

The United Nations Resolutions on Syria: Exploration of Motivation from Russia and China

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Abstract

This article interrogates the United Nations Security Council's response to the Syrian crises and explores the motivation from Russia and China for vetoing all attempts to impose sanctions on President Bashar al-Assad's regime. The paper argues that although China's decision to collaborate with Russia in the Syrian crises displayed their mutual determination to check the United States' unilateral regime change in Syria, they acted in protection of their respective national interests in Syria, and that their actions had the effect of undermining the United Nations' multilateral approach to international peace and security. The study recommended, among other things, the enlargement of the Security Council to accommodate the major regions of the world in order to enhance the Council's authority, modify the right of veto, and thereby make the adoption of resolutions and the prospect of their enforcement possible.

Keywords: United Nations, Resolution, Syria, Veto, Russia, China.

1. Introduction

Recently, citizens of many independent states have adopted mass protests and demonstrations as an instrument to dethrone their leaders. Thus, protest movements reflect the key aspect of political life – the relationship between the rulers and the ruled (Andrain and Apter, 1995: 1-2). Starting in December 2010, protests and demonstrations, described severally as the “Arab Spring” (Ashley, 2011), “Arab Spring Winter” (Miller, 2011), “Arab Awakening” (Al Jazeera, 2011) and “Arab Uprisings” (Fahim, 2011), had convulsed North African countries and later spread across the Middle East. This had resulted in the ousting of sit-tight leaders as well as in the overthrowing of repressive regimes, the plunging of another country into a fratricidal civil war and the placing of even long-established monarchies under renewed political and economic stress (Gvosdov, 2012).

In Tunisia, for instance, the protests started on December 18, 2010 in Sidi Bouzid, when Mohamed Bouazizi set himself on fire in protest against police corruption and ill-treatment, thus igniting weeks of demonstrations that spread across the country (Noueihed, 2011). As a result, President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali fled to Saudi Arabia, after 23 years of repressive rule. In Egypt, the uprising started on January 25, 2011 with millions of protesters from a variety of socio-economic and religious backgrounds protesting. On February 11, 2011 after eighteen (18) days of protests, President Hosni Mubarak resigned from power, thus ending his 30-year old presidency. In Libya, the protest began on February 12, 2011, against the 42-year rule of Col. Muammar Gaddafi, a day after Hosni Mubarak was deposed, spreading to other parts of the country within days (Newas. Az, 2012). The crisis in Libya, however, seized the attention of the international community and was labeled a clear case when timely and decisive response for upholding Responsibility to Protect (R2P) should occur.

With the success of the protests in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, a wave of unrest struck Yemen and spread to other countries and outside the region. On March 15, 2011, demonstrations began in the southern Syria city of Dera'a with the protesters demanding “the release of political prisoners, lifting of emergency law, broader political representation and a free media”. Despite government repression and the nominal enactment of reforms such as the lifting of the 48-year old ‘state of emergency’ in April 2011, protests spread to other Syrian cities such as Damascus, Aleppo, al-Hasakah, Deir ez-Zor and Hama (Skibinsky, 2011). As the protests which, nevertheless, culminated in the calls for the resignation of President Bashar al-Assad continued, the government forces indiscriminately attacked and detained protesters, leading to deaths, injuries, internal displacement, increase in the number of refugees and other forms of casualties. As Amos (2011) puts it, “protests continued through July, 2011 with the government responding with harsh security clampdowns and military operations in several districts, especially the north”.

Consequently, as the protests escalated in Syria, armed insurgent groups emerged, thus signaling a new phase in the uprising. In particular, two opposing groups emerged: on the one hand, - the Syrian National Council (SNC) rejected dialogue with Assad's regime and called for its immediate overthrow. On the other hand, the National Co-ordination Committee (NCC) advocated dialogue and argued that overthrowing Assad's regime would lead to further chaos. While the demands by the protesters remained unheeded and the cataclysmic effect of the crisis continued, the situation in Syria more closely came to resemble a civil war, with opposition groups seizing villages (and parts of cities such as Homs) and fighting more sophisticated battles against government forces (Harris, 2012). In June 2012 in particular, rebel forces began to take and to hold territory, especially along the Turkish-Syrian border, thus prompting Turkey's strong stance against Assad's regime as against the Arab world's initial silence to the development in Syria (Sharp and Blanchard, 2012). Of note, the UN Security Council did not take immediate steps to halt the crisis in Syria as compared to its swift protective action in the Libyan crisis.

After several months, the Syrian crisis has continued unabated, due to the UN Security Council's clear lack of unity and inability of the permanent members to form a consensus on action needed to arrest the crisis in the early stage. In particular, Russia and China had vetoed a number of draft resolutions originally designed to curb a possible escalation of violence in Syria, thus threatening the dispute settlement mechanism of the UN and leaving the Security Council divided.

This article explores the motivation from Russia and China in vetoing the UN resolutions on Syria and its impact on the UN collective security approach in the maintenance of international peace and security.

2. Conceptual and Theoretical Discourse

Foremost among the original purposes of the United Nations Charter was the maintenance and enforcement of global peace through the creation of an effective system of collective security. Thus, the perceptual prism for the analysis of this study is the Collective Security Theory. Developed from the nineteenth century system of the balance of power, collective security which coincides with the development of an increasingly strict prohibition on the use of force, is captured in the old adage "one-for-all and all-for-one" (Mingst, 2004:218; Ghosh, 2009:89). As Morgenthau (1978: 418) puts it, "one-for-all and all-for-one is the watchword of collective security". Thus, collective security is predicated on the assumption that aggression against one state is aggression against every member (of the international community) which should be defeated by the collective action of all (Rourke and Boyer, 2003:279). In the same vein, Luard (1982:3-7) opined that "collective security" can be understood as "the principle of each for all and all for each", the rule that wherever an act of aggression occurred, the whole international community would combine to defend the victim. In so doing, it would defend not only the particular country concerned, but peace itself. Laski (cited in Ekpe, 2004) notes that, under collective security arrangements, nations must agree to the principle that, in matters which touch more than one nation, they would be bound by the decision arrived at by a common international body (in this case, the UN) in which all nations are in some way represented.

This implies that under a collective security arrangement, every Member-State is expected to rally to the side of the "victim" against the "aggressor", regardless of any friendly ties that might exist between the Member-State and the "aggressor", or any hostility between that Member-State and the "victim". Thus, there must be a broad consensus among members of the Security Council as well as collaborative efforts in the endorsement of UN resolutions as well as their enforcement.

Lowe *et al* (2008; 13) argued that "the concept of collective security referred to a system, regional or global, in which each State in the system accepts that the security of one is the concern of all, and agree to join in a collective response to threats to, and breaches of the peace." This presupposes that collective security could be undertaken under two levels of arrangements, global or regional. Regional collective security as provided for in Chapter VIII of the UN Charter encouraged regional arrangements to be proactive in peacefully resolving conflicts that occur within their neighbourhood. This idea implies that each region of the world, for example, African Union should be responsible for its own peacemaking.

Mearscheimer (1998) has identified the core premises of a paradigmatic collective security system. First, States must renounce the use of military force to alter the *status quo*. They must not launch wars of aggression but instead must settle all disputes peaceably. Second, "States must believe that their national interest is inextricably bound up with the national interest of other States, so that an attack on any State is considered an attack on every State. Thus, when there is an act of aggression, all States must automatically and collectively confront the aggressor with overwhelming power. The aim is to create automatic obligations of a collective character. Third,

and for Mearscheimer most important, States must trust each other. State must not only act in accordance with the first two norms, but they must trust that other States will do likewise.

Ziring, Riggs and Plano (2005:172) have, however, identified the essential elements of an effective collective security system to include *consensus*, *commitment* and *organization*. The authors explained the working of these elements graphically:

At the minimum level of 'consensus' states must agree that peace is indivisible and that threats to peace anywhere are the concern of all. But more is required. There must be a 'commitment' to act in accordance with the collective security principles...But commitment may fail in times of crisis if there is no 'organization' to make it effective.

The authors argued further that, for practical purposes, collective security had a fourth prerequisite, which states that, power should be widely dispersed enough that no State can hope to challenge all the others, and that the effectiveness of the system depends on its capacity to deter most potential violators and to defeat an actual aggressor in short order. Furthermore, Standley (1991: 6-7) has given the essential characteristics of a workable collective security system to include; *representativeness* in composition, *fair* in its decisions, *decisive* and *prompt* in its actions, *effective* in operation, *flexible* in response, *reliable* and *adequately* financed. Arguing similarly, Opitz (2010) has rightly articulated:

Further preconditions for the proper functioning of the system of collective security are the universality of the system, in particular the participation of all great powers, a high degree of international solidarity, the impartiality of the international organization, and above all, the readiness of the States to surrender essential components of their sovereignty.

Going by the dictates of the collective security theory, it was reasonable to expect or assume that the permanent members of the UN Security Council would cooperate to resolve the Syrian crises, but, however, the character of the international system in general and the imperatives of the UN system in particular made this impossible. In other words, although the prescription of the theory is compatible with the UN's primary goal of maintaining international peace and security through collective enforcement measures, the interests of the major powers on the Council were at variance with the commitment to the adoption and enforcement of resolution.

3. The UN Security Council Response to the Syrian Crisis

As the protests in Syria gradually turned into armed conflict between the government forces and the protesters, the international community became the focus of international reactions and interactions. Though the UN Security Council did not take immediate steps to halt the crisis in Syria, it has debated the crisis on a number of occasions, as discussed hereunder:

Firstly, in August 2011, the Security Council issued a presidential statement without adopting a binding resolution. In the presidential statement, the Security Council:

- (1) Expresses its grave concern at the deteriorating situation in Syria, and expresses profound regret at the death of many hundreds of people.
- (2) Condemns the widespread violations of human rights and the use of force against civilians by the Syrian authorities.
- (3) Calls for an immediate end to all violence and urges all sides to act with utmost restraint, and to refrain from reprisals, including attacks against state institutions.
- (4) Calls on the Syrian authorities to fully respect human rights and to comply with their obligations under applicable international law. Those responsible for the violence should be held accountable.
- (5) Notes the announced commitments by the Syrian authorities to reform, and regrets the lack of progress implementation, and calls upon the Syrian Government to implement its commitments.
- (6) Reaffirms its strong commitment to the sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of Syria. It stresses that the only solution to the current crisis in Syria is through an inclusive and Syrian-led political process, with the aim of effectively addressing the legitimate aspirations and concerns of the population which will allow the full exercise of the fundamental freedoms

for its entire population, including that of expression and peaceful assembly (Media Release, August 3, 2011).

Prior to releasing the above stated presidential statement, the Security Council debated a draft resolution that would have, among other things, condemned the Syrian government's actions. But Russia, China, Brazil, South Africa, Lebanon and India all opposed the resolution (Dergham, 2011). In addition to this, the presidential statement was described as 'a limp statement that is not legally binding' and 'completely inadequate'.

After more than seven months of violent crackdown on predominantly peaceful dissent in Syria by the government forces, it became obvious and disappointing that the Security Council could not arrest the situation. In October 4, 2011 France, UK, Germany and Portugal tabled a draft resolution UN Doc. S/2011/612 (hereinafter, October 2011 Draft Resolution) for consideration by the Security Council. The European Draft resolution repeated many points in the Presidential statement, though in stronger terms, condemning the "continued grave and systematic human rights violations and the use of force against civilians by the Syrian authorities". The resolution had initially imposed sanctions as well, but it was watered down during negotiations preceding the vote so that it ultimately warned only of the Council's "intention... to consider its options", including measures under Article 41 of the UN Charter, thus hinting at the prospect of sanctions in the future (Mohamed, 2012). Despite these revisions, there were nine votes in favour of the resolution, two votes against with four abstentions. Voting in favor of the draft resolution were Bosnia-Herzegovina, Colombia, France, Gabon, Germany, Nigeria, Portugal, the UK, and the US. Voting against were China and Russia. Abstaining were Brazil, India, Lebanon and South Africa. The 'no' votes by China and Russia, as permanent members of the Security Council, represented a double veto of the European draft resolution. The European draft resolution failed to pass.

In a related development, on October 27, 2011 a draft resolution had been proposed by Russia and China. The two countries said their resolution had been designed to encourage a peaceful process to help the Syrian government deal both its desired reforms and with the extremist violence against the Syrian government that was making such reforms difficult (Mohamed, 2012). The draft resolution from Russia and China was not even put to vote at the Security Council.

In a bid to further discuss and find a lasting solution to the Syrian crisis, the United Nations began a meeting on January 31, and continued until February 4, 2012, where a draft resolution, sponsored by a large number of Arab States and Western countries, was put to vote. The draft resolution:

1. Condemns the Syrian regime for 'the continued widespread and gross violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms'.
2. Demands that the Syrian government immediately put an end to violence...
3. Condemns all violence... and demands that all parties in Syria...stop all violence...
4. Recalls that all those responsible for human rights violations...must be held accountable...
5. Demands that the Syrian government, in accordance with the plan of action of the League of Arab States of November 2, 2011 and its decision of January 22, 2012 without delay:
 - a) ceases all violence and protect its population;
 - b) releases all arbitrary detained persons due to the incidents;
 - c) withdraws all Syrian military and armed forces from cities and towns to barracks;
 - d) guarantees the freedom of peaceful demonstrations;
 - e) allows full and unhindered access and movement for all League of Arab States' institutions in all part of Syria...;
 - f) allows full and unhindered access to the League of Arab States' Observer Mission.
6. Calls for an inclusive Syrian-led political process...
7. Fully supports the League of Arab States' initiatives set out in its January 22, 2012 decision... aimed at:
 - i. formation of a Government of a national unity;
 - ii. delegation by the President of Syria of full authority to his Vice...and
 - iii. transparent and free election under Arab and international supervision.

- 8 Calls upon the Syrian authorities, in the event of a resumption of the Observer Mission, to co-operate fully with the League of Arab States.
- 9 Stresses the need for all to provide all necessary assistance to the Mission...
- 10 Demands that the Syrian authorities co-operate fully with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights...
- 11 Calls upon the Syrian authorities to allow safe and unhindered access for humanitarian assistance...
- 12 Welcomes the Secretary-General's efforts to provide support to the League of Arab States...
- 13 Takes note of the measures imposed by the League of Arab States... and encourages all States to adopt similar steps...

Follow – up

- 14 Requests the Secretary General to report on the implementation of this resolution... within 15 days after its adoption-and to report every 30 days thereafter;
- 15 Decides to review Syria's implementation of this resolution within 15 days and, in consultation with the League of Arab States, within 15 days and, in the event that Syria has not complied, to adopt further measures...
- 16 Decides to remain actively seized of the matter.

On February 4, 2012 during the UNSC session, Russia and China again used their veto power to stymie the draft resolution. The Chinese representative at the Security Council justified the veto by arguing that the SC members were attempting to 'put undue emphasis on pressuring the Syrian government' and were aiming for a 'prejudged result of dialogue' (meaning regime change). Russia argued that:

In the Security Council, we [Russia] have actively tried to reach a decision for an objective solution that would truly help to put a prompt end to violence and start a political process in Syria. The decision of the Security Council should be just that, but from the very beginning of the Syrian crisis some influential members of the international community, including some sitting at this table, have undermined any possibility of a political settlement, calling for regime change, encouraging the opposition towards power, indulging in provocation and nurturing the armed struggle (S/PV.67114 Feb., 2012)

On February 23, 2012 former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan was appointed as the joint UN-Arab League 'Special Envoy' to Syria. Annan's function was to:

Broadly engage with all relevant interlocutors within and outside Syria in order to end the violence and the humanitarian crisis, and facilitate a peaceful Syrian-led and inclusive political solution that meets the democratic aspirations of the Syrian people through a comprehensive political dialogue between the Syrian government and the whole spectrum of the Syrian opposition.

As part of his efforts to end the Syrian crisis, in mid-March 2012, following meetings with, among others, Bashar al-Assad, Special Envoy Annan presented his six-point peace plan to the UN, which called on everyone involved in the conflict to:

1. Commit to work with the Envoy in an inclusive Syrian-led political process to address the legitimate aspirations and concerns of the Syrian people, and, to this end, commit to appoint an empowered interlocutor when invited to do so by the Envoy;
2. Commit to stop the fighting and achieve urgently an effective United Nations-supervised cessation of armed violence in all its forms by all parties to protect civilians and stabilize the country.

To this end, the Syrian government should immediately cease troop movements towards, and end the use of heavy weapons in, population centres, and begin pullback of military concentrations in and around population centres.

As these actions were being taken on the ground, the Syrian government should work with the Envoy to bring about a sustained cessation of armed violence in all its forms by all parties with an effective United Nations supervision mechanism.

- Similar commitments would be sought by the Envoy from the opposition and all relevant elements to stop the fighting and work with him to bring about a sustained cessation of armed violence in all its form by all parties with an effective United Nations supervision mechanism;
3. Ensure timely provision of humanitarian assistance to all areas affected by the fighting, and to this end, as immediate steps, to accept and implement a daily two-hour humanitarian pause and to coordinate exact time and modalities of the daily pause through an effective mechanism, including at local level;
 4. Intensify the pace and scale of release of arbitrarily detained persons, including especially vulnerable categories of persons, and persons involved in peaceful political activities, provide without delay through appropriate channels a list of all places in which such persons are being detained, immediately begin organizing access to such locations and through appropriate channels, respond promptly to all written requests for information, access or release regarding such persons;
 5. Ensure freedom of movement throughout the country for journalists and a non-discriminatory visa policy for them;
 6. Respect freedom of association and the right to demonstrate peacefully as legally guaranteed (Hamilton, 2012).

The Syrian Government, however, accepted the Annan peace plan on March 25 and on April 2, 2012 Special Envoy Annan told the UNSC that the regime had agreed to a ceasefire to come into effect on April 12, 2012. Annan also reportedly asked the Security Council, in a closed meeting, to consider sending a ceasefire monitoring force to Syria and the UN deployed 300 unarmed military observers as part of the United Nations Supervision Mission in Syria (UNSMIS). However, violence again increased, and the UN Under-Secretary General for Peacekeeping Operations stated that both sides had violated the ceasefire agreement. On April 14, 2012 the UNSC adopted Resolution 2042, which condemned the ‘widespread violations of human rights by the Syrian authorities’, as well as ‘any human rights abuses by armed groups’. The resolution also authorized the initial deployment of 300 unarmed military observers to Syria as part of the Annan peace plan. Before being adopted, the draft Resolution was amended to avoid further Russian/Chinese veto. Russia’s representative told the Security Council that ‘the initial draft resolution underwent substantive changes to make it more balanced, appropriately reflect realities and take into account the prerogatives of the Syrian Government in receiving the Observer Mission on its territory’.

Later in April 2012, the UNSC adopted Resolution 2043, which authorized the deployment of a further 270 unarmed military observers to Syria. This formally created the United Nations Supervision Mission in Syria (UNSMIS), the official mandate of which was ‘to monitor a cessation of armed violence in all its forms by all parties and to monitor and support the full implementation of the Envoy’s [Annan’s] six-point proposal’. As the mandate of the Mission expired on July 20, 2012, the Council was to decide whether to extend it or not by then. On July 11, 2012 more than a week before the due expiration date, France, Germany, Portugal, Britain and the United States co-sponsored a draft resolution which:

1. Demands extension of UNSMIS for a period of 45 days.
2. Threatens non-military sanctions under Chapter VII of the UN Charter against Syrian government if it fails to withdraw troops and heavy weapons from the populated areas within 10 days.
3. Demands “all parties in Syria, including the opposition, to immediately cease all armed violence in all its forms, thereby creating an atmosphere conducive to a sustained cessation of violence and a Syria-led political transition”.

The draft resolution further indicated that if the Syrian authorities have not fully complied with the above requirement within ten days, the Council “shall impose immediately measures under Article 41 of the UN Charter”. Article 41 of the Charter gives the Council the right to employ economic and diplomatic sanctions...not involving the use of armed forces...to give effect to its decision and may call member states to apply such measures”. Russia and China, however, vetoed the draft resolution. Thus, while Russia remains opposed to any threat of sanctions against Syria in fear of unilateral sanctions sending the conflict-plagued country into a civil war, China slammed the veto draft as “seriously problematic” with uneven content that is intended to put pressure on only one party in Syria and insisted that the draft further eroded international trust

and cooperation on the Syrian issue (English. News.cn, 2012).

On August 2, 2012 Mr. Kofi Annan resigned as the Special Envoy for the Syrian crisis when there was a renewed crisis in Syria. Syria has been wracked by violence, with more than 10,000 people, mostly civilians, killed since the uprising against President Bashar al-Assad began some months ago.

4. Exploring Russia/China's Motivation

As earlier indicated, the UN Security Council was unable to reach a consensus on actions needed to check the Syrian crisis in its early stage. This was largely due to Russia and China's veto on several attempts to impose sanctions on Syrian government. These fundamentally changed to ability to even implement to United Nation's six-point peace plan and forced the resignation of Kofi Annan, the first UN Mediator in the crisis.

Thus, a number of reasons have been given for this. Firstly, Russia had regularly expressed a desire to avoid a repeat of the 'Libya situation' where, the UN Security Council Resolutions 1970 and 1973 (2011) adopted to create a no-fly zone in Libya were used as a means to carry out regime change. Put it clearly, both countries had vetoed the Security Council resolutions on Syrian crisis, using the Libyan predicament as a pretext. To these countries, the Western countries and NATO had gone too far in their understanding and enforcement of the Security Council resolutions on Libya, which were, as a result, interpreted as a mandate for carrying out military operations. They then overcame their demurral, allowing the Security Council to adopt a clear position of Syria. Secondly, Russia and China are two faithful allies of the Syrian regime. Their strategic and economic interests tended to inform their support for President Bashar al-Assad's regime as against promoting collective security on the issue. Chauhan (2012) has offered an explanation for Russia's interest in Syria:

First, Syria's strategic relevance remains significant to Russia. Syria's port of Tartus is the last Russian military base outside the former Soviet Union and the only Mediterranean fuelling spot for Russian naval vessels. Thus, Moscow fears that any turmoil within Syria will adversely affect its interests. Besides, Syria is a crucial market for Russian arms; the \$1.5million arms trade between the two in the last decade illustrates this.

Second, President Vladimir Putin's practice of using emotive foreign policy issues, epitomised by the rhetorical snubbing of the West to garner public support, some believe, have powerfully to influenced Moscow's resistance to US-led resolutions. Russia has witnessed an unprecedented number of political protests since 2011. The protests began with a challenge of the results of the Russian legislative elections which, many believe, were flawed. The large-scale protests raised doubts about Putin's popularity. In this background, Putin has used nationalist, anti-western rhetoric as a tool to regain public support. According to his assertion, prospects of a Libya-styled international intervention in Syria came as a blessing in disguise for Putin, who saw the crisis as an opportunity to elevate Russia's international role and divert local dissatisfaction.

Third, apart from efforts to mobilize public support, several domestic constraints feed into the Syrian policy. As Chauhan further explained, official figures show that an estimated 30,000 Russian citizens (mostly women and children) reside within Syria's border. With a considerable number of its citizens present in the hostile, Russia's responsibility to protect them is greater than that of Western countries, which have a low presence of their citizens within Syria. Further, the Russian Orthodox Church has been lobbying in favour of the secularist Assad. They fear that with the removal of the autocratic leaders, the probability of a repeat of the Libyan episode (attacks on the Coptic Christians by members of the now politically powerful Muslim brotherhood) with the Christian community of Syria is very high.

Fourth, the increasing influence of radical Islam on Syrian rebel forces has strengthened Russia's resolve to support the Assad's regime. As countries like Saudi Arabia and Qatar provides aid to Syrian rebel forces, the rebels' resistance has been assuming a more Islamic nature. Therefore, a crisis which began as a peaceful protest has become more religious, thus, pitting the majority Sunni Muslims against the ruling Alawite minority. Hence, Russia fears that a successful Sunni victory in Syria could encourage similar behaviour in Central Asia, where there are large Sunni populations, causing instability, and thereby providing grounds for international intervention in the region. Having already suffered at the hands of Muslim fundamentalists in Chechnya Russia is determined to prevent anything similar in its "Near Abroad", which it continues to regard as its primary area of influence.

Fifth, China's decision to collaborate with Russia in vetoing the UN Security Council resolutions against Syria displayed their mutual determination to check US unilateralism on issues of global governance.

Sixth, Russia's genuine concern about the state of law and order within Syria also explains its support for

al-Assad. This is important because earlier western interventions in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya have shown that while external intervention has been successful in overthrowing regimes, it has failed to replace them with stable and strong states.

On the other hand, China's interests in Syria revolve around the volume of bilateral trade between China and Arab countries. Historically, China had established a long-standing friendship with the Arab states. Their economic and trade exchanges were founded on this friendly relationship, which provides great prospect for the development of China-Arab States economic and trade changes more than 50 years since its establishment. Corroborating the above assertion, Jiechi (2012) opined that, "in the past 50-plus, China and Arab countries have supported each other and shared weal and woe in fighting for independence, safeguarding state sovereignty and realizing national rejuvenation.

Of note, the use of the United Nations Security Council veto by China has historically been a rare occurrence. But Chinese representative emphasized the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of states and noted China's belief that the threat of sanctions would not help to resolve the situation in Syria.

5. Conclusion and Policy Prescription

From the above discussion, it is clear that the division among the Security Council members and their inability to reach consensus on action needed to halt the Syrian crisis have served as a reminder of the problem of an international organization, particularly the UN. Evidently, the United Nations has, over the years, encountered enormous challenges particularly in the areas of passing resolutions, as well as in enforcement. The sources of the challenge include the problem of veto, the lack of consensus among the permanent members, absence of united political purpose to undertake enforcement, as well as strategic calculations of major powers on Council.

Overall, China's decision to collaborate with Russia in vetoing the UN Security Council resolutions against Syria displayed their mutual determination to check US unilateralism on issues of global governance. In this regard, as Yang (2010) has rightly concluded, both parties attached great importance to the democratization of international relations, upholding a common opposition against unilateral dominance on international affairs, with a clear objective of constructing a kind of equal relationship and new political order among various countries. Their actions have undermined the UN multilateral approach to international peace and security.

Furthermore, the configuration of the Security Council itself presents a formidable obstacle to prompt and effective UN enforcement action. As long as the five permanent members retain veto power and political alliances, created largely by the compelling national interests, adoption of resolutions as well as enforcement would be difficult. Therefore, there is a need for a broad-based reform, particularly enlargement of the Security Council to accommodate Germany and Japan which has resurfaced as global economic powers, as well as Africa and Latin America known for their ability to maintain regional peace and security. This will facilitate cooperation among member states in order to build a broad consensus for the Security Council enforcement action. Expansion of Council membership could help enhance its authority and modifying the right of veto, thereby making adoption of a resolution and the prospects of enforcement possible.

Regardless of whether the Security Council is reformed to include additional permanent members, or whether the veto power is reappraised, the adoption of resolutions is contingent upon unanimity of the permanent members. This requisite unanimity often rarely occurred since the establishment of the UN. Therefore, there is a need for unanimity among Council members to ensure prompt adoption of resolution(s) on issues which affect international peace and security.

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