

Whither Security Council ex

APPARENTLY FRUSTRATED BY THE failure of the decade long efforts to achieve a consensual agreement on the SC permanent membership, the G-4 finally decided last month to introduce a draft resolution at the UN General Assembly in order to put it to vote. This forced those opposing it — the African Union (AU) and the United for Consensus group (UFC) — to table their drafts too.

The G-4 justified the step on the ground that enough was enough and that the resolution of the issue through vote was the only remedy. The Secretary-General Kofi Annan who too thought that the time was ripe for settlement of the issue through vote supported the course of action that the G-4 had adopted. What was the latter's motive in egging the UN members to put the matter to vote rather than urge them to make greater efforts towards a consensually agreed solution?

The question assumes greater importance when we examine the present issue, which involves scramble for political power in the international community, in the light of the settlement relating to the struggle for the resources of oceans spread over two-thirds of the planet during the last century. It was in 1967 that the "talkathon" on oceans started under the UN auspices and it took the member states a quarter of a century to reach a consensually agreed settlement. The LOS Convention became possible because the international community was convinced that a resolution through vote would not be durable in addition to being divisive.

It is undeniable that negotiations on the SC expansion on an informal level have been going on for more than a decade without results. This however does not mean that the time has come to put the matter to vote because, as rightly pointed out by Pakistan's UN representative, the G-4 approach was "divisive" and "selfish". Could it be that the Secretary General is looking for a place in history, which he may be hoping to achieve through the SC expansion during his tenure? Or is it that he wants the international community to forget about his role in the oil-for-food scandal and the Rwandan genocide?

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COMMENT



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AU which, unlike the latter, demand it with veto right. The schism thus created between the two has deprived the G-4 of the 53 African votes, which could have helped it get two-thirds majority for its draft. In order to woo the AU, the G-4 inserted in its draft the right to reopen the issue of veto after 15 years. There were high hopes of winning the African vote as its draft, according to the German ambassador Gunter Pleuger, gave Africans 95 percent of what they had asked for. And the ministerial meeting of the two groups held in London in late July further enhanced the high hopes when the Africans agreed to drop the demand for veto right. However, the extraordinary summit held in the beginning of August in Addis Ababa scuttled the London deal.

It is certainly a moot point that the

endorsement of the London deal by the summit would have resolved the issue. This is so because China and the US have at present announced their staunch opposition to the SC expansion for one reason or the other. The US, which openly favours the Japanese candidature in contradistinction to China, opposes the G-4 draft because it does not fit into its priorities.

In its view, the financial and secretariat reforms along with other measures such as establishment of a new human rights council, a peace-building commission, a UN democracy fund and adoption of a comprehensive convention on terrorism demand priority over the question of the SC expansion.

On the substance of the expansion proposals, it favours addition of no more than "two or so" permanent members and the maximum SC strength at 20 or so. It justifies this stance on the ground that a large number of new members will make the SC unwieldy and hence ineffective. In the light of the foregoing, the US asked the UN members not to vote for any proposal.

China, on the other hand, opposes the G-4 draft on the ground that it is indifferent towards the interests of most developing countries, especially small and medium-sized countries. However, the real reason for its opposition stems from Japan's candidature, which it disapproves of because of the latter's horrendous wartime record. In its view, the forcible voting on the draft will severely damage the solidarity of Africa, Asia, UN member States and the long-term interests of the UN. The Chinese, in addition to ganging up with the US to defeat the G-4 draft, have threatened to veto it if it was put to vote in its present form.

Upset at the monkey wrench thrown in to frustrate its efforts to get permanent membership, the G-4 resorted to threats and blackmails or at least some of its members were accused of doing so. For example, the Japanese foreign minister, Machimura, threatened to cut his country's contribution to the UN budget in case Japan was denied a permanent seat. He argued that Japan was the second largest economy of the world. He also highlighted that with 19.5 percent contribution the Japanese share to the UN budget was second only to the US' (which contributes 22 percent) and was much higher than that of other per-

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manent members each of which contributed less than 10 percent of the budget.

Again, the Italian representative accused an unnamed G-4 country of blackmail and financial threats to win support for its draft. Mr Machimura rebutted the Italian charge by describing it as "negative campaigning". His comment that "[he] would not want to sink that low", demonstrated the degree of acrimony in the General Assembly debate in the matter.

Given the continuing deadlock the president of the General Assembly, Jean Ping of Togo, was reportedly contemplating presenting a draft of his own. According to diplomatic sources, the compromise draft, if presented, will envisage non-electable permanent seats with ten- or 12-year tenure. Japan appears to be receptive to the idea whereas the reaction of other three G-4 members is not clear. India, which was apparently reluctant to abandon veto rights in the first place, is reportedly not keen on the compromise formula. The proposed draft appears to be a non-starter for the UFC group as a ten-year tenure is unacceptable.

Where do we go from here? It is obvious that the matter cannot be wished away. The Secretary General hopes that a settlement will be achieved in the course of the forthcoming session. As things stand it is far from certain. It is undeniable that the allied powers that had to grapple with the present issue after WWII were able to do so without too much hassle because of the unity which they enjoyed as result of the coalition against Hitler.

We definitely lack such an advantage today. However, the essence of their approach was the spirit of compromise, which unfortunately is lacking on the part of the G-4, as it is not ready to accommodate the vital interests of regional rivals. Unless it shows readiness to do so, a consensual settlement in the matter may not be forthcoming. And if by any coincidence its draft gets adopted on the basis of a technical majority, it will be constantly challenged which will not augur well for the cause of international peace and security.

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