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UN Reform: Towards a More [In] Secure World?

by

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Introduction

The United Nations report, *A more Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility* presents a unique opportunity to refashion and renew the international organisation's institutions to suit a changed global environment. Even more significant is the fact that United Nations Secretary General, Kofi Anan, has incorporated select recommendations from this and other reports into his March 2005 report on the Millennium Review. The March report sets the agenda for a summit of world leaders scheduled for September 2005, the UN's 60th anniversary. So critical is UN reform that Member States will be following closely the Secretary General's efforts to reinvent the world body.

As Secretary General Anan strives to determine which 'fork in the road' for the UN to take, it is important to note that Security Council reform will become a game of high stakes. This is because the post-World War II era powers –the United States, Russia, France, the United Kingdom, and China – now known as the Permanent Five (P-5) will ultimately determine the height of the bar for any changes to their veto rights (Weiss, 2003), thereby maintaining the status quo. This is demonstrated by the fact that while the full package of reforms proposed by the Secretary General's High-Level panel is wide-ranging; the most mooted change of all has been the proposed democratisation and enlargement of the Security Council. The reform of the Council has generated a lot of interest among the world's new regional players such as Brazil, Mexico, India, Indonesia, Japan, Egypt, Nigeria and South Africa. Several questions, therefore, arise ahead of the crucial 60th Anniversary of the UN in September 2005 and most importantly, before the reform window closes with Kofi Anan's departure in 2006.

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