

A Proposal to Elect a Successor to the Convening Group of the Community of Democracies

by Robert Axelrod

Ford School of Public Policy
University of Michigan
Ann Arbor, MI 48109
axe@umich.edu
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Executive Summary

The Community of Democracies is still run by the ten countries that convened the first ministerial meeting in 2000.¹ Although this Convening Group has served the Community well, the time has come for an elected Council to succeed it. This memo proposes a simple voting process that is consistent with democratic legitimacy, balances the interests of the large and small countries, and does not single out specific members for special privileges.

The Problem

The Community of Democracies (CD) relies on its own legitimacy to realize its full potential. Inevitably, the legitimacy of the CD will require fixing the anomaly of an organization to promote democracy being run by a small self-appointed group. The ten-country Convening Group has served the CD well since its founding in 2000. Perhaps the Convening Group's greatest achievement is the development of the Declaration of Democratic Principles and Practices that has now been accepted as a goal by 110 countries. Despite its effectiveness so far, the continued legitimacy of the Convening Group is in doubt. It needs to be succeeded by an elected Council.²

The electoral process for a Council of the CD could be adapted from the process used to elect the ten non-permanent members of the UN Security Council. In that process, each region nominates members to fill its given quota. The nominations to the Security Council are almost always approved by the General Assembly. In electing a Council of the Community of Democracies, regional quotas have several advantages: quotas provide assurance that each region is represented, quotas simplify the bargaining process by specifying the groupings in advance, and to some extent the geographic regions reflect major political and economic divisions.

¹ The Convening Group is Chile, the Czech Republic, India, the Republic of Korea, Mali, Mexico, Poland, Portugal, South Africa, and the United States. For information on the Community of Democracies, see the website of the NGO Council for a Community of Democracies <http://www.ccd21.org>.

² Perhaps a term other than "Council *of the* Community of Democracies" should be used to avoid confusion with the NGO called the Council *for a* Community of Democracies (emphasis added).

For the Community of Democracies, regional quotas have three disadvantages: the lack of transparency in how regions make their selections, the potential difficulty of adjusting the quotas to stay abreast of the evolving membership, and the inability to form alignments between members in different regions.

Designing a suitable process for the CD to elect the members of a Council is not straightforward. The members of the CD vary in size by a factor of a thousand or more: from India's billion to dozens of member countries smaller than one million. Obviously, the default voting method of one-country, one-vote would fail to recognize the power and interests of the largest members. Giving one vote to each member would mean the eighteen members who comprise 80% of the Community's population would be outnumbered more than five-to-one by the other members. On the other hand, a proportional voting system that used relative population size for the weights would allow dominance by just the five largest members since their combined population is larger than all the others put together. (See Table 1, column D.)

The process used to elect the Council should have the following properties.

1. The voting system itself should be acceptable as a legitimate process consistent with democratic principles.
2. There should be a balance between one-country, one vote system (which could be dominated by members comprising only 5% of the Community's population), and proportional representation (which could be dominated by just five members).
3. No specific country should be singled out for special privilege, as was done for the permanent members of the Security Council, and is now being done for the ten members of the Convening Group of the Community of Democracies.

The Proposed Voting Process

The following process to elect a Council of the CD meets the goals listed above.

- Rule 1. Each member country has a number of votes equal to its population.³
- Rule 2. Each member country must cast its entire vote for just one country, possibly itself.
- Rule 3. The country receiving the most votes is elected, followed by the country receiving the next largest number of votes, and so on until all open seats are filled.
- Rule 4. Each elected member has one vote on the Council.

Analysis of the Proposal

For illustration, suppose that a Council of 20 is to be elected from the 110 countries invited to the Second Ministerial Meeting of the CD, Seoul 2002.⁴ Given the population

³ If the Council is elected with overlapping terms, Rule 1 should specify that members continuing on the Council may not vote.

distribution of these countries, support of 113 million votes is sufficient to guarantee a member's election to the Council. (See the Appendix). For example, Mexico, with 103 million votes, could get elected with the support of Guatemala's 12 million votes.

The proposed voting system has the three desired properties.

1. Council can achieve democratic legitimacy because (unlike the quota system) the voting process would be transparent, would take account of population.⁵

2. The interests of the largest members are taken into account because they are big enough can elect themselves to the Council. Continuing our illustration of a Council with 20 seats, the eight largest members could each attain a seat by voting for themselves. On the other hand, these eight members alone could not control the Council because even though they have 61% of the Community's population, they could elect only 40% of the Council's seats. Conversely, the small countries can not dominate the Council either. Even though the countries smaller than 41th ranked Greece (11 million) comprise a clear majority of the membership, they could elect only two of the twenty seats. Since their combined population is only 6.5% of the Community's, the ability of the small countries to elect 10% of the Council shows that the proposed process gives smaller countries disproportionate - but not dominant - power.

3. The rules governing the voting process do not need to name any specific country for special standing. Nor do the rules have to specify regional membership or regional quotas.

⁴ Observers are not counted. France is included because it was invited even though it chose not to participate.

⁵ The UN regional quotas are not a good reflection of population. For example, the seats per capita allocated to Africa are more than four times the seats per capital allocated to Asia (excluding China).

Appendix

Calculating the Number of Votes Needed to Win a Seat

The key to understanding how the Proposal works is to focus on the smallest country that is able to guarantee its own election to the Council. In our example of 20 seats, eight countries are large enough to do so: India, U.S. Indonesia, Brazil, Bangladesh, Russia, Japan and Nigeria. (See Table 1.) Assuming that each of these eight votes for itself, the remaining countries have a combined population of 1,470 million with twelve seats left to be filled. In order for a country to be sure not to be outvoted by twelve others, it needs the support greater than a thirteenth of the remaining population. One-thirteenth of 1,470 million is 113 million. Therefore, any country attaining the support of 113 million votes (including its own) is guaranteed to win one of the twelve remaining seats. The result is that 113 million votes are sufficient to guarantee election to a Council of 20. Thus, eighth ranked Nigeria with 124 million votes has enough to elect itself to one of the 20 seats on the Council.

Ninth ranked Mexico with 103 million is not as quite as large as Nigeria. Obviously, the eight countries larger than Mexico can outvote Mexico. The countries smaller than Mexico have a total of 1,367 million. This many votes can be divided evenly among twelve candidates each of whom could get more votes than Mexico's population of 103 million. Therefore it is possible for 20 countries to each receive more votes than Mexico alone.

In practice, some coalitions will have surplus votes over the 113 million needed to guarantee a seat. If so, the twentieth seat could be elected with somewhat less than 113 million votes. If the coalitions were sufficiently unequal, Mexico would be able to win by itself even if it could not be certain of this beforehand. In any case, Mexico can be sure to win a seat if it can attract 10 million votes. For example, adding the 12 million votes of Guatemala to Mexico's 103 million votes would suffice.

The Council size of 20 was used simply for illustration. A larger number of seats would allow a lower threshold. For example, with 30 seats to be elected, 59 million votes are sufficient to guarantee election (Table 1, columns F and G). With only 12 seats to be elected to the Council, the sufficient number rises to 219 million.

Table 1. Community of Democracies, Seoul 2002

Column

D. Population of countries smaller than this one

E. Column D as % of CD Population

F. Council seats for which this is smallest self-sufficient country (see text)

G. Votes needed for this number of seats (see text)

H. Polity IV Score (-10 to 10)

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
<u>Rank</u>	<u>Country</u>	<u>Pop. x 1000</u>	<u>Pop. Below</u>	<u>% Below</u>	<u>Seats</u>	<u>Threshold</u>	<u>Polity</u>
1	India	1,065,462	2,704,336	71.70%			9
2	United States	294,043	2,410,293	63.90%			10
3	Indonesia	219,883	2,190,410	58.10%	12	219,041	7
4	Brazil	178,470	2,011,940	53.40%			8
5	Bangladesh	146,736	1,865,204	49.50%			6
6	Russia	143,246	1,721,958	45.70%			7
7	Japan	127,654	1,594,304	42.30%			10
8	Nigeria	124,009	1,470,295	39.00%	20	122,525	4
9	Mexico	103,457	1,366,838	36.30%			8
10	Germany	82,476	1,284,362	34.10%			10
11	Philippines	79,999	1,204,363	31.90%			8
12	Turkey	71,325	1,133,038	30.10%			7
13	Thailand	62,833	1,070,205	28.40%			9
14	France	60,144	1,010,061	26.80%	30	59,415	9
15	United Kingdom	59,251	950,810	25.2%			10
16	Italy	57,423	893,387	23.7%			10
17	South Korea	47,700	845,687	22.4%			8
18	South Africa	45,026	800,661	21.2%			9
19	Colombia	44,222	756,439	20.1%			7
20	Spain	41,060	715,379	19.0%			10
21	Poland	38,587	676,792	18.0%			9
22	Argentina	38,428	638,364	16.9%			8
23	Tanzania	36,977	601,387	16.0%			2
24	Canada	31,510	569,877	15.1%			10
25	Morocco	30,566	539,311	14.3%			-6
26	Peru	27,167	512,144	13.6%			9
27	Venezuela	25,699	486,445	12.9%			6
28	Nepal	25,164	461,281	12.2%			-4
29	Romania	22,334	438,947	11.6%			8
30	Ghana	20,922	418,025	11.1%			6
31	Australia	19,731	398,294	10.6%			10
32	Sri Lanka	19,065	379,229	10.1%			6
33	Mozambique	18,863	360,366	9.6%			6
34	Netherlands	16,149	344,217	9.1%			10
35	Chile	15,805	328,412	8.7%			9
36	Mali	13,007	315,405	8.4%			6
37	Ecuador	13,003	302,402	8.0%			6
38	Guatemala	12,347	290,055	7.7%			8
39	Malawi	12,105	277,950	7.4%			5
40	Niger	11,972	265,978	7.1%			4
41	Greece	10,976	255,002	6.8%			10
42	Yugoslavia	10,527	244,475	6.5%			7
43	Belgium	10,318	234,157	6.2%			10
44	Czech Republic	10,236	223,921	5.9%			10
45	Senegal	10,095	213,826	5.7%			8
46	Portugal	10,062	203,764	5.4%			10
...							
55	Honduras	6,941	128,855	3.4%			7
...							
110	Tuvalu	11	0	0.0%			
	Total	3,769,798	(60 % of world population)				

Sources.

- B. Invitees to CD's 2nd Min. Conf., Seoul. 2002. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/13751pf.htm>
- C. UN Population figures for 2002.
- D to G. Author's calculations
- H. Polity IV (ver. 2002d). <http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/inscr/polity/>