

23 Nation Poll Finds Strong Support for Dramatic Changes at U.N.

March 21, 2005

Citizens of All Countries Polled Favor Adding New Permanent Members to UN Security Council

[Questionnaire](#)

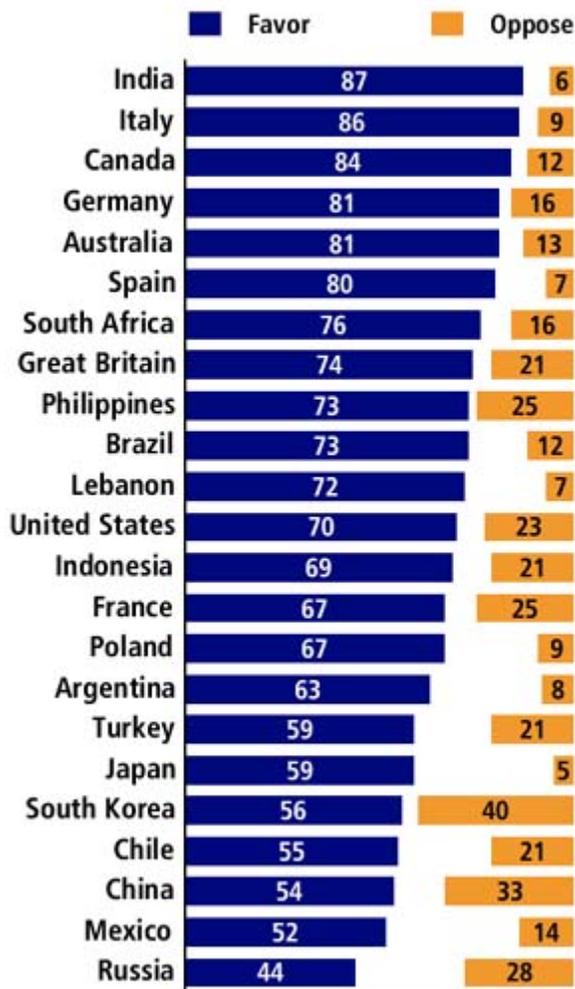
A BBC World Service poll that surveyed 23 countries finds nearly universal support for dramatic reforms in the United Nations in parallel with a desire for increased UN power in the world. Majorities throughout the world favor adding permanent new members to the U.N. Security Council, with most favoring adding Germany, India, Japan, and Brazil. Most favor giving the U.N. Security Council the power to override the veto power of the permanent members, including majorities in three of the permanent member states: the US, Britain, and China. In France and Russia, citizens are divided.

The poll of 23,518 people was conducted for the BBC World Service by the international polling firm GlobeScan together with the Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA) at the University of Maryland. The 23-nation fieldwork was coordinated by GlobeScan and completed during December 2004 in most countries.

The poll reveals that expanding the U.N. Security Council to include new permanent members is supported by a majority in 22 of the 23 countries. These include majorities in four of the current permanent members, the United States (70%), Britain (74%), France (67%), and China (54%). Russia is the only country polled for which support is a plurality (44% in favor), though opposition is quite low (28%). On average for all countries, 69 percent favor expanding the permanent membership. Majorities in favor are especially robust in Italy (86%), Canada (84%), Germany and Australia (both 81%), and Spain (80%). Besides Russia, support for expanding the permanent membership is relatively modest in Mexico (52%), Chile (55%), and South Korea (56%).

UN Security Council

Expanding the Number of Permanent Members



The white space in this chart represents "Depends/Neither," and "DK/NA."

Of five countries that are widely discussed as candidates for permanent membership, Germany and Japan are especially popular. Germany is favored in 21 countries (14 majorities, 7 pluralities) with an average of 56 percent across all countries. In the two remaining countries, China and South Korea, opposition is mostly to expanding Council membership in general—not focused on Germany. Japan is favored by 20 countries (16 majorities, 4 pluralities). However, Japan lacks support from three close neighbors, two of which are on the Security Council: Russia is divided (41% in favor, 10% opposed to Japan specifically and 28% opposed to expansion in general), China has a majority (51%) opposing Japan, and in South Korea 32 percent were opposed to Japan and 40 percent to expansion in general. On average 54 percent favor Japan's membership. For both Germany and Japan, developed countries are a bit more enthusiastic than developing countries.

A majority of countries also favor India and Brazil, but in each case the average is not a majority. Sixteen countries favor adding India (9 majorities, 7 pluralities), with two countries divided and 5 opposed to India specifically or to expansion in general (3 majorities--China, Germany, and South Korea, and 2 pluralities--the Philippines and Turkey). On average, 47 percent favored India with 19 percent opposed, and another 17 percent opposed to any expansion of the Security Council. Attitudes toward Brazil are remarkably similar, with 16 countries in favor (10 majorities, 6 pluralities) and 47 percent overall in favor (18% opposed to Brazil and 17% to all expansion). Four countries are opposed to Brazil specifically or to expansion in general: majorities in South Korea, and pluralities in China, Russia, and Turkey. Indonesia, France, and Germany are divided.

South Africa receives less support, with 10 countries in favor (5 majorities, 5 pluralities); 7 countries divided and 6 countries with opposition—to South Africa or to expansion in general—by a plurality (China, Indonesia, Mexico, Russia, and Turkey) or a majority (South Korea). On average, 43 percent favor South Africa and 21 percent are opposed (plus 17% opposed to all expansion).

[View graph](#)

In all countries but two, more people favor than oppose the idea of giving the U.N. Security Council the power to override the veto of a permanent member. Respondents were asked about the right, held by each of the five permanent Security Council members, to block any resolution with a veto, and were told: “Some people have proposed that this should be changed so that if a decision was supported by all the other members, no one member could veto the decision.” Respondents in the United States, Britain, France, Russia, and China were reminded in the question that their own country would lose the veto: for instance, Americans heard that “if a decision was supported by all the other members, no one member, not even the United States, could veto the decision.” In the United States, 57 percent favor giving up the absolute veto (34% opposed), Britain is similar at 56 percent (35% opposed) and in China, a 48 percent plurality is in favor (36% opposed).

Overall, citizens in 21 countries favor ending the absolute veto (16 majorities, 5 pluralities), with an average of 58 percent in favor and just 24 percent opposed. However, two permanent members are divided: France and Russia (France, 44% in favor, 43% opposed; Russia, 25% in favor, 29% opposed, with 46% not answering).

There is an extraordinary degree of consensus in favor of the U.N. becoming “significantly more powerful in world affairs.” This prospect is seen as “mainly positive” in every country (21 majorities, 2 pluralities) and by an average of 64 percent. A mere 19 percent on average sees this prospect as mainly negative. Especially enthusiastic are Germany (87%), Spain (78%), Indonesia (77%), and the Philippines (77%). Six in 10 Americans (59%) favored it, with only 37 percent opposed. The only two countries to have just a plurality in favor are Turkey (40% to 24%) and Argentina (44% to 22%).

[View graph](#)

Steven Kull, director of PIPA, comments, “Very large majorities all around the world are calling for the U.N. to become more powerful in world affairs. Consistent with this sentiment there is broad support for making the UN Security Council more representative by adding new members, and making it less unwieldy by giving the U.N. Security Council the power to override the veto of a permanent member. Most striking, even citizens in three of the five permanent member states are willing to give up their absolute veto power, and the other two are divided. The readiness for dramatic change is very palpable.”

Doug Miller, President of GlobeScan, says, “Results suggest that the tight control of the United Nations by a few countries may soon be history. There is strong popular support for the democratization of the UN system.”

Polling was conducted from November 15, 2004 to January 3, 2005 with 23,518 people. In eight of the countries, the sample was limited to major metropolitan areas. The margin of error per country ranged from +/-2.5-4%.