

REVIEW ARTICLE



Assessing Africa's Emerging Influence in Global Governance: Opportunities and Challenges for Expanded Representation in the UN Security Council

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Abstract: African states and the region as a whole have played important roles in the international system, including peacekeeping contributions, alliances, and a significant influence on global south-south cooperation. However, Africa has been faced with the challenge of underrepresentation in key global organizations due to its late entry as a result of colonialism. The quest for inclusion and proper representation in the United Nations (UN) Security Council has become a life-long pursuit for most African diplomats and heads of state. Thus, this article investigates the growth of Africa's influence in the global system since the Cold War era. A transition that has revolved from simply being receivers of resolutions and directions from the global order to forming self-governing organisations and subsequently contesting the status quo. The central question is: does Africa have what it takes to get a permanent seat and equitable representation in the UN Security Council? The emergence of a united African agency in the international system has been a development that has given the region a voice in global affairs. Although individual states such as Ethiopia, Nigeria, and South Africa have made significant contributions to global governance, the focus remains on a united African agency and its ability to achieve full representation in global politics. To this the end, the goal of the entire assessment is to strengthen the argument for African representation in the United Nations Security Council—the most significant body in the world.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The role of Africa in global governance has undergone a transformative evolution over the past decades. For a long time, the continent was the target of global policies but had little say in shaping them.

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Colonial rule left Africa excluded from decisions that shaped the international system. However, with the wave of independence in the mid-twentieth century, African states began to push for a stronger voice in world affairs. Since then, African diplomacy has sought to challenge this marginal position and secure fairer representation in global decision-making.

This new diplomatic drive unfolded within a changing international environment. After the Second World War, new institutions were created to promote peace and cooperation. The idea of collective action in solving common problems gradually replaced the older system of great power rivalries and bilateral alliances that had characterized nineteenth-century European order. Institutions such as the United Nations (UN), the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) became central to the new international order. Among these, the UN quickly stood out as the most important platform for peace, security, and global dialogue.

It was within this context that newly independent African states, still weighed down by the legacies of colonialism, turned to the UN as a forum for addressing their shared problems. Yet, as late entrants into the system, they faced structural barriers that limited their influence. Their voices were often marginalized, particularly within the UN Security Council, where real decision-making power rests.

The Security Council itself has remained largely unchanged since 1945, with five permanent members—China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States—retaining veto power. In contrast, non-permanent members rotate every two years and have no veto authority. This arrangement has left Africa and Latin America without permanent representation, effectively excluding entire regions from the Council's most critical decisions. Such imbalance, together with the growing appeal of multilateral cooperation, encouraged the rise of regionalism as states sought collective ways of addressing their challenges (Fawcett, 2013). Africa was not left behind in this development. Consequently, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) was formed in 1963 which later evolved to the African Union (AU) in 2001.

However, globalization made it clear that regional solutions alone were not enough. African problems increasingly became global problems, while global crises had deep impacts on Africa. This realization pushed African states to seek greater influence on the world stage. They began to amplify their voices by joining international alliances, taking part in peace and security initiatives, and speaking more assertively in global forums. One major platform has been the BRICS+ group, which has become a rallying point for South-South cooperation and an avenue for advancing African interests in global governance.

Despite these efforts, the question of Africa's place in the UN Security Council remains unresolved. Calls for reform have been widespread, including proposals championed by Africa itself (Welz, 2013), but progress has been limited. The barriers are many: the difficulty of changing the Council's structure without rebuilding it completely, the lack of unity in the General Assembly over a common reform plan, the veto power of the permanent members, as well as the dynamics of global politics among the Security Council members.

In view of these, this study assesses critically the growth of Africa's influence in global governance and the opportunities that it presents for proper representation in the United Nations Security Council as well as outlining the expected challenges. A historical analysis of global restructuring over time is presented while the argument is given credence by the theories of power transition and institutionalism. In essence, the research seeks to investigate theoretically the possibility of Africa's rise to greater influence in global affairs.

2. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF AFRICA'S ROLE IN GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

African participation in international organizations began after the Second World War, when most African states gained independence. By then, however, the major institutions of global governance had already been created, with their structures and rules firmly in place (Mashiri & Shaw, 1989). At the same time, the Cold War was the dominant force in international politics, and the superpower rivalry often sidelined the interests of newly independent African countries. Confronted with this marginalization and

caught between opposing blocs, African states sought to build unity among themselves so they could better defend their interests and articulate their perspectives on key global issues (Oloo, 2016). It was in this context that African countries joined initiatives such as the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), the G-77 coalition in the wider UN system, and most significantly, the Organization of African Unity (OAU).

It is against this backdrop that African diplomatic face took its form in the early 1990s, namely, to leverage on numbers in order to find greater representation of their interests against a marginalised position in the already established system of international organisations. What ensued was that African states began to use this numerical advantage to press for reforms in the international order. A major example was the OAU's call in 1973 for the establishment of a New International Economic Order (NIEO). This push contributed to the UN adopting a series of landmark resolutions between 1974 and 1975, including the Declaration and Programme of Action on NIEO, the Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States, and resolutions on Development and International Economic Co-operation. These initiatives reflected Africa's determination alongside other developing regions to restructure the global economy in ways that would promote their development and address long-standing inequalities. Over time, this activism also deepened cooperation between African states and the wider UN system, eventually laying the foundation for the OAU's transformation into the African Union (AU) in 2001 (Oloo, 2016).

Yet, despite this activism, Africa's representation in the United Nations remained limited, especially in its most powerful body, the Security Council. At the time of the UN's founding, most African states were still under colonial rule and therefore excluded from shaping its institutions (Hovet, 1964). This early absence meant that the structures of global governance were designed without African input. When independence came, African leaders quickly recognized that while the General Assembly offered them a platform to voice concerns, real decision-making power rested in the Security Council. It was in this organ that critical choices on peace, security, and international interventions were made including those directly involving Africa yet African states had little or no influence over such outcomes (Souaré, 2011). This imbalance soon made representation a central priority of African diplomacy. From the 1960s onward, African states repeatedly pressed for a stronger role within the Council, emphasizing that their growing membership in the UN should translate into genuine participation in its most decisive organ. Over the decades, their demands have expanded beyond calls for permanent seats to include equal participation in decision-making, particularly the extension of veto rights to any new permanent members (Hosli & Dörfler, 2019; Lättilä & Ylönen, 2019). These persistent appeals reflect Africa's long-standing struggle to shift from being the object of Security Council deliberations to becoming an active shaper of its decisions.

3. AFRICA'S PARTICIPATION IN INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCES AND PLATFORMS

Africa's diplomatic influence has undergone a significant transformation over the years, both in regional cohesion and global alliances. The continent, once seen mostly as a subject of global policies, has increasingly asserted itself as an active player capable of shaping its own future. This shift in Africa's position has marked a new era in international relations, where Africa no longer seeks only to respond to global events but also to influence them. One clear example of Africa's growing influence can be seen in South Africa's membership in the BRICS+ group. This group of emerging economies has emerged as a formidable force in global economic governance, challenging Western powers' traditional dominance (Daniel & Virk, 2014). The rise of BRICS has positioned the group as a formidable force in global economic governance, challenging the traditional dominance of Western powers (Daniel & Virk, 2014). Within this framework, South Africa plays a strategic role by amplifying African concerns and ensuring that the continent's priorities feature in global institutional discussions (Asuelime & Jethro, 2012). The presence of Russia and China both veto-holding members of the UN Security Council, further strengthens Africa's indirect representation in one of the most powerful organs of the United Nations. Beyond exerting influence in the existing global governance system, BRICS has also signaled its intent to create an alternative structure of global governance, one that promises to address long-standing inequities in decision-making. This was evident at the 2013 BRICS summit, where the group agreed to deepen cooperation with African countries in support of socio-economic transformation, with particular focus on infrastructure development and industrialization (Daniel & Virk, 2014; Kumar *et al.*, 2022). Such commitments reflect the

potential of South Africa's membership in BRICS to channel African interests and create opportunities for African-driven solutions to African problems. Furthermore, BRICS' intent to establish an alternative global governance system presents an opportunity for Africa to break free from the shackles of traditional Western-dominated institutions. By creating a new architecture for global governance, BRICS can help redress the historical imbalance in global decision-making, providing Africa with a more equitable seat at the table.

At the same time, African states have also worked to strengthen their global influence by building regional cohesion. This often brings forward regional powers that can champion the continent's cause. Nigeria is a key example. The country has played a central role in establishing regional organizations such as the African Union (AU), formerly the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Nigeria has also pushed to make sure these organizations meet their objectives (Johnson, 2021; Garba, 2023). Nigeria's leadership, generosity, and commitment to solving African problems have earned it recognition both inside and outside Africa as a major regional power and a "Big Brother" to many countries (Garba, 2023). Its foreign policy has consistently opposed colonization and oppression of African states (Adamu, 2017). Nigeria has been the main donor to ECOWAS peacekeeping operations, covering more than half of the funding for the ECOWAS Commission, and it remains one of the top five donors to the AU budget (Obasi, 2024; Dauda & Ekwulo, 2024). Through the AU and ECOWAS, Nigeria ensures that Africa is not simply dependent on decisions made by external global institutions. This is a major shift compared to the past, when policies like structural adjustment programs were imposed on African states with little say in the matter. Nigeria's peacekeeping missions under the AU and ECOWAS also demonstrate Africa's ability to solve its own problems (Adetula, 2014; Ije *et al.*, 2019; Garba, 2023). Its role in regional integration reflects the principles of its foreign policy, particularly multilateralism (Akinola, 2024). By working through international organizations, Nigeria has been able to project influence in global politics, especially at the United Nations. Although realist scholars often argue that the international system is anarchic, Nigeria's multilateral approach shows how African states can build power and influence by working collectively.

4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

4.1. Power Transition Theory

Power Transition Theory (PTT), developed by Organski (1958), explains how power shifts occur between states in the international system. It views the world as a hierarchy in which dominant powers maintain order by setting the "rules of the game" (Gennari, 2017). In essence, this theory provides a useful lens for understanding how states ascend in the global system to gain significant influence. According to PTT, major change begins when a rising power is able to challenge the existing hierarchy. To reach this stage, a state must first grow internally in key areas such as the economy, population, political stability, and military strength. That is, a rising state must attain a level of parity with the dominant power before it can contest the status quo.

According to PTT, a further condition for systemic change is whether the rising power is satisfied or dissatisfied with the prevailing order. In Africa's case, this theory provides credence. Despite its large population, natural resources, and economic potential, the continent remains marginalized in global governance, most notably by its lack of permanent representation on the United Nations Security Council. This exclusion reflects exactly what Organski and Kugler (1980) describe as dissatisfaction that goes beyond the desire for influence. But rather a dissatisfaction that necessitates challenging the very rules by which the system operates (Gennari, 2017).

Historical examples help to clarify this argument. The rise of the United States shows how a dissatisfied power can reshape the international order by changing its rules. Rather than relying on direct confrontation, the U.S. advanced new institutions and promoted multilateralism, securing global leadership in the twentieth century. China offers a contemporary illustration. Through the BRICS partnership and its push for reforms at the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF), Beijing has worked to alter global governance. The creation of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the recognition of the

yuan as a reserve currency at the IMF (Kim & Gates, 2015) further demonstrate how dissatisfied powers seek not only greater influence but also structural change.

Africa's trajectory reflects similar dynamics. The strengthening of regional organizations such as the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) reveals efforts to create autonomous systems that challenge the status quo. From the perspective of Power Transition Theory, the argument for Africa's emerging role in global governance is clear: with its demographic weight, abundant resources, and growing economies, the continent must consolidate internal cohesion and forge strong alliances. As Khan *et al.* (2022) observe, rising powers enhance their capacity to contest the international order when they align with other influential actors. Africa's cooperation with dissatisfied partners such as the BRICS states therefore illustrates how partnerships can amplify its collective voice and strengthen its case for expanded representation, particularly within the United Nations Security Council.

4.2. Theory of Institutionalism: Multilateralism and Institutional Representation

The theory of institutionalism complements the argument for Africa's rise in global governance by explaining how Africa's underrepresentation in the United Nations Security Council undermines the credibility of the UN itself. This argument is further clarified through the concept of multilateralism and institutional representation.

Institutionalism, which emerged in the mid-twentieth century, offers a systematic approach of studying how institutions guide political actions and help organize and enforce cooperation between states (Barkunov, 2013). At its core, institutionalism says that politics is shaped by formal rules, norms, and procedures—what Schmidt (2014) calls the “rules of the game”—which influence how decisions are made. After the Second World War, interest in this idea declined because many scholars focused more on individual behavior and bias in politics. But when institutionalism came back, it offered a deeper understanding of how institutions shape and maintain political order (Immergut, 1998; Peters, 1999; Peters, 2022).

In the context of global governance, institutionalism explains the role of international institutions in shaping state behavior and fostering cooperation. Central to this explanation is the concept of multilateralism; the idea that certain problems require collective action because no single state can address them alone. Multilateralism thus forms the foundation of institutional cooperation.

Multilateralism can be understood in various ways. Broadly, it refers to a relationship among three or more states in which cooperation is voluntary. More precisely, and relevant to this study, it refers to institutionalized collective action, that is, action taken by states within a structured framework that ensures inclusive representation (Newman *et al.*, 2006). This implies that agreed rules guide discussions and decisions, and that all stakeholders have a fair voice. The essence of multilateralism lies in institutional representation, where the diversity and equality of participants strengthen legitimacy and decision-making.

Historically, the idea of multilateralism was first expressed by Woodrow Wilson, who argued that lasting world order depends on nations being connected through shared interests (Coleman & Jones, 2004). This idea was first put into practice with the League of Nations in 1919 and became a key principle of global governance after World War II. Led by the United States, institutions such as the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), which later became the World Trade Organization (WTO), and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) were created as examples of multilateral cooperation (Scott, 2015). These examples show how institutions are formed to create order based on common interests, and how multilateralism helps sustain global governance.

Thus, the credibility and effectiveness of multilateral institutions depend on equal representation. When certain regions or groups are underrepresented, they may feel marginalized, weakening the legitimacy of the institution and reducing willingness to cooperate. This is particularly evident in Africa's case. Despite African issues dominating nearly 50% of the Security Council's agenda and accounting for about 70% of its resolutions over the last three decades (Mbeti, 2024), Africa lacks permanent representation in the Security Council.

This underrepresentation questions multilateral legitimacy. As Keohane and Newman (2006) argue, a multilateral institution is legitimate when its operations reflect the expectations of those it serves, and when decision-making is inclusive and representative. The dominance of the permanent five members, coupled with their veto power, contravenes these principles. Thus, the UN Security Council falls short of the ideal of multilateralism. Africa's absence from permanent membership is not merely a matter of representation, it is a challenge to the legitimacy of the global governance system itself.

From the perspective of institutionalism, advancing Africa's representation in the Security Council is both a normative and functional necessity. Institutionalism underscores that credible global governance depends on inclusivity, diversity, and equality of representation. Therefore, addressing Africa's exclusion is not only an imperative for fairness, but also essential to strengthen the legitimacy, stability, and effectiveness of the United Nations as a truly multilateral institution.

Together, Power Transition Theory and the Theory of Institutionalism provide a strong foundation for understanding Africa's emerging role in global governance. Power Transition Theory shows why Africa's exclusion creates a strong reason to challenge the current system, explaining that rising powers push for change when they have the ability and feel left out. Institutionalism explains how such changes happen, highlighting the importance of fair and rule-based systems that allow all voices to be heard. For Africa, these ideas come together clearly. The continent's large population, natural resources, and growing economy give it the potential to become a major power in the world. Yet its lack of permanent representation in the United Nations Security Council shows a structural exclusion that weakens the fairness and legitimacy of the current global system. Institutionalism shows that fixing this exclusion is not only fair but also important for making global governance more credible, stable, and effective. Therefore, reforming how institutions represent states is both a practical and moral step for Africa's rise, making the call for Africa's proper representation a key part of building a fairer and stronger world order.

5. METHODOLOGY

This study employs qualitative research to assess Africa's emerging influence in global governance and the opportunities and challenges for expanded representation in the UN Security Council. With a focus on the central question; whether Africa possesses the agency for equitable UNSC inclusion, the approach is primarily drawing on historical analysis and theoretical application. Data were sourced from secondary sources, including academic journal articles, books, and scholarly works on international relations. The analysis was carefully done, focusing on relevance to key themes: Africa's historical role in global affairs, participation in alliances, and UNSC reform debates.

6. OPPORTUNITIES FOR AFRICA'S EXPANDED INFLUENCE

Despite long-standing marginalisation, Africa's global significance cannot be denied. It is the world's second-largest continent in both population and size and is endowed with abundant natural resources (Rosenberg, 2024; Sawe, 2018). This wealth has consistently attracted global partners eager to access African markets and resources. Among these partners, the BRICS coalition—Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa—has been especially active, presenting Africa with both opportunities and challenges. Unlike traditional Western partners, BRICS countries bring distinctive benefits such as military cooperation, technological transfer, and economic investment (Deych, 2015). For Africa, this partnership provides a platform to assert its influence globally.

Africa's inconsistent political stability and uneven economic growth have often limited its ability to fully exploit its potential. However, BRICS support has created space for new opportunities. The conclusions of the 2013 BRICS summit highlighted commitments to infrastructure development, the exploration of political system models, and the modernization of social structures (Deych, 2015). Through such initiatives, BRICS opens the door for African states to reduce their dependence on traditional Western-dominated institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank. By offering alternatives for trade, inclusive growth, and infrastructure (Yiblet, 2024), BRICS enables African states to reposition themselves from being aid-dependent to more influential global actors. In fact, the possibility of

closer economic ties between Africa and BRICS could allow them to adopt a common stance in global negotiations similar to the European Union's influence which would make African states more visible players in international politics. Scholars have raised concerns about imbalances and possible instability within BRICS (Rewizorski, 2017; Yible, 2024). Nevertheless, the platform still provides Africa with a historic opportunity: the chance to shape alternative global rules and institutions, or at the very least, to gain greater leverage in existing ones. Unlike the post-1945 order, where Africa had little input, African states now have the ability to actively contribute to the structures of global governance. Africa's influence in world affairs has also expanded through regional integration and peace initiatives. The growth of pan-African ideology after the Cold War led to the formation of regional alliances such as the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). These institutions have enhanced Africa's capacity for self-governance and reduced its reliance on external actors (Edozie & Khisa, 2022). By providing alternative frameworks for solving problems, regional organisations give African states a stronger voice in global debates and allow them to negotiate from a collective position rather than as isolated states.

In addition, Africa's role in peacekeeping has increased its global relevance. The AU's Peace and Security Council, established in 2002, created an institutional structure for addressing African conflicts (Kodjo, 2012). Since then, it has become unthinkable for the UN to launch a peace operation in Africa without first consulting the AU, African states, and sub-regional organisations (De Coning & Peter, 2018). Africa has also demonstrated its ability to challenge global institutions, as seen when the AU contested the International Criminal Court's 2008 charges against Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir (Welz, 2013). Furthermore, African countries today contribute around 30% of troops to UN peacekeeping missions (United Nations Peacekeeping, 2024). This active involvement has created new spaces for dialogue between the UN Security Council and the AU's Peace and Security Council. Such cooperation outlines Africa's growing capacity to influence international security decisions. It also strengthens the case for Africa's inclusion in the UN Security Council, since its credibility as a partner in global peace and security is increasingly recognized. In short, Africa's economic potential, regional organisation, and peacekeeping efforts together form a solid foundation for expanded global influence and stronger representation in the Security Council.

7. CHALLENGES TO AFRICA'S REPRESENTATION IN THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL

Indeed, African states have grown tremendously since after the Cold War era, and the subsequent establishment of the United Nations and their inclusion in the organization. Ideally, one might expect their growing influence, both collectively and individually to bring about change in the Security Council, the UN's most powerful organ responsible for peace and security. Ethiopia, for example, hosts the third-largest number of diplomatic missions in the world, is a founding UN member, and has taken part in numerous UN peacekeeping missions (Dahir, 2016; Adeto, 2018). It has also recently joined the BRICS grouping. South Africa has emerged as another key player, contributing 13% of Africa's total GDP and at one point accounting for 60% of the continent's GDP in 2011 (Wikipedia contributors, 2024; Jiménez, 2019). It too is part of BRICS. Nigeria, meanwhile, has played a vital role in regional stability and has a long history of financial and human contributions to UN peacekeeping. Yet, despite these achievements, Africa still lacks permanent representation on the Security Council.

A major obstacle lies in the way the UN is structured. The five permanent members (P5) of the Security Council hold veto power, which allows them to block any reform proposals. As UN membership has expanded, it has become increasingly difficult to achieve consensus on reform, since no single proposal can satisfy all members (Lesage & Graaf, 2015). According to the UN Charter, reform would require both a two-thirds majority vote in the General Assembly and the approval of nine Security Council members, including all five permanent members (United Nations, n.d.). This makes structural reform exceptionally difficult.

Internal divisions among African states has also hindered the progress of any reform. While Africa has often emphasized the principle of collective representation, competition over which states should take permanent seats undermines unity. Prestige and national ambition frequently overshadow the broader Pan-

African vision. The Ezulwini Consensus of 2005 illustrates this problem. While some regional powers, such as South Africa and Nigeria, were willing to accept permanent seats without veto power, most other African states insisted that veto rights must be extended to all new permanent members (Welz, 2013). This disagreement weakened Africa's position and revealed deep internal divides.

Beyond institutional and political disagreements, instability within Africa further complicates its bid for representation. Ongoing internal conflicts and governance challenges weaken the credibility of African states as reliable global actors. For instance, recent protests in Nigeria over economic decline and in Kenya against government policies highlight the fragility of political stability across the region (Salako, 2024; Wambua-Soi, 2024). Such instability reinforces the perception that Africa may not yet be ready to shoulder the responsibilities that come with permanent membership on the Security Council.

In short, Africa's absence from the UN Security Council is not merely the result of external barriers but also of internal challenges. The dominance of the permanent five, the near-impossibility of Charter reform, the lack of unity among African states, and the persistence of political instability all combine to delay Africa's long-sought goal of full representation.

8. THE CASE FOR EXPANDED REPRESENTATION IN THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL

The argument for democracy in the UN Security Council is one of many made towards the inclusion of Africa in the UN Security Council. When discussing global governance and security, it is necessary to discuss world inclusion and unity, yet Africa, Asia, and Latin America have long criticized the Council's undemocratic structure. This imbalance is most glaring in Africa's case, since a large share of UN policies directly affect the continent (Odeyemi & Igwebueze, 2016; Oloruntoba & Falola, 2021). Africa accounts for 28% of UN member states (Wikipedia contributors, 2024a), has no permanent representation on the Security Council yet. The key point of contention is that permanent membership, currently limited to the five states with veto power (China, Russia, the United Kingdom, France, and the United States) does not reflect all world regions. For true multilateralism and legitimate global governance, Africa should have a permanent voice, with equal veto rights.

Africa's contributions to global peace further strengthen this case. The continent is deeply involved in UN peacekeeping operations, providing troops and resources. Yet African states are sidelined in decision-making. The question then arises: if Africa can contribute to implementing peacekeeping, why is it excluded from shaping the decisions that authorize such missions? Nigeria's decisive role under ECOMOG in 1990 to stabilize Liberia is one example of African leadership in peace and security (Gambari, 2012). Similarly, the African Union (AU) has often acted when the international community was hesitant, carrying out several peace operations independently. This exclusion reflects a broader failure of the United Nations Security Council to adapt to today's realities. Beyond lacking equal representation, the Council has also resisted multiple reform proposals, largely because any reform would challenge the long-held privileges of the permanent five (P5), who are unwilling to give up the power they gained after World War II. This raises a critical question: are the structures designed for stability in 1945 still appropriate for addressing the challenges of today?

Over the years, several reform proposals have sought to address these concerns. In 2005, the UN Commission led by Secretary-General Kofi Annan proposed two reform models. Model A expanded the Council from 15 to 24 seats, including six new permanent seats and three non-permanent seats. Two of these permanent seats were reserved for Africa, two for Asia-Pacific, one for Europe, and one for the Americas. However, the model failed to address the issue of veto power. Model B proposed creating four-year renewable seats (rather than new permanent ones) along with additional non-permanent seats, but this too fell short of real reform. The G4 proposal put forward by Brazil, Germany, Japan, and India, called for six new permanent seats and four non-permanent ones, with two permanent seats for Africa. Again, the veto question was left unresolved. By contrast, the African Union's Ezulwini Consensus demanded six new permanent seats (two for Africa, two for Asia, one for Latin America and the Caribbean, and one for Western Europe and others), as well as five new non-permanent seats. Crucially, the AU insisted that new permanent members must have equal veto rights.

The real issue, then, is not only about expanding membership for equitable geographic representation but also about voting power. Security Council membership is not simply symbolic; it is about influence and decision-making authority. Mere representation without real power leaves inequality intact. Scholars and states alike have stressed the need for deeper structural reform rather than token inclusion (Gould & Rablen, 2017; Lättilä & Ylönen, 2019; Winther, 302). While some propose abolishing the veto altogether, others including the AU, argue that if the veto remains, it must be extended to new permanent members for fairness (United Nations, 2024). Other reform ideas have also emerged. The Uniting for Consensus Proposal, led by Italy, suggested increasing the majority needed for substantive Security Council decisions from nine to fifteen members (Volacu, 2015). Italy also proposed regional representation in place of individual states, even advocating for a permanent European Union seat with veto rights (Gould & Rablen, 2017).

From these debates, one point becomes clear: the current system is outdated. The veto has failed to guarantee balance and stability, while regional cohesion and new alliances are shifting the center of global governance away from the UN. Meaningful reform of the Security Council must therefore go beyond simply adding new members. It must include equal geographic representation, a fair distribution of voting power, and genuine inclusivity. Only then can the Council uphold its role as a credible institution for international peace and security, with Africa properly represented.

9. STRATEGIC PATHWAYS FOR AFRICA'S ADVOCACY

This study has shown that Africa demonstrates significant strength when it acts collectively, whether through regional unity or broader alliances. A key example is the Ezulwini Consensus Proposal advanced by the African Union (AU). This proposal gained recognition from the G4 group, though in a slightly modified form (Welz, 2013). Had African states maintained unity, the AU might have achieved greater success. The broader point is that Africa's advocacy for permanent membership in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has real potential either by forging alliances with external powers or by presenting a united African front proposal gained recognition from the G4 group, though in a slightly modified form (Welz, 2013). Had African states maintained unity, the AU might have achieved greater success. The broader point is that Africa's advocacy for permanent membership in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has real potential either by forging alliances with external powers or by presenting a united African front.

One important avenue is the BRICS organization, which presents Africa with a strong platform in its campaign for UN reform. South Africa, a member of BRICS for over a decade, has established trust among fellow members. A central factor is the balance Russia and China seek to maintain within the UNSC. Russia, for instance, opposes Germany and Japan, perceived allies of the United States; but has voiced support for South Africa, a fellow BRICS member (Kiku, 2024). With the bloc's increasing strategic interest in Africa, it is plausible that Russia and China would favor the inclusion of an African state in any reform plan. Thus, BRICS offers Africa a valuable alliance to leverage. However, this path requires unity: African states must rally behind a single candidate. The divisions that weakened the Ezulwini Consensus cannot be repeated.

Beyond BRICS, other alliances could serve Africa's strategy. Both the G-77+China and the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) provide opportunities. With 138 and 120 members mainly overlapping, these coalitions represent a large proportion of the UN General Assembly, offering Africa a strong numerical base of support. For such strategies to succeed, Africa must first resolve its internal divisions. A united position is essential to maximize external alliances. Some have even suggested Africa might pursue a regional representation seat, echoing Italy's proposal (Gould & Rablen, 2017). Africa also benefits from the AU's growing international profile. The AU's role in peace operations and its partnerships with the UN (Boutellis *et al.*, 2013; Allen, 2024) have strengthened its credibility, while its observer status at the UN General Assembly ensures it is recognized as more than just a continental body. The AU should therefore be seen as an emerging global actor with the capacity to influence international decision-making.

Nevertheless, a central obstacle remains the resistance of the Permanent Five (P5), who have consistently opposed reforms that might dilute their influence. Their reluctance stems largely from a desire to protect the veto power, which guarantees them dominance in Security Council decisions. From its inception, the UN reflected the interests of the Allied powers of World War II, who designed the system to safeguard their positions. Alliances and diplomatic maneuvering remain just as crucial today for Africa's advocacy. Recent statements from the United States supporting an African seat on the UNSC (Murithi, 2024; Hernandez, 2024) appear encouraging. Yet questions remain over whether such support reflects genuine recognition of African influence or a desire to position Africa in a subordinate, dependent role. To avoid this, African states must continue building independent influence on the global stage. This requires strengthening military capabilities, expanding industrial capacity, and projecting political and economic power internationally. Only through such efforts can Africa move from being a candidate for symbolic inclusion to a true global power in its own right.

10. IMPLICATIONS OF AFRICA'S INCLUSION IN THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL

Africa's impending inclusion in the UN Security Council will have a tremendous impact in global governance and international relations. Africa's historical experiences with colonialism, injustice, and conflict have shaped a unique outlook on peace and fairness, positioning the region as a potential neutral voice in contrast to the power-driven tendencies of the Global North. For instance, Nigeria has consistently demonstrated a commitment to peacekeeping, both through financial contributions and troop deployments. Its foreign policy explicitly prioritizes "promotion of international cooperation for the consolidation of universal peace and mutual respect among nations and elimination of discrimination in all its manifestation" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nigeria, n.d.). Such values reflect Africa's potential to bring balance and moral authority into UNSC deliberations.

For too long, the Global North has dominated international agendas, often advancing policies that prioritize their interests over those of the Global South. In contrast, Africa's inclusion would bring fresh perspectives that better reflect the realities of marginalized regions. As Newman *et al.* (2006) argue, broader representation enhances decision-making by ensuring diverse voices are heard, increasing objections, deepening deliberation, and producing policy outcomes that are more widely accepted. Such inclusivity would directly improve the legitimacy and effectiveness of the UNSC.

Beyond normative arguments, Africa's economic and strategic importance adds weight to the case for its inclusion. The continent's vast natural resources, growing markets, and geopolitical relevance make it central to the global economy. This reality partly explains the reluctance of the United States and its allies to extend veto power to potential African permanent members, as doing so could diminish their own influence in global affairs. Yet, excluding Africa undermines the credibility of the UNSC, whose decisions have increasingly been criticized for lacking legitimacy due to underrepresentation (United Nations, 2024). Including Africa would help address these concerns in ways that the proposed inclusion of Japan or Germany—both close U.S. allies—cannot.

Moreover, Africa's inclusion would enhance the Council's ability to address regional issues more effectively. While the UNSC regularly deliberates on African conflicts, discussions often occur at the margins, with resolutions shaped by external perspectives. With genuine African representation, issues such as regional security crises, climate change, development, and economic growth could be tabled with greater urgency and authenticity. This would not only produce more effective resolutions but also ensure stability and long-term development in the region.

Most significantly, Africa's permanent representation in the UNSC would mark a turning point in international relations comparable to the creation of the United Nations itself. It would signal a shift towards genuine multilateralism and redefine the balance of global governance. In theoretical terms, it would deepen the practice and study of multilateralism, offering future scholars a critical reference point for understanding how international institutions evolve to reflect changing global realities.

CONCLUSION

There is a compelling case for Africa's representation in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) because of its growing role and influence in world affairs. Given the continent's long history of colonial exploitation, the issue of representation is not only a political necessity but also a matter of justice. Africa has emerged as an important actor in global governance, with notable contributions to international peace and security that strengthen the case for its inclusion. Moreover, the very idea of multilateralism upon which the United Nations was founded, loses credibility without fair and diverse representation in its most powerful organ. The contradiction is clear: while Africa remains central to the Council's agenda, it has little say in shaping its decisions. This imbalance undermines the legitimacy and effectiveness of the UNSC and continues to expose a fundamental flaw in the global power structure

One thing stands out in all of this; which is the growing influence of Africa in the global system. Africa's voice though underrepresented cannot be sidelined anymore and this has become a glimmering hope for the continent. Alliances such as the BRICS and a strong regional organizational impact such as the AU peacekeeping operations, has helped to create a new face for Africa in the quest for representation in global multilateralism. Ultimately, Africa's inclusion in the UNSC is essential not just for the continent but for the credibility of global governance itself. As Africa continues to assert its place on the world stage, the international community must embrace inclusive multilateralism as the only path toward a fairer and more effective Security Council.

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The author confirms sole responsibility for the following: study conception and design, data collection, analysis and interpretation of results, and manuscript preparation.

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