

Given the fact that some observers have argued that 'in practice, substantive and substantial reform has been virtually impossible' (Weiss, 2003) in the UN's 60 year history of existence, many wonder what chance Annan's proposed reforms have? What will be the implications of international rivalry over the revised allocation of Security Council seats, especially on the building of a true multilateral spirit of cooperation that the High-Level Panel report called for? What possible scenario will emerge out of the complex web of tensions in the Pacific rim? Will the major veto-wielding powers cooperate?

Key questions also arise in the African context. Will African countries accept what many have referred to as 'second class citizenship' or non veto-wielding permanent Security Council membership? More importantly, how can the continent manage the fierce contestation for Security Council seats in a manner that averts a potentially damaging rift between Africa's lead states? What chance does Africa have in advancing its own agenda within the Security Council? Is the continent ready to take on the Security Council's huge responsibilities (political, economic, and military) that go with this privilege? Will any of the continent's candidates for the Security Council seats really have the means –

economic, military, and political or the wherewithal to check the US's unilateral tendencies? This policy brief broadly seeks to explore some of these questions and contribute to debate ahead of the 60th Anniversary of the UN in September 2005.

A different world, the same UN

Although the world has changed tremendously since the United Nations (UN) was formed in 1945, the international organisation's immediate post-war configuration or architecture has remained virtually unchanged. The UN structure, which reflected global politics at the end of World War II, contained a clearly bifurcated division of rights and roles of members: the General Assembly was tasked with general functions and a restricted Security Council with executing authority for maintaining international peace. This arrangement was meant to serve as a departure from the ineffectual Council of the League of Nations which was riddled with divisions and lacked consensus in dealing with international security. Central to the original 1945 UN architecture was the Security Council which the era's great powers, the P-5, with eternal seats and veto powers, have dominated ever since. Significantly, only six countries from Africa and Asia were UN members originally. Much to its credit and unlike

the old League of Nations, the UN has until now tried to preside over an era characterised less by conflict and more by peace, freedom and prosperity in the world. The post - 1945 period also saw conflict between major powers avoided while the defeated 'axis' powers, Japan, Germany, and Italy successfully became rehabilitated members of the international community. Sixty years on, an entirely different world exists and the incongruities of the UN system and lack of fairness have become even more apparent. Several developments explain why this is the case. Firstly, in the Global South, bitter liberation struggles over the last 50 years have democratised international politics for half of the world's marginalised humanity by ending the enduring evils of colonialism, the cynicism of Cold War politics and crimes against humanity such as apartheid. Thus, from Angola to Zimbabwe, new states emerged to give the hitherto marginalised Global South a voice, albeit outside the UN. Fearing the consequences of the Cold War, the so-called Third World rejected the notion of a bi-polar world by creating multilateral organisations such as the Non Aligned Movement in Bandung in 1955. Other Southern continental initiatives included the formation of the Organisation of African Unity in 1963. Broadly embracing peoples of all races, religions and ideologies, these organisations turned post-war

multilateralism into a lived reality for the Global South.

By the mid 1960s, more than half of the UN's membership came from Africa and Asia. (Weiss, 2003). Over the last six decades, the decolonisation process has brought the total membership of the UN from 51 in 1945, 114 in 1963 to 191 in 2004. In many ways, the UN played a critical role in the birth of new member countries by facilitating diplomatic solutions and developing a peace-keeping capacity. It is interesting, however, that this peace-building capacity was based on troops drawn from some of the world's poorest and smallest countries such as Bangladesh. The irony was that such peace-keeping obligations did not fall on the P-5 powers, most of whom were caught up in the Cold War. Despite these positive developments, the UN, especially the Security Council, failed to contain the threat of US militarism in the post - 1945 period. For instance, 'the US launched several armed actions and supported others, in the name of counter-insurgency, which seriously damaged progressive [Third World] movements and the prospects for democracy.' Like Vietnam, many of these actions were unsuccessful, ironically not because of UN peace efforts alone but due to determined resistance from anti-American forces (Turok, 2003).

Secondly, the collapse of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s severely weakened the foundations of the UN Security Council by dangerously altering the calculus of power on which the organ was delicately balanced for so long. By the beginning of the 1990s, the US had become a virtual sole superpower capable of conducting unilateral action with little censure from the UN Security Council. Throughout the 1980s, and 'with noteworthy regularity, America ... found itself – often alone, sometimes joined by one or two other countries [including Britain] – standing in opposition to the [United Nations] General Assembly resolutions aimed at furthering human rights, peace, nuclear disarmament, economic justice, the struggle against apartheid and other progressive causes', argues William Blum (Blum, 2000).

Because of the weakness of the UN, the US now talks of building a global regime built on force (Blum, 2000). For example, the US Space Command in its document titled, *Vision for 2020*, refers to the establishment of 'Full Spectrum Dominance', which the internationally respected journalist, John Pilger, describes as the stated policy of the US to control land, air, and sea space and information by force of arms in order to 'close the ever widening gap between diminishing resources and increasing military commitments' (Pilger, 2002). In

fact, one of the leading experts of warfare analysis at the US Naval War College, Thomas P. M. Barnett, reportedly predicted that the US's Iraq invasion would not be about settling old scores, or finding Weapons of Mass destruction (WMDs). Rather, the invasion would '*mark a historic tipping point – the moment when Washington takes real ownership of strategic security in the age of globalisation.*' (Pilger 2000) (emphasis added). Although the UN Secretary General described the invasion of Iraq as 'illegal', the UN as a body has become too weak to censure the US's violation of international law and human rights.

Thirdly, since 1945 the world has changed in two fundamental ways. Firstly, the emergence of alternative and important global centres of power outside the UN Security Council and; secondly, changes from old notions of security to human security. Despite the US's global dominance, alternative centres of economic power have emerged. These major powers include China, Japan, India and of course, the European Union, which is consolidating itself as an alternative power bloc. From being international pariahs states at the end of World War II, Japan, Germany and Italy have actually grown to become major players in international politics and in the UN. They are currently ranked as the second, third and sixth

largest financial contributors to the United Nations', respectively (High-Level Panel Report, 2004).

Secondly, from a 'threat analysis perspective,' the new notion of human security has changed and broadened the interpretation of threats to international peace and security. Although conventional war fighting capability is still critical to ensure peace, it must be noted that the world is no longer at war with Nazism and Fascism, which shaped the defence philosophy and posture of the P-5 during the Cold War years. Rather, the world is now at war with poverty, trans-national crime and diseases such as tuberculosis, malaria and HIV/Aids. The combination of war, poverty and disease has not only given rise to a crisis in human security but has also heralded a fundamentally different security climate. For instance, if current trends 'are not reversed, some [African] States face collapse under the combined *tsunami-like* weight of poverty and HIV-Aids' (High-Level Panel Report, 2004). Also of critical importance to developing countries is the so-called 'war on terrorism' ('irregular warfare') or what some defence experts have called 'fourth generation warfare [4GW]' (Shelton, 2005). The rise of 'threats without boundaries' has, therefore, led to calls for the creation of a 'comprehensive collective security' system in which all

countries, rich and poor, have a critical role to play. Thus, if international human security has become a collective concern, the question arises of whether there can be responsibility without representation for all members in the UN Security Council itself. What is interesting is that although the UN 'gave birth to the notion of human security, it proved poorly equipped to provide it.' For example, the UN failed to act in the face of ethnic cleansing and genocide in Bosnia and Rwanda. Its failure in those cases is largely explained by 'complacency and great power indifference' of P-5 member countries in general (High-Level Panel Report, 2004).

Thus, not only has the UN in general become anachronistic but its structure looks increasingly out of step with a globalising and democratising world that clearly faces different challenges. The Security Council's unrepresentative nature, failure to reflect today's realities, and general indifference had by the 1990s seriously denuded it of any international legitimacy. Its future legitimacy critically depends on how far it is representative of all nations and regions. Today more than three quarters of the UN Security Council's business is taken up with African affairs. Yet the 54 nation continent has only three semi-permanent members with no veto power in the UN Security Council. Even worse, is the fact that the entire Global South

has no single permanent seat on the Security Council! This is in contrast to continental Western Europe which has two permanent seats but is smaller in size than the Democratic Republic of Congo. Not surprisingly, this assessment has constituted the basis for a global consensus on a new UN reform model since the early 1990s. It is this global consensus that prompted African leaders to meet in Harare 1997 to thrash out a common position on the issue of UN reform. Outside the African continent pressure for reform has been coming from Germany, Japan, Brazil and India.

**High-level Panel's Recommendations:
Summary**

The United Nations report, *A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility* has the potential to reshape the United Nations and redefine collective security. A core premise of the report is that today's 'threats recognize no national boundaries, are connected, and must be addressed at the global and regional as well as the national levels.' In calling for this report, the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan said: 'We have come to a fork in the road. This may be a moment no less decisive than 1945 itself, when the United Nations was founded.' The Panel's report details 101 recommendations on how the United Nations can best be modernized to respond effectively to the full range of

threats that confronts an interconnected world of the 21st century. A summary of the more important recommendations includes:

- Making membership in the Commission on Human Rights universal with prominent human rights figures as the heads of national delegations.
- Adoption of a new normative value called 'the Responsibility to Protect,' which lays out a structure for when, how, and under what circumstances the international community has the responsibility to intervene in a nation when its government cannot or will not protect its citizens from genocide, war crimes, or crimes against humanity.
- Approval of five basic criteria for authorizing the use of force that questions: the seriousness of threat, the purpose for using force, if it is the last resort, proportional means, and what are the balance of consequences.
- Creating within the UN a small corps of senior police officers (50-100) to plan and organize international civilian police operations.

- Allowing the UN to fund regional peacekeeping operations authorized by the Security Council with assessed contributions.
- Establishing a Peace-building Commission to identify and assist countries that risk sliding toward collapse.
- Beginning new negotiations on a new long-term strategy for reducing global warming.
- To prepare the Security Council to refer cases of suspected war crimes and crimes against humanity to the International Criminal Court.
- A State's notice of withdrawal from the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons should prompt immediate verification of its compliance with the Treaty.
- Two alternative proposals to increase the size of the Security Council from 15 to 24 members and review the composition of the Security Council in 2020.
- Amending the UN's charter to delete all references in the charter to the World War Two era concept of 'enemy States' and eliminate the UN's outdated

Trusteeship Council and the Military Staff committee (Kraus, 2004).

In making its case for these recommendations, the report broadens the definition of 'collective security' in line with new thinking. The UN was founded to 'save succeeding generations from the scourge of war.' But 60 years later, the threats that we face--from nuclear proliferation and international terrorism to collapsed states spawned by hunger, poverty, HIV AIDS, and environmental disasters--go far beyond those associated with wars of aggression. Thus, in developing its recommendations, the High-Level Panel defined six 'clusters' of threats that the world must deal with:

1. Economic and social threats, including poverty, infectious diseases, and environmental degradation;
2. Inter-State conflict;
3. Internal conflict, including civil war, genocide, and other large-scale atrocities;
4. Nuclear, radiological, chemical, and biological weapons;
5. Terrorism; and
6. Trans-national organized crime.

The report asserts that individual nations are still the 'front-line actors' in dealing with threats, both old and new, but in the 21st century no nation, no matter how powerful, can stand alone. It makes a compelling case that in today's world, a threat to one is a threat to all. Some examples include:

- Any one of the 700 million international airline passengers every year could be an unwitting carrier of a deadly infectious disease. SARS spread to more than 8,000 people in 30 countries in 3 months.
- Globalization means that a major terrorist attack anywhere in the industrial world can have devastating consequences for millions in the developing world. The World Bank estimates that the 9/11 attacks increased the number of people living in poverty by 10 million and cost the world's economy over US\$80 billion.

The report also promotes the strengthening of UN partnerships with regional organizations and individual member states. It recognizes the current gap in mobilizing political will and coordinating governments. It supports the growth of peacekeepers and calls on wealthy nations to transform existing forces into contingents suitable for UN

peace operations. It also calls for greater investment in mediation and support for the implementation of peace agreements, as well as demobilizing and reintegrating combatants into civilian life to bring civil wars to an end (Kraus, 2004).

The strength of this report is that it calls for a collective response to security that has something in it for all nations. Besides supporting greater representation on the Security Council, the Global South will support calls for donor countries to live up to the commitments they have already made: that is, 'whether it be the proportion of 0.7% of their Gross Domestic Product (GDP) they pledged to overseas development aid and setting the timetable for reaching this critical UN goal, to the sums they devote to combating HIV/AIDS, or to the provisions of the Doha Round on developing country access to Northern markets. And of course, to the mechanics of disarmament, which does not mean simply disarming countries that a Superpower may dislike' (Williams, 2004). Some of the targets or commitments outlined above have long been overdue. For instance, 2005 is the 35th year since the UN General Assembly first affirmed the target of 0.7% of GDP as Overseas Development Aid (ODA). Since this target was pledged, only five countries have met or

surpassed it: Denmark, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden. Six others have so far committed themselves to specific timetables to achieving the target by 2015: Belgium, Finland, France, Ireland, Spain and Britain. Interestingly, the remaining 11 of the world's 22 richest nations have failed to commit themselves to this target.

Reform of the Security Council

The High-Level Panel Report could not take such a robust attitude to the most mooted change of all, namely, the composition of the Security Council. However, the report accepts that if the Security Council is to wield such important powers of promoting peace and preventing war, it should be more representative of the changed state of the world. On the issue of the reform of the Security Council, the High-level Panel Report recommended that such reform meet the following principles:

- In honouring Article 23 of the UN charter, there should be increased involvement in the decision-making of those who contribute most to the UN financially, militarily and diplomatically.
- Countries more representative of the broader membership, especially of the developing

world, should be brought into the decision-making processes of the Security Council.

- The envisaged reforms should not impair the effectiveness of the Security Council.
- The reforms should increase the democratic and accountable nature of the body.

If the decision on the enlargement of the Security Council is based on the foregoing criteria, several problems can be anticipated. The emphasis on financial, military and diplomatic contributions to the UN only serves to highlight the stark reality that only wealthy nations are likely to gain new permanent seats. Thus, even some major but poor regional players from the Global South do not stand a realistic chance of gaining any seats. The suggested two models for the expansion of the Security Council also underscore the constraints against Security Council reform. The two proposals, tagged models A and B, both propose a distribution of seats between four major regional areas, namely, Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe, and Americas. The models also converge on their objection against any expansion of the veto and any Charter modification of the Security Council's existing powers. This is despite the High-Level Panel's acknowledgement that 'as a whole the institution of the veto has an anachronistic character that is

unsuitable for the institution in an increasingly democratic age' (High-Level Panel Report, 2004: paragraph 256).

In deciding to maintain the status quo, the panellists argued that the veto had an important function in reassuring the UN's most powerful members that their interests would be safeguarded. This explains why the panellists saw no practical way of changing the existing members' veto powers. It would appear that throughout its work, the High-level Panel was guided by the need to evolve only the kinds of reform proposals that would not infringe on the vital interests of the existing veto-wielding powers of the Security Council. Yet, it is common knowledge that the anachronistic character of the veto power provision has fed the impulse for reform. The report seems to reflect attempts to bend backwards to appease current permanent members such as the US who are likely to resist the enlargement of the Security Council or the scrapping of the veto altogether. Because of these concerns, key aspects of the report reflect UN efforts to comply with US pressures. For instance, the report calls for abandoning even the discussion of 'state terrorism', most often identified with military strikes by Israel and the US. Also, the reports begins with the self-imposed limitation to only deal with reforms that can be accomplished,

reflecting the unwillingness of the UN leadership to issue a wholesale call for the UN to reject US dominance and its contempt or disregard for international law, UN resolutions and treaties.

Nevertheless, the proposed reform models are far from being completely hollow as they create space for new actors in the Security Council with the potential to influence the character and nature of the body:

- The first model provides for six new permanent seats, with no veto being created, and three new two-year term non-permanent seats, divided among the major regional areas as follows: Africa (2 permanent seats and 4 two-year non-renewable seats); Asia and Pacific (2 new permanent seats and 3 two-year non-renewable seats); Europe (1 new permanent seat and 2 two-year non-renewable seats); and Americas (1 new permanent seat and 4 two-year non-renewable seats). All these additions will see the Security Council expanded from the current 15 members to 24 members.
- The second model provides for no new permanent seats but creates a new category of eight four year renewable-term seats

and one new two-year non-permanent (and non-renewable) seat, divided among the major regional areas as follows: Africa (2 four-year renewable seats and 4 two-year non-renewable seats); Asia and Pacific (2 four-year renewable seats and 3 two-year non-renewable seats); Europe (2 four-year renewable seats and 1 two-year non-renewable seat); Americas (2 four-year renewable seats and 3 two-year non-renewable seats). This arrangement will equally have the Security Council expanded to 24 members from the current 15.

Both models leaned on Article 23 of the UN Charter requiring regional bodies entrusted with the task of electing Security Council members to give preference for permanent or longer-term seats to those states that are among the top three contributors to the activities of the UN in their relevant geographic areas. This is in terms of financial contributions to the regular budget, voluntary contributions, troop contributions for peace keeping and peace building missions (High-Level Panel Report, 2004: paragraph 254). What is significant to note is that discussions during the 59th session of the General Assembly in September 2004, suggested a broad consensus in favour of new permanent seats. In

contrast, 'there appears to [have been] little support for alternative models, the so-called 'semi-permanent seats'' (Germany's Views on UN-SC Reform, 2004). Overall, the proposed reforms have been received with mixed feelings and they have generated competition among global and regional actors to position themselves strategically to influence the reform process.

Non-African contenders

Outside the African region, other regional actors have sought to concretize their positions for a place in the UN-SC before the reform window closes with Annan's departure in 2006. Prominent amongst them are states that emerged as major losers during World War II, but that have since recovered to become key global actors - Germany, Japan and Italy. Two of them, Germany and Japan, have allied with two emergent middle powers, India and Brazil, in what is known as the Group of Four (G4) to lobby for permanent seats in the Security Council. They have based their demand for permanent seats on the argument that the UN's most powerful body must reflect the realities of the 21st century, which reality includes the emergence of new global powers outside the victorious five of World War II.

However, their candidatures have been opposed by other countries. While

Pakistan does not want India to have a permanent seat because of their historical animosity, Italy feels that if the UN-SC is to be enlarged to include the losers in World War II, it should also be included on the Council. Mexico and Argentina, on the other hand, believe Latin America should be represented by a Spanish-speaking country rather than Portuguese-speaking Brazil. In turn, Brazil's response has been muscular. It has backed its campaign for a seat by rebuilding its military industry on a strong industrial and export platform. In the Asia Pacific Rim, another complex of tensions have emerged with China strongly opposed to the idea of its historical enemy, Japan, gaining a seat on the SC. Indonesia, as the most populous Muslim nation, has also laid claim to an Asian permanent seat. In Europe, the tensions could even be more profound. France, the United Kingdom and Russia are uncomfortable with having Germany occupy a permanent seat on the UN Security Council. Although Britain and France have been willing to rehabilitate a reunified Germany into core European economic and political processes, they have been disposed to guard against granting Germany too much power, such as may be afforded by membership of the UN Security Council. For one thing, membership of the Security Council goes with strong military capability, necessary for the

enforcement of UN resolutions and keeping world peace more generally. Therefore, if Germany were to become a permanent member of the Council, it would have enough reason to push for rearmament. This would not bode well for Britain and France, who feel directly threatened by the prospects of the emergence of a rearmed Germany.

Africa's Position

Following the launch of the High-Level Panel Report, African Heads of State decided at the end of the 4th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union to set up a 15 member committee to hammer out a common stance for the continent on UN reforms. The committee, whose members were drawn from the continent's main regions, was to consider two main options that take into account the African common position. These are contained in the Harare Assembly Declaration of 1997, and include developments on the international scene since the adoption of the Harare Declaration and the essence of the debate in the AU Executive Council in Abuja on 28 January 2005. The AU committee met in Mbabane, Swaziland from 20 – 22 February 2005 to hammer out what has become the 'Ezulwini Consensus'. While side-stepping the issue of which African countries would represent the continent in a future reformed UN Security Council, the committee resolved that

Africa would insist on getting two veto-wielding permanent seats in a reformed UN Security Council. In principle, the AU is opposed to the notion of exclusive veto power, as it is undemocratic. However, the organization also argues that if other Security Council members have veto power, then as long as it exists, all members, old and new should have it.

Aside from African governments' case for at least two permanent veto-wielding seats and five non-permanent, rotational seats, they have also insisted that in the event of approval of the proposed reform of the Security Council, it should be the exclusive prerogative of the African continent – the African Union more precisely – to decide on which African states should represent the continent in this august body. More importantly, African leaders have argued strongly against any attempt to discriminate between old and future (new) permanent members of the Security Council. Their position is that either the veto power is scrapped completely or it must be extended to the all permanent members of a broadened Security Council, within the ambit of the UN Charters' emphasis on the equality of member states.

Prospects for Africa's candidates

Egypt, Nigeria and South Africa have emerged as three main contenders for

the continent's two seats on the UN-SC. Underneath this spirit of entente between Africa's major role players lies the reality of interstate power politics – national interest – with one particularly aspiring candidate, Nigeria, intent on out-manoeuvring other rather muted aspirants, South Africa and Egypt. The attractiveness of securing a permanent seat (even one devoid of the undemocratic but strategic veto power privilege) might be sufficient incentive to bring about a divorce between Africa's leading states, particularly Nigeria and South Africa.

However, even a casual reading of the High Panel's reform proposals, reveals that the panelists were expressly against any broadening of the veto power to new members. In fact, in the proposed models ("A" and "B") they have made no allowance for the extension of the veto power to potential new permanent or/and non-permanent members of the Security Council. As a matter of fact, they seem to have placed an injunction on the extension of the veto power by declaring: 'we recommend that under any reform proposal, there should be no expansion of the veto.' The official argument against an extension of the veto is that it would blunt the instrument and weaken the Security Council. It would seem, however, that this position was forced into the reform agenda by the traditional veto-wielding

powers, in a bid to protect and preserve their post-war privileges. From this perspective, it would seem that the High-Level Panel made attempts to pander to the interests of the powerful.

Egypt

The Egyptian candidacy appears to be receiving a lot of support from major global actors, especially those from the North. The arguments that are advanced are that: first, while the other two contenders are from Sub-Saharan Africa, Egypt is from North Africa (the Maghreb) and that for purposes of geopolitical balance, Egypt should take up one seat to cater for the interests of North Africa. The truth of the matter is that Egypt is a nation caught between its physical location in Africa and ambitions of leading the Arab World. It is far more assertive and involved in Arab than Pan African Affairs. The fear is that if Egypt gets the seat, it will use it to promote Arab and Middle-East interests rather than those of Africa. More importantly, African leaders have argued that, the North should not decide which African states take up the African seats on the Security Council. The AU wants to determine who takes up Africa's seats on its own. In this regard, it is noteworthy that in recent times, the Egyptian leader, Hosni Mubarak, has not been a regular attendant at African Union summits. Following an assassination attempt,

Mubarak has cited security concerns as the reason for not attending summits. Interestingly, President Mubarak was present in the last AU Summit in Abuja, where the issue of Africa's Security Council seats was high on the agenda. However, Mubarak's opportunism will not do much to regain confidence among African leaders. All things being equal, Egypt's chances are more contingent on Western influence, especially the US rather than on continental solidarity. Interestingly, in the event that such Western pressure prevails, the remaining seat would have to be contested by Nigeria and South Africa.

South Africa

At the sub-regional level, South Africa is still being haunted by its historical past, specifically Pretoria's destabilising military and economic policies in the region during the apartheid era. 'The collective memory of these actions is still alive in the sub-region,' argues Adekeye Adebajo (Adebajo, 2005: 1). Importantly also, post-apartheid South Africa's economic and political successes have created jealousies that tend to feed perceptions of Pretoria's economic and political hegemony in the region. Such underlying tensions were evident during the World Cup bid. Botswana, seen by many as having very solid politico-diplomatic ties with Pretoria, failed to back Pretoria's bid

despite the fact that one of its citizens held a vital voting right as a prominent representative of the African Football Confederation (CAF) in the FIFA elections. In this sense, Pretoria may not necessarily count on sub-regional solidarity for support against Nigeria. In any event, many still feel that South Africa is a new comer to continental politics and therefore, that it is yet to understand the political realities of the rest of the continent.

The destructive penetration of South African capital into the rest of Africa alongside growing perceptions that South Africa sees itself as only geographically part of Africa but culturally part of Europe have not endeared it to the rest of the continent. Ordinarily, South Africa's candidacy could be enhanced by the notion of its exceptionalism, namely, that of a country highly revered in western capitals amidst the latter's generalised pessimism about the rest of the continent. Moreover, South Africa's position could be further strengthened by its solid UN credentials: its role in the extension of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), its chairmanship of the UN Commission on Human Rights, its opposition to the invasion of Iraq, its contributions to the Ottawa process to ban land mines and its involvement in the establishment of

the International Criminal Court (ICC), just to mention a few.

However, while South Africa's independent stances on critical global issues may endear it to countries of the South, it may simply alienate major global powers whose support is very vital for enhancing Pretoria's bid for a UN-SC seat. In this regard, Pretoria might not have to rely on the support of the Americans because of its position on the war in Iraq, its perceived pro-Palestinian sympathies and its independent foreign policy that has, among other things, seen it extend red carpet treatment to a high-level delegation from North Korea in March 2005. Yet another issue that will separate South Africa from Nigeria is Pretoria's perceived support for President Mugabe's regime in Zimbabwe. This may yet prove to be popular currency in the hands of the United States. This is contrasted by Nigeria's critical role in African liberation politics, contribution to UN peace keeping operations, the attractions offered to big powers by Nigeria's fledgling oil industry and more importantly, the Abuja government's firm stance against the undemocratic developments in neighbouring Togo Republic.

Nigeria

By virtue of being home to Africa's largest population, Nigeria is naturally the most representative of the African voices on the continent. One in every 1000 black Africans is Nigerian. As a matter of fact, Nigeria perceives itself as the only true African country deserving of a place on the Security Council. One influential Nigerian conflict analyst argued: 'We [Nigeria] have true blacks, unlike Egypt and South Africa...Egypt is more part of the Arabian sector and South Africa owes its high level of development to the influence of whites.' While South Africa has good credentials, Nigeria feels that the former is still largely under white domination, especially in the realm of economics, military, academic and strategic policy thinking. From a Nigerian perspective, therefore, South Africa cannot be the custodian of African interests.

Additionally, Nigerians feel that they have an edge over other contenders on the issue of contributions to UN peace missions, both regionally and internationally. This together with the fact that Nigeria has a long history of Africa's interests in the global arena, including championing Africa's struggle against apartheid, appears to make its case significantly stronger. Even more importantly, Nigeria has oil, an increasingly important consideration, especially in Washington. However,

Nigeria's reputation for corruption, lack of good governance and the spectre of political instability have denuded it of much-needed credibility in both the continental and global political arenas. These factors may stand in the way of Nigeria's quest for a seat at the Security Council.

Africa's potential 'spoilers'

Although the battle for UN Security Council seats appears set to be between Africa's three lead states, Nigeria, South Africa and Egypt, one must not lose sight of manoeuvres by 'weaker' African states. A good example is that of Libya which has successfully rehabilitated itself in Washington's and London's eyes. Furthermore, some diplomatic sources have hinted that just before the Mbabane AU meeting concluded on the option of demanding two veto-wielding seats, some African states strongly objected to Nigeria, South Africa and Egypt portraying themselves as representatives of the continent. Senegal and other francophone countries are also potential spoilers within the logic of traditional Francophone-Anglophone tensions that have characterised African political dynamics. Weaker AU members may argue that instead of Africa asking for two permanent seats on the Council, the continent should favour the second proposed option of having a non-permanent four year rotating slot that

will give every country – big and small – a real chance of one day sitting at the prestigious Security Council. This position may be supported by the P-5 who will not support efforts to weaken them by devolving the veto. But, as already indicated, the ‘Ezulwini Consensus’ seems to have paved the way for a race by the lead states. It remains to be seen, however, if these ‘spoilers’ would be willing to rally behind Africa’s lead states, especially in defending Africa’s common position at the upcoming UN-General Assembly meetings in March and September 2005.

Conclusion

The momentum for the reform of the UN has come from a global consensus over the need to align the organisation with new global realities and power configurations. There is no denying the fact that the scope of the ongoing reform agenda is unprecedented in the history of the institution. However, while the proposed reforms appear to be ground-breaking in areas such as broadening the definition of ‘collective security’ and shifting from unilateralism to broad-based multilateralism, they painfully fall short in meeting the yearning for the democratisation of the Security Council. Overall, the High-level Panel report’s recommendations are based on political realism. Its recommendations are anchored largely

in the fear of alienating the interests of the world’s most powerful nations.

Significantly though, the report calls for donor countries to live up to the commitments they have already made to developing countries. Irrespective of how one views these reform proposals, they have set in motion underlying centripetal and centrifugal forces amongst regions and regional ‘actors.’ While the veto-wielding nations are determined to retain their privileges, emerging global and regional actors are bent on wresting them away or at the very least, sharing them.

In Africa, the struggle to influence the reform process has created a potentially destructive rift that has brought into sharp relief how the continent’s lead states view each other. If this rift becomes manifest, a lot of work will be needed to rebuild destroyed diplomatic fences when the dust finally settles. Whichever state gets the nomination it will be representing Africa not its flag. Both candidates should be states accepted by Africans as their representatives rather than those chosen for them by outside forces and interests.

Policy considerations

1) For the champions of the UN reform agenda:

Although there is little beyond an advisory opinion that Annan and his reform team can express, they would need to shed the fear of provoking the wrath of the great powers by insisting on genuine reforms. This will help boost the legitimacy of the UN and render it more effective and efficient. More precisely, they must adroitly address the issue of the anachronism of the veto power if the proposed reforms are to be taken seriously. Any reform agenda that shies away from this thorny issue will be cosmetic and would do little to reverse the perceptions of illegitimacy and ineffectiveness of the institution.

2) For the African Union:

Without necessarily being constrained by the wishes of the more powerful current veto-wielding states, the AU must state its case in a manner that is not overtly confrontational to the interests and wishes of the P-5. And while Africa's claim is legitimate and not necessarily overly ambitious, the AU must be psychologically prepared to settle for non-veto wielding Security Council membership. One suggestion would be that more effort be put into building stronger multilateral groupings from the Global South to counter the effects of the rapacious power of the US and its allies.

3) For African contenders:

While contending African states have a right to promote their respective national interests, they have an obligation to conduct themselves responsibly and in a manner that would not compromise the broader African agenda. They need to present a unified, common position as embodied in the 'Ezulwini Consensus'. Potentially disastrous rifts will open the continent to the divide and rule tactics by the North. Nigeria, South Africa and Egypt must, therefore, avoid all strategies that consist of undermining and backstabbing each other. Practices like labelling each other as being less African or being too corrupt to qualify for a seat at the UN must, as a matter of urgency, be avoided. For South Africa in particular, the foreign ministry must be aware that the odds do not appear to be totally in its favour. Therefore, there is need to double diplomatic efforts to engage the continent on the negative perceptions that haunt it.

4) To Africa's potential spoilers:

To the extent that it remains their legitimate aspiration to strive for a democratic reform agenda that avails all African states equal opportunity to influence UN Security Council decisions, they must realise that the Security Council represents the pinnacle of global power politics, in which only stronger countries will hold

sway. Their efforts must therefore be directed at supporting stronger African candidates for seats on the Security Council.

5) To current veto-wielding states:

Although current veto-wielding states will try to maintain the status quo, they must not lose sight of the fact that the failure to democratise the UN in line with new global power realities will act as a real obstacle to multilateralism. They must, therefore, make a conscious effort to create space for new comers to the Security Council to share in the privileges that go with the huge responsibility of keeping global peace and preventing war.

Suggested Readings

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Session Supplement No. 47 – A/57/47, New York, 2003)

3. *Reform of the United Nations Security Council – Germany's Views*, (Germany Permanent Mission, United Nations, 2004)
4. T. G. Weiss, 'The Illusion of UN Security Reform', *Washington Quarterly*, (Autumn, 2003)
5. B. Turok, 'The threat of US militarism', *New Agenda*, (Second Quarter, 2003).
6. Z. P. Jordan, 'A global regime built on force?', *New Agenda*, (First Quarter, 2003)
7. D. Kraus, '101 Steps Towards a More Secure World', *Foreign Policy In Focus* (online at www.fpif.org, 8 December 2004).
8. I. Williams, 'Will Calls for Sharing Responsibility in New UN Report Fall on Deaf Ears', *Foreign Policy In Focus*, (online at www.fpif.org, 10 December, 2003).
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10. W. Blum, *Rogue State*, (Maine Monroe, Common Courage Press, 2000).

11. John Pilger, *New Rulers of the World*, (London, Verso, 2002).

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