated by current permanent members and scholars alike: All P5 members but France repeatedly called for only a limited expansion of the Council in order not to diminish its effectiveness, and it is precisely on this ground that the US and Russia have officially positioned themselves against the G4 proposal. For scholars of the conservative American think tank The Heritage Foundation, ‘[e]ven a modest expansion of the Council would contribute to gridlock’ (Gardiner and Schaefer, 2005, p. 1). These voiced concerns do not stand up to scrutiny. While ‘care has to be applied assuming that observed empirical patterns in the past might be guidelines for preference distributions and voting behavior of actors in the future’ (Hosli et al., 2011, p. 168), it stands to reason that a Security Council modeled after the G4 proposal would be not less but more effective than the actual one.

To fortify this finding, *a posteriori* studies like this should be combined with *a priori* studies like the one conducted by Hosli et al. (2011) that reach a very different conclusion. As Hosli et al. (2011, p. 68) note: ‘In future work, it might be fruitful to also test effects on . . . power distributions among actors when the probabilities of actors voting “yes” or “no” are adapted based on empirical insights’. In the end, though, neither *a priori* nor *a posteriori* studies are able to capture the informal patterns of bargaining and voting, such as side-payments and ‘hidden vetoes’ (Nahory, 2004), that play an ever more important role in Security Council negotiations. In order to model the decision-making process itself, one would have to test the different decision-making regimes in a controlled simulation environment.
DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are openly available at https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/LEJUQZ.

Notes

1. Effectiveness means achieving a desired goal (here: maintaining international peace and security, mainly through passing resolutions); efficiency means achieving this goal with the least effort (here: least waste of time).

2. The different percentages reported by Volacu (2018) and Hosli et al. (2011) could be due to the fact that the latter include an element of a posteriori-ness by estimating the correlation of P5 votes in the Security Council on the basis of P5 voting records in the General Assembly.

3. This would require a content analysis of all 1,788 resolutions as well as some sort of importance/robustness/impact scale against which to rate them – an undertaking that goes well beyond the scope of this article. Though, it is not unreasonable to assume that more important/robust/impactful resolutions have a higher chance of being rejected than less important/robust/impactful ones. We thank two anonymous reviewers for drawing our attention to this.

4. The number of compared resolutions (Security Council: 67, General Assembly: 68) is almost the same.

5. Members can abstain for different reasons: sometimes, a delegation does not have a strong opinion on the issue on the floor, which it seeks to indicate by abstaining from a vote. At other times, a delegation is neither fully in support of nor fully in opposition to an issue, opting for a ‘neutral’ vote instead. In the Security Council, where a negative vote by a permanent member is tantamount to a veto, abstaining can also be an option to not block a resolution, but still express one’s misgivings about it. In all cases, abstentions constitute some kind of halfway point between strong support and strong opposition. Following the approach devised by Hurwitz (1975) and used by Ferdinand (2014), amongst others, we computed the voting coherence when adding half a point for every case in which one country casts an affirmative or negative vote and the other country abstains from voting, but found no significant difference.

6. As South Africa was absent from the General Assembly until 1994, the bar chart in Figure 1 displays the P5-South Africa average share of congruent votes for the years 1994–2017 and the graphs in Figures 2–6 report a P5-South Africa annual share of congruent votes of zero for the years 1991–1993.

7. Since our projection only considers resolutions during whose adoption all P11 Council members were present, we would have to exclude the eventful post-Cold War years of 1991–1993 if we included South Africa instead of Egypt or Nigeria.

8. These and the following numbers do not appear in the table.

9. The figures are for the time period 1974–2008.

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