**Issue:** Reviewing the right of VETO power in the Security Council  
**Forum:** General Assembly  
**Position:** Co-Chair  
**Name:** Marta Ceccarelli

**Introduction**

The Security Council is one of the 6 main organs of the United Nations. Created to maintain and regulate international peace and security, this committee operates with 15 members: 5 permanents and 10 non-permanent ones with a 2 years term elected by the General Assembly. The 5 permanent members own the so called “veto power” that permits them to overrule a non procedural meeting’s decision. Critics see this as an undemocratic character for the UN standards and it’s often seen in contrast with articles in the UN charter itself. The veto power was given to China, France, Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, and the United States and many argue that these power based on historical merit doesn’t fit today’s society.

**Definition of Key Terms**

*Security Council:* One of the main six UN organs, this committee works to maintain and regulate international peace and security along with a few other responsibilities.

*Veto power:* “The power of any of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council to overrule actions or decisions by a non concurring vote.”[1]

*Hidden veto/ Pocket veto:* Every draft text first needs to be approved by all of the permanent members so many discussion don’t even arrive to the council when one of the five decides to block the drafts. This is a great disadvantage, as the big five can avoid the Security Council to discuss certain issues.

*Big Five/ P5:* The five countries that after WW2 were awarded the title of most important and influent. They are the five permanent members of the Security Council and they own the power to veto.
General Overview

The Security Council role is to protect international peace. This means investigating possible threats to security, recommend methods to adjust frictions between States, ask for economic sanctions, take military action, and admit new members to the UN. The five permanent members of the Security Council are often referred as ‘The Big Five’, or ‘P5’ and they hold the power to veto substantive resolutions inside the Security Council. There are also 10 non-permanent members elected for a two-years term by the members of the General Assembly. They are elected mainly based on keeping the equilibrium of representation between regional groups (African group, Asia-Pacific Group, Eastern European Group, Latin American and Caribbean Group, Western European and Others Group). Even if the General Assembly tries to include every UN member, more than 60 member states have never been part of the Security Council. These are the current non-permanent states:

➢ Angola (2016)
➢ Chad (2015)
➢ Chile (2015)
➢ Jordan (2015)
➢ Lithuania (2015)
➢ Malaysia (2016)
➢ New Zealand (2016)
➢ Nigeria (2015)
➢ Spain (2016)
➢ Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) (2016)

Members of the current UNSC on the map of the world: Permanent members | Non-permanent members [2]
Veto power was introduced to maintain unanimity in Security Council and was given to the ‘winners’ of WW2 because of their so called historical merit. The presence of the power to veto in an organization such as the UN has always been seen as controversial. While sustainers claim that the veto power was never meant to be democratic because it was a well-established decision making method, many argue that veto power can’t be justified in today’s society and that it doesn’t reflect some principles of the UN charter. They also believe that the big five hide behind the ‘historical merit’ argument when they are actually just protecting their own interests. Moreover, some think that veto power can alter the discussion of issues even when not used, like in the case of the hidden veto.

**Major Parties Involved**

**Big five:**
China, France, Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, and the United States. China has used veto power the least, only 9 times. France has used its veto 17 times, the United Kingdom 31 times. The USA has used its veto 79 times, with more than 40 related to issues in the Middle East. Russia has used the veto power 127 times since the UN was formed.

**Uniting for Consensus (UfC):**
A Movement lead by Italy, developed in opposition to the idea of adding G4 countries as permanent members in the Security Council. Along with Italy, other 12 countries are in this group.
Timeline of Key Events

1939-1945    World War II
1945          UN Charter
1947–1991     Cold War
1950          Uniting for Peace Resolution
1990          Uniting for Consensus develops
2009          First and second meeting ‘Security Council Reform’ Address the Veto
2015          Latest use of Veto power (By Russia on condemning the Srebrenica massacre as genocide)

Previous attempts to resolve the issue

In 1990, the General Assembly discussed and drafted the resolution ‘Uniting for Peace’ presented by the United States. This resolution states that the General Assembly itself should immediately consider any decision that fails to receive unanimity among the five permanent members in a special meeting. The disadvantage of this is the fact that the General Assembly is big in size, so the decisions won't be quick or effective enough.

Possible Solutions

One of the possible solutions is to abolish the veto power itself. The supporters claim that the existence of this power is obsolete and politically unjustified. This solution is not supported by the Big Five, as they sustain that it is an efficient way to preserve unanimity among the permanent members. Another possible solution is the extension of the permanent members to other countries. This would mean some kind of election inside both the Security Council and the General Assembly in which the most economically, socially, and military influential States would be elected as new permanent members. The members that are most likely to be elected, are the G4 nations (Brazil, Germany, India, and Japan). Some argue that this resolution should
also eliminate some of the current permanent members from the list, based on some kind of requirements. The idea of extending veto power is not appreciated by the current permanent members but also by the ‘Uniting for Consensus’, which is a movement against the veto power as a whole. One last solution is to review and restrict the veto power. This would mean limit the scope of veto only, for example, for decisions under the chapter VII of the UN Charter.[3]

Appendix/Appendices


[2] Picture: "UNSC 2015" by Sir Sputnik - Own work. Licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0 via Wikimedia Commons -

[3] Chapter VII: “Action with respect to threats to the peace, breaches of the peace, and acts of aggression”

Bibliography

<http://www.academia.edu/4028521/The_analysis_of_the_Veto_Power_in_the_United_Nations_Security_Council_Public_International_Law>


