

INSIGHT: 'G-4' countries won't give up on reforming U.N. Security Council

- 1) There's no giving up for the so-called Group of Four--Japan, Germany, India and Brazil--in their desire for permanent seats on the U.N. Security Council.
- 2) "In order to promote UNSC reform, we will more positively ask other countries (to support our reform plan)," Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga said at a news conference May 8.
- 3) It is an uphill struggle, especially with veto-wielding China standing in the way--as it did for the last attempt in 2005.
- 4) Earlier this year, the G-4 submitted to the United Nations a reform plan to increase the membership of the Security Council from the current 15 nations to 25 or 26.
- 5) It's a milestone year, the 70th anniversary of the establishment of the United Nations, so the G-4 regards it as an ideal opportunity to push for the reform.
- 6) However, the group also submitted a similar reform plan 10 years ago. It failed, with the United States and China, permanent UNSC members, among the nations opposing the plan.
- 7) The chance of realizing reform this time round is equally bleak. The current plan is a partially modified version of the old one, with the aim being to attract more countries than last time.
- 8) Each of the G-4 countries holds the ultimate aim of becoming a permanent member of the UNSC, and just like the previous reform plan, in this one the proposed number of permanent members rises from the current five to 11.
- 9) The main change is that this time round the plan aims to increase the number of nonpermanent members from the current 10 to "14 or 15." In the previous plan, the figure was 14. The crucial factor is that the additional 15th seat would be allocated to an African country.

AFRICAN SUPPORT KEY

- 10) Amending the Charter of the United Nations requires two-thirds support of all the U.N. member countries. Given that many U.N. member countries are in Africa, they are collectively regarded as "a big voting bloc" in the United Nations. Because of that, the G-4 is offering them a carrot.
- 11) Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is a strong supporter of Japan becoming a permanent member of the UNSC. In his speech at the U.N. General Assembly in September 2014, he said, "Japan seeks to become a permanent member of the Security Council, and take on an appropriate role that the status requires."
- 12) While this year marks the 70th anniversary of the establishment of the United Nations, 2016 marks the 60th anniversary of Japan's membership of the organization. Because of that, Japan has labeled these two years as "years of concrete actions." 中略
- 13) The momentum for reforms heightened in 1995, which marked the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the United Nations, and in 2005, which marked the 60th anniversary. On each occasion, Japan expressed its hope for UNSC permanent membership.

CHINESE OPPOSITION

- 14) It didn't happen. In 2005, a vote was not even taken on the reform plans due to objections from China and the United States.
- 15) The United States supported Japan's bid to become a permanent member but opposed the idea of increasing the number of permanent members. China, on the other hand, was totally against Japan joining the inner circle of permanency.
- 16) The amendments to the U.N. Charter take effect only when all of the current five permanent members ratify them. The five are the United States, Russia, Britain, France and China. This time, there is also little possibility that China will support Japan's bid for permanent membership.
- 17) China is believed to be putting top priority on maintaining the current UNSC framework in which victor countries of World War II occupy the seats of permanent members. In addition to China, the other four permanent members are also unwilling to support reforms that would see them abandoning their vested interests.【May 09, 2015／THE ASAHI SHIMBUN／Hajimu Takeda in Tokyo and Ryuichi Kanari in NY】

★Ice breaker for active discussion★

1. Please explain briefly about the United Nations and what is your opinion about this organization?
2. What changes would you suggest to UNSC if you could reform it?
3. Why does China oppose the idea of Japan being a permanent member of UNSC?
4. What are the merits and demerits of the Veto power?
5. Do you think that Japan could be a permanent member of the UNSC in the future?
6. Make sentences using the following words: attempt, permanent, collectively, bloc, bleak, inner circle and vested interest.

常任理事国5か国と10の非常任理事国で構成される国連安保理。日本は国連最多となる11回目の非常任理事国となった。しかし国連憲章の改正には現常任理事国すべての批准が必要となるため、日本が目指す常任国入り等の改革案は、現状では実現が困難であると見られている。