

## **An At-Large Representation of the General Assembly Membership in the Security Council**

By Robert McKelvey

Here I outline an alternative voting procedure, whereby the membership of the UN General Assembly, voting in a body, may elect the members of the UN Security Council.

The objective of such a voting procedure is to create a SC which faithfully mirrors the distribution of policy positions within the GA on SC issues--and which achieves this in a relatively simple way. Specifically, the method utilizes an informal caucusing, in which GA members are strongly motivated to participate. This is followed by a formal vote, in which all GA members participate, a procedure designed specifically to achieve--in a relatively simple and transparent way--a proportional representation within the SC of the policy perspectives present in the GA.

Any group (or coalition) of GA members which share a common policy perspective on SC-related affairs will endeavor to agree upon a particular candidate or (candidates) for SC seats who will best represent their own individual positions on SC-related issues. And proportional representation of the GA in the SC means that the strength of various policy perspectives among SC members should approximate ( as appropriately weighted) the same perspectives within the GA itself.

Note that the currently recognized "coalitions" in the GA, such as the *Group of 77* often do NOT really meet this policy-homogeneity criterion, although subsets of its members will--and that typically such a subset may well be part of a larger coherent group, not all of whose members belong to the Group of 77. Similarly not all African states will agree on SC policy for dealing with issues such as civil war in the Congo or on the appropriate UN response to ethnic oppression in Darfur, and some of them will share a common perspective on these issues with many countries in Europe and elsewhere.

In the following I will describe a particular *system for weighted at-large voting within the GA* that can, in a very simple and transparent way, achieve-and maintain over time--such proportional representation in the SC.

To begin with, I accept that the GA has adopted a weighted-voting scheme for its OWN voting, such as Joseph Schwartzberg's merged triad system, as described in his 2007 article Universal Regional Representation as a Basis for Security Council Reform (URR). I pair such a weighted voting scheme in the GC with an unweighted voting system in the SC. Furthermore, the choice of SC members by the GA is made through an *at-large system*--namely, *all members of the SC are elected simultaneously, through an appropriately-structured vote by the full membership of the GA*.

To illustrate this general scheme, I accept the specific voting weights assigned to the members of the GA in Dr. Schwartzberg's URR. I then pair these weighting assignments with a particular voting scheme, whereby the membership of the GA votes to choose the SC members.

I have chosen to prescribe for this GA vote a procedure called cumulative voting (CV). There are other appropriate systems in common use (e.g. the Hare system of a *single transferrable vote*), but CV is perhaps the simplest to describe. (For more details on these and other at-large voting systems, see the Wikipedia article on Voting Systems, or Chapters 31-33 in vol. 2 of the Handbook of Game Theory , Elsevier, 1994).

Using *weighted cumulative voting* (WCV) one assigns to each GA member-state a vote equal to its assigned weight, as expressed as a percentage of the GA total.. Thus the US will be assigned a quota of 14.32 votes, the members of the Westminster League (Canada, Australia, and New Zealand) each is assigned a quota, and these total to a quota of 4.27 for the three. The European countries' individual quotas sum to a total of 16.19. And so on. The cumulative quota for all GA members together totals 100.

As an illustration of SC selection, consider a SC consisting of 11 at-large members, all having the same voting power in their (unweighted) SC decision-making. Assume for simplicity that all 11 SC positions are filled simultaneously, and that, in the election, each GA member can cast its total quota for a single SC candidate or split it among any number of candidates as it may choose.

If, in the GC voting, a particular SC candidate-state receives a vote quota exceeding  $100/11 = 9.091$  votes, then it is assured election, since the remaining quota isn't large enough for more than 10 other candidates to be allotted that vote level or more.

Under the URR weightings no GA nation-state has a quota large enough that it can unilaterally elect more than one candidate. However two countries, the US and China, with respective quotas of 14.32 and 11.09, have large enough quotas to permit each of them, acting unilaterally, to assure itself, or its other first choices, SC seats. (India and Japan come close, and may eventually grow to achieve as much.)

On the other hand, after allocating 9.091 units of its quota to elect its first choice, the U.S will still have a residual quota of 5.559 which, combined with a partner's quotas, would permit it to share in the election of a second representative. For example, by forming a coalition with the Westminster League, a group whose policy positions are very similar to its own, it will have created a *homogeneous* coalition with a total quota of 19.55, --more than enough to elect two representatives--indeed the group could achieve this result even without the help of New Zealand.

But note that, should this coalition attempt to elect more than two representatives, then it will fail, and at least one of the three would likely be defeated. To be certain of electing three or more compatible candidates, the coalition must expand its membership accordingly.

In a similar way, all GA member states can be expected to shop around, each looking for compatible allies so as to optimize the role of its own quota in advancing the strength of its own policy perspectives within the SC. The upshot of all GA members operating in this fashion is that the resulting SC makeup will indeed mirror the distribution of policy positions found within the GA itself. Furthermore the process of coalition building that this relies upon is entirely self-driven and informal--requiring no explicit guidance or structuring within the formal voting system--and the GA members are strongly motivated to participate.

Note that having a strong proportional representation of the GA in the SC will simplify the negotiations between the membership of the GA *as a whole* with the SC, to arrive at a mutually acceptable position on any substantive action to be taken through the SC process: For example, following an initial majority ruling (6 or more votes out of 11) by the SC, the measure would then require GA ratification, e.g. by a supermajority of 60 votes of 100. If such ratification should fail, the measure would then return to the SC, which will internally negotiate changes designed to secure GA ratification of a modified action.

To conclude: This, and other at-large voting systems are entirely compatible with weighted voting schemes, and would be likely to result in a proportional representation in the SC of the current policy

distribution of the GA. This in turn would facilitate interaction between the two bodies, in arriving at mutually acceptable actions over SC-related issues.

As noted, there are a number of widely-used at-large voting schemes available to achieve such a result- and most are compatible with weighted voting in the GA. There is NO perfect system-each has its own strengths and weaknesses. It would be a worthwhile exercise to explore these and to decide whether there is a particular at-large system which would best suit the culture and politics of the UN General Assembly.

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