

## The Challenging Path to the African Veto: Between the Anarchy of the International Order and African Divisions

Abdennour Mansouri<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Political Science, Mohamed Boudiaf University of Msila, Head of The Research Team: "Algerian-African Relations: Algeria's Foreign Policy Efforts to Regain Regional Initiative After 2019" (Algeria)

The E-mail Author: [abdennour.mansouri@univ-msila.dz](mailto:abdennour.mansouri@univ-msila.dz)

Received: 10/07/2024

Published: 05/05/2025

---

### Abstract:

In addition to the injustices Africa suffered due to European colonialism, the continent has faced significant inequities from the United Nations Security Council, where it has been absent from its composition as it was a colony, despite being constantly affected by its decisions. This situation has led to a consensus on the existence of a historical injustice towards Africa. In an effort to rectify this, Africa proposed a reform project in the *Ezulwini Consensus* and the *Sirte Declaration* in 2005, aimed at acquiring an African veto through two permanent seats in the Security Council. This proposal embodies the desire for reform. However, the historical injustice acknowledged by the *2024 Future Charter*, which calls for a specific approach to African issues, has not progressed to the recognition of an African veto. Instead, it has merely urged a reconsideration of the future of veto power, whether by limiting its use or expanding the authority of the UN General Assembly.

This article explores the challenges hindering the realization of an African veto. It posits that the difficulty stems from structural barriers related to the anarchic nature of the international order and African divisions. This study is structured into three key sections. The first examines the rationale behind Security Council reform, highlighting its shortcomings—including the deep-rooted historical injustices suffered by Africa. The second section delves into Africa's perspective on Security Council reform, which solidified in 2005 through the *Ezulwini Consensus* and *Sirte Declaration*, marking a collective push for fair representation and structural change. The third and final section explores the challenges hindering the establishment of an African veto, starting with the resistance of permanent Security Council members to ceding veto power to prospective new permanent members; the proliferation and contradictions of reform proposals among the various groups engaged in intergovernmental negotiations, such as the *G4*

*Group* and the *Consensus for Unity Group*; the failure to implement international charters that hinder the application of international frameworks aimed at correcting historical injustices against Africa, particularly *The 2024 Future Charter*; and the division of African positions on reform initiatives. All these factors contribute to the obstruction of the African veto project.

**Keyword:** *Ezulwini Consensus* and *Sirte Declaration*, African Veto, Reform of the UN Security Council, South Africa, Algeria.

---

## Introduction

The United Nations was established after World War II with the aim of protecting international peace and security. The Security Council has been a central forum for addressing global issues, thus playing a pivotal role in international politics. However, Africa has suffered significant injustices from the Council, in addition to the wrongs inflicted by European colonialism, as it was absent from the Council's composition while being subject to its decisions. This has led to a consensus on the existence of a historical injustice towards Africa. To address this issue, Africa advanced a reform initiative advocating for two permanent seats in the Security Council, with the veto power—the study referred to as the African veto—reflecting the principles of the *Ezulwini Consensus* and the *Sirte Declaration* of 2005.

However, the historical injustice acknowledged by *The 2024 Future Charter*, which calls for a specific approach to African issues, has not resulted in the recognition of the African veto. Instead, it has merely called for reconsideration of the future of veto power, whether by limiting its use or expanding the authority of the UN General Assembly. What obstacles stand in the way of achieving the African veto, making its path to implementation so difficult? Is this challenge rooted in Africa's weaknesses and internal divisions, or does it stem from the inherent anarchy of the international order? This is the central problem that this study seeks to explore.

To address this issue, the study begins with the hypothesis that the pursuit of an African veto is hindered by structural challenges stemming from both the anarchic nature of the international order and internal African divisions. The African veto has faced challenges in unifying the African stance on a formula for reform and its implementation. Progress has been made, including the establishment of *the Committee of Ten* in 2005, the *Ezulwini Consensus*, the *Sirte Declaration*, and the adoption of the African *Agenda 2063* in 2015, culminating in global recognition of the need to fairly representing Africa in the Security Council through *the 2024 Future Charter*.

The divisions surrounding an African veto—and its ultimate implementation, if approved—revolve around the crucial question of who will occupy the two permanent

seats on the Security Council. This underscores the anarchic nature of the international order, where the absence of a supreme authority allows states to prioritize their national interests, often at the expense of collective governance and global stability. Implementing the African veto requires securing approval from two-thirds of Security Council members, with no objections from any permanent member, alongside the endorsement of two-thirds of the UN General Assembly. This process unfolds amid reform proposals that could existentially challenge the African initiative.

### **Structure of the Study**

The study is divided into three main sections:

**1. Rationale for Reforming the Security Council:** This section highlights the shortcomings of the Security Council, particularly the historical injustices suffered by Africa, and emphasizes the urgent need for reform.

**2. The African Perspective on Reform:** This section focuses on the African perspective on reform as articulated in the *Ezulwini Consensus* and the *Sirte Declaration* of 2005.

**3. Obstacles to Realizing the African Veto:** This section analyzes the obstacles to securing the African veto, starting with the resistance of permanent Security Council members to transferring veto power to new members. Additionally, it highlights the wide array of reform proposals and the conflicting positions among different groups involved in intergovernmental negotiations, such as the *G4 Group* and the *Consensus for Unity group*; The failure to implement international charters that hinder the application of frameworks aimed at correcting historical injustices against Africa—most notably *The 2024 Future Charter*. Additionally, the fragmentation of African positions on reform initiatives further complicates efforts toward meaningful change. These factors all contribute to obstructing the African veto project.

The study strives to rely on primary sources that support the topic, including reports and official statements from *The African Union*, *The Committee of Ten on Reform*, and the relevant countries.

### **1. Rationale for Reforming the Security Council: Historical Injustice Against Africa**

The United Nations was established at the end of World War II with the aim of maintaining international peace and security and upholding the principles of justice and international law.<sup>1</sup> The Security Council serves as the executive body of the organization, but over time, it has assumed a position that allows it to dominate international politics for decades. This has led the fifteen members of the Security Council to act on behalf of 193 member states of the UN, a significant responsibility that makes it a central and influential institution in global governance. However, these

institutions have faced growing scrutiny over their legitimacy and the urgent need for reform to better align with contemporary international realities.

In his address at the opening session of the 79<sup>th</sup> UN General Assembly in 2024, UN Secretary-General António Guterres emphasized that the Security Council was originally structured by the victors of World War II, contributing to a world characterized by impunity amid numerous violations of international law and the UN Charter.<sup>2</sup> The persistent injustice Africa faces is a clear reflection of the imbalance in the international order, as pointed out by Guterres, who underscored Africa's lack of a permanent seat on the Security Council, noting that most of its nations were still under colonial rule at the time of the UN's founding.<sup>3</sup> Africa remains a perpetual 'absent-present' on the Security Council's agenda, consistently discussed yet lacking direct representation, despite obtaining three non-permanent seats in the Security Council through a UN Charter 1963 amendment.

The Rwandan Genocide serves as a case study of the Security Council's failure in Africa. Had Africa held a permanent seat, this tragedy might have been prevented. In the lead-up to the genocide, despite the United States and France being aware of the potential for mass killings, they did not attempt to convene a Security Council meeting to investigate the repeated warnings. New Zealand's ambassador and then-President of the Security Council, Colin Keating, wrote about his desperate attempts to have the Council declare what was happening as genocide; however, the United States was unwilling to activate the Genocide Convention. Additionally, China strongly opposed any mention of human rights violations in the Security Council and interpreted the Genocide Convention accordingly, while Nigeria and the Non-Aligned Movement made efforts that ultimately failed to alter the situation.<sup>4</sup>

Algerian Foreign Minister Ahmed Attaf believes that the changing nature of international crises necessitates the exploring new methods of global governance, pointing out that the internal regulations governing the Security Council are based on a provisional document established in 1945. Attaf highlighted the broad consensus on the existence of internal divisions within the Security Council, which have paralyzed it. Therefore, Algeria advocates for rectifying Africa's historical underrepresentation in the Security Council by enhancing its presence within the institution. As a non-permanent member, Algeria is collaborating with the Group of Ten, non-permanent members, to explore potential reforms for the Security Council.<sup>5</sup>

In the same context, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa emphasized that the African continent, home to 1.4 billion people, continues to be excluded from key decision-making structures. He also underscored the Security Council's failure to uphold its mandate of maintaining international peace and security. After 78 years since its establishment, its structure has undergone little change. Therefore, South Africa advocates for a more representative and inclusive Security Council.<sup>6</sup>

Amid growing pressure for reform, a consensus on the need for change has started to take shape, with even the permanent five showing some signs of responsiveness. In

2022, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov called for strengthening African representation.<sup>7</sup> Additionally, U.S. President Joe Biden, in the 79<sup>th</sup> UN General Assembly in 2024, emphasized the need to build a stronger, more effective, and inclusive UN, accommodating new voices and perspectives, and announced his country's support for reforming and expanding the Council's membership, including permanent seats for African states.<sup>8</sup>

On September 22-23, 2024, world leaders adopted *The Future Charter*, which included an agreement on guiding principles established in intergovernmental negotiations regarding fair representation and increased membership in the Security Council, according to General Assembly Resolution 62/557 as criteria for reform.<sup>9</sup> The charter prioritized strengthening intergovernmental negotiations on Security Council reform; addressing historical injustices against Africa; Enhancing representation for historically underrepresented or unrepresented regions and groups, including Asia and the Pacific, Latin America, and the Caribbean; and expanding representation for developing nations, as well as small and medium-sized states. The right of veto was also considered a key element of the reform. The charter called for continued negotiations and the development of new or modified models<sup>10</sup>.

## **2. The African Perspective on Reforming the Security Council: *Ezulwini Consensus* and *Sirte Declaration 2005***

Africa played a pivotal role in one of the Security Council's most significant transformations: the 1971 admission of China as a permanent member, replacing the Republic of China (Taiwan). At that time, Mao Zedong acknowledged a 'debt of gratitude' to African and other developing nations that supported his country's candidacy.<sup>11</sup>

Demographically, by 2050, one in four people is expected to be African, and Africa is projected to become the most populous continent by the end of the century. Within the United Nations General Assembly, African countries hold 28% of the votes, surpassing Asia (27%), the Americas (17%), and Western Europe (15%).<sup>12</sup>

The liberation and decolonization approach offers the most compelling explanation for the gap between Africa's qualifications and its marginalization in global governance, as well as the call for fair representation in the Security Council.<sup>13</sup> This approach is based on the fact that most international organizations emerged from colonial ideas and practices, continuing as instruments of a neo-colonial project through international governance. When the UN was established, nearly all African countries remained under colonial rule, with only four African nations present at its founding conference. In the UN, African countries confronted the reality that the UN Charter established institutional structures favoring major powers by placing them in the Security Council. The decolonization of African states during the Cold War and their subsequent accession to the UN contributed significantly to the expansion of its membership. With 54 member states, Africa remains without a permanent seat on the Security Council—a glaring exclusion that has become a significant issue. Despite being a central focus of

the Council's discussions, Africa is largely absent from its decision-making processes, reinforcing the perception of the Council as a modern colonial club that determines matters of war and peace without African participation.

In 2005, *The Committee of Ten Permanent Representatives to the UN* (C-10) was established, comprising representatives from the Republic of Congo and Equatorial Guinea from Central Africa; Kenya and Uganda from East Africa; Namibia and Zambia from Southern Africa; Libya and Algeria from North Africa; and Senegal and Sierra Leone from West Africa. The committee was entrusted with advancing a unified African position on Security Council reform. That same year, *The African Union* (AU) adopted two key documents as the foundation for its collective stance on UN reforms: *The Ezulwini Consensus*, endorsed at the AU's 22<sup>nd</sup> Extraordinary Executive Council meeting in March 2005, and *The Sirte Declaration*, adopted in July of the same year.<sup>14</sup> Since the launch of the first round of intergovernmental negotiations on UN reform on March 4, 2009, the African position has gained growing international recognition. This shift was reflected in the UN Secretary-General's report, "Our Common Agenda," issued on September 10, 2021, which underscored Africa's call for Security Council reform. The report highlights that an overwhelming majority of member states now acknowledge the need for a more representative Security Council in the 21st century, including improved representation for Africa.<sup>15</sup>

The AU has integrated the *Ezulwini Consensus* and the *Sirte Declaration* of 2005 into its strategic framework through "Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want." Adopted in 2015 under Aspiration 7, the initiative aims to establish "Africa as a strong and influential global power."<sup>16</sup> Strengthening Africa's position in the global governance system—particularly in the Security Council and financial institutions—is essential, as decisions made within these international bodies have a direct impact on Africans and their continent. The Security Council's decisions have direct consequences for peace and security in Africa. Agenda 2063 highlights Africa's continued marginalization, despite being the primary focus of many Security Council decisions. However, the continent remains excluded from the permanent membership and lacks veto power, making Security Council reform an urgent priority for Africa.<sup>17</sup>

*The Ezulwini Consensus* enjoys broad sympathy and support, as noted in the Committee of Ten's report.<sup>18</sup> However, this alone is insufficient to shift global power dynamics. Opposition to an African veto has emerged internationally, as the five permanent members are unlikely to agree to granting veto power to new permanent members or accepting restrictions on their own. Consequently, most current reform proposals seem destined to fail from the outset, given the reluctance of permanent members to weaken their veto authority. *The G4 Group*, comprising nations seeking permanent membership, remains unwilling to be sidelined—particularly given that Germany and Japan rank among the top four contributors to the UN budget.

Africans acknowledge the immense challenges ahead and the complexity of their mission, yet they find strength in their historical struggle. Political independence was once considered an unattainable goal, but through immense sacrifice, it became a reality. Similarly, the prospect of an African veto remains difficult but not impossible—it may one day be realized, though it will require overcoming significant hurdles and persistent opposition.

The African veto underscores the anarchic nature of the international order, highlighting the disproportionate influence of veto power in global politics. In response, some African positions have sought greater flexibility by offering concessions—particularly from Nigeria and South Africa, two leading candidates for permanent representation. While both acknowledged that Security Council reform would necessitate new permanent members relinquishing veto privileges, they ultimately reaffirmed Africa’s unified stance.

Changing entrenched institutions of international governance, such as the Security Council, is an immense challenge. A deeper understanding of this difficulty requires examining the circumstances of its creation in the aftermath of World War II. Consequently, any meaningful amendments may necessitate a seismic geopolitical event comparable to a world war. Secretary-General Guterres has emphasized the challenges of reforming the multilateral order, citing political and economic forces reluctant to embrace change. He warned that the current system depletes their influence, and their resistance to reform weakens global institutions, diminishing their legitimacy, credibility, and effectiveness.<sup>19</sup>

The African Union’s invitation to join the G20 on September 9, 2023, highlights an alternative form of engagement with global governance—one that may reflect resistance to Africa’s ambition for a Security Council veto. On this occasion, UN Secretary-General spokesperson Stéphane Dujarric remarked that the invitation “reflects the increasing influence and importance of Africa on the global stage.”<sup>20</sup> Africa’s entry into the G20 raises critical questions about its true significance. Does it mark a genuine acknowledgment of Africa’s growing global influence, or is it a calculated move to redirect the continent’s focus? Some view this inclusion as a step toward elevating Africa’s status in international affairs, while others argue it could serve as a distraction—an attempt to temper Africa’s push for a Security Council veto. If the G20 is positioned as an alternative platform to the Security Council, it could potentially delay or weaken urgent reform efforts, reinforcing existing global power dynamics rather than reshaping them.

*The Consensus Group* notes that the *Charter for the Future* summit in 2024 encountered significant obstacles, with no agreement reached on proposals from the five groups engaged in Security Council reform. However, there was consensus on expanding the non-permanent membership for two years and improving the Council’s working methods.<sup>21</sup>

### **3. Obstacles to Achieving the African Veto**

### - Permanent Members: A Veto on Veto Expansion?

As global dynamics shift and emerging powers champion a multipolar world, calls for Security Council reform have intensified to better align with contemporary realities. However, these efforts remain constrained by the anarchic nature of the international system, where entrenched power structures resist significant change.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan voiced strong dissatisfaction with the current international order, declaring, “It is not only the children in Gaza who are dying; the United Nations order is dying as well.”<sup>22</sup> Meanwhile, Austria’s permanent representative to the UN, Alexander Marchik, highlighted mounting pressures for Security Council reform, driven by the escalating conflict in Gaza.<sup>23</sup>

The five permanent members hold differing views on Security Council reform. China supports expanding representation for developing nations and increasing opportunities for small and medium-sized countries to engage in decision-making,<sup>24</sup> ensuring that all member states can benefit from the reform process. In 2005, China firmly opposed the *G4* proposal—put forward by India, Germany, Japan, and Brazil—to expand Security Council membership. Beijing even threatened to use its veto to block the initiative, citing the need to protect the interests of most developing countries and uphold the long-term stability of the United Nations.<sup>25</sup>

The Taiwan issue is expected to be a contentious factor in Security Council reform negotiations. For China, this will be a decisive criterion in determining new permanent members, as it remains firmly opposed to supporting any nation that recognizes Taiwan’s independence. Conversely, the United States—along with the United Kingdom and, to a lesser extent, France—is unlikely to support countries that oppose Taiwan’s independence. This stance adds another layer of complexity to Security Council reform, creating obstacles for the nomination of any African state. Ensuring consensus among the five permanent members remains a prerequisite before advancing discussions to the UN General Assembly.

Russia supports Security Council reform, emphasizing that it must fully serve the interests of Africa, Latin America, and Asia. Moscow advocates for Africa securing its rightful place within global governance while maintaining a unified position to counter geopolitical challenges, as highlighted by Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov,<sup>26</sup> who characterizes Western influence as “historical Western dominance,” asserting that efforts to bypass the Security Council are evident in the *G20*’s evolving role. Originally founded to address financial and economic issues, the *G20* has increasingly engaged in political discussions, which Lavrov argues reflects a deliberate attempt to obstruct meaningful progress on Security Council reform. Lavrov argues that increasing Western representation will not address the underlying issue or add meaningful value, as Western nations already hold at least one-third of Security Council seats—often even more—under various proposed configuration.<sup>27</sup>

Both France and the UK support expanding the Council; however, France advocates for two seats for Africa with veto power, while the UK supports both permanent and non-permanent categories without specifics<sup>28</sup>. The United States, through its UN ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield, has expressed support for adding six permanent seats to the Security Council—two for Africa, one each for India, Germany, and Japan, and one for small island developing states. However, the U.S. position remains firm on limiting veto privileges, as Thomas-Greenfield stated, “We do not support expanding the veto.”<sup>29</sup> This stance signals that while expansion is welcomed, new permanent members would not receive veto power—potentially foreshadowing a U.S. veto against the African veto proposal.

This proposal raises concerns about its true impact, as it risks diluting the Security Council’s structure by blurring the distinction between permanent and non-permanent membership—ultimately preserving the status quo. Meanwhile, Ambassador Greenfield’s statement that the U.S. supports negotiations based on a written text marks a significant shift. For over two decades, major powers have consistently rejected this approach, making this development particularly noteworthy.

#### - National Interests’ Contradictions and Reform Projects Conflict

Beyond the five permanent members, the rest of the international community is divided into three main groups regarding Security Council reform negotiations, each advocating distinct proposals to shape the future of global governance. These include the *G4 Group*; the *Uniting for Consensus* (UfC) coalition; and the *African Union* (AU). Additionally, there is the *CARICOM* group, consisting of fourteen Caribbean nations, and the L69 group, which aligns closely with the African Union’s position, as the latter expressed support for the *Ezulwini Consensus* during a meeting of its foreign ministers on September 26, 2024<sup>30</sup>. There is also an Arab position advocating for a permanent seat for the Arab group with veto power, along with another non-permanent seat.<sup>31</sup> This Arab stance is similar to the African position, as highlighted in the African Committee of Ten’s report from January 2024.<sup>32</sup>

Within the current landscape of reform proposals, the initiatives put forward by the G4 and Uniting for Consensus present tangible challenges to the African veto project. These proposals shape the debate on Security Council restructuring, and their implications will be examined in further detail.

#### **G4 Proposal**

Established in 2004, the *G4*—comprising Brazil, Germany, India, and Japan—seeks permanent membership in the Security Council. These nations view themselves as medium powers with substantial demographic and economic influence, often surpassing even the existing permanent members in key metrics. The group argues that new permanent members of the Security Council could forgo veto rights, proposing that discussions on granting them veto power should occur after 15 years of implementing

the reform. To address concerns about the overrepresentation of Europe, Asia, and the Americas, the G4 argues that permanent Security Council members represent their nations rather than their regions. According to this reasoning, France, Britain, and Russia do not serve as Europe's representatives, Russia and China do not stand for Asia, and the United States does not represent the Americas. This framing allows the G4 to advocate for its candidacy while, in practice, reinforcing the existing dominance of the Americas, Europe, and Asia—often sidelining Africa in the process.

The G4's position presents a significant challenge to Africa's stance on regional representation. While Africa advocates for its representatives to be selected by the African Union and for new permanent members to possess veto rights, the G4 supports expanding the Security Council by six permanent seats, including two for Africa, along with four or five additional non-permanent seats. Although the foreign ministers of the G4, meeting in New York on September 23, 2024, affirmed that Africa, Asia, the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean deserve greater representation, aligning with the African position.<sup>33</sup> The meeting emphasized the importance of initiating negotiations based on a written text, following the precedent set by the United States. This approach is seen as a crucial step in overcoming the deadlock and advancing meaningful reform, with the ultimate goal of presenting a viable proposal to the UN General Assembly during the organization's 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2025.

### ***Uniting for Consensus Proposal***

*The Uniting for Consensus UfC*, also known as the *Coffee Club*, emerged in the 1990s as a coalition opposing the expansion of permanent seats in the Security Council. Comprising medium-power nations such as Argentina, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, Italy, Malta, Mexico, Pakistan, San Marino, South Korea, Spain, and Turkey. The group firmly opposes granting permanent seats to major regional powers. In March 2024, it proposed expanding the number of non-permanent members—including long-term non-permanent seats—while advocating for restrictions on veto power among the five permanent members, rather than introducing new permanent seats.<sup>34</sup>

The *UfC* group opposes the G4's proposal for permanent Security Council seats. While recognizing the historical injustices faced by Africa, *UfC* advocates for an expansion based on non-permanent membership, arguing that this approach would help rebalance the Council by enhancing representation for underrepresented regions—including Africa, Asia, the Pacific, Latin America, and the Caribbean.<sup>35</sup> While the *UfC* supports enhancing Africa's representation in the Security Council, it diverges from the African stance, which calls for full permanent membership with all associated privileges, including veto power.

This contradiction is reflected in Africa's rejection of reform proposals perceived as diluting its demands, including those from Mexico and Liechtenstein. As a member of *UfC*, Mexico aligns with the group's position, while Liechtenstein has introduced what it considers a conciliatory proposal—suggesting the establishment of a new category of six long-term seats with a tenure of eight to ten years.<sup>36</sup> During the second round of

intergovernmental negotiations on January 22–23, 2024, discussions included reform models proposed by Mexico and Liechtenstein, both of which explicitly ruled out new permanent members. However, neither proposal addressed Africa's demand for veto power, prompting the *Committee of Ten* to reject them outright. The committee argued that these models diverged entirely from Africa's unified position and risked entrenching historical injustices rather than rectifying them. Reaffirming its stance, the committee rejected any proposals for long-term or interim seats, emphasizing that such arrangements fail to meet Africa's core demands as outlined in the *Ezulwini Consensus* and the *Sirte Declaration*.<sup>37</sup>

### **The Inability to Realize International Charters**

The language of the Future Charter—where world leaders pledged to reform the Security Council—can be viewed as a declaration of goodwill. However, its optimism closely resembles the aspirational rhetoric of the UN Charter, which, despite its principles, has not prevented violations since its adoption in 1945. As the entity responsible for maintaining international peace and security, the Security Council has struggled to contain the spread of conflicts and wars, raising questions about the effectiveness of past commitments and future reforms.

Recently, the Security Council failed to prevent the Russian-Ukrainian war in 2022, the war in Gaza in 2023, and the conflict in Sudan in 2023—all occurring around the time the Future Charter was adopted in 2024. This underscores the Council's ongoing inability to uphold its core mandate of maintaining international peace and security, as well as preventing genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes. The fundamental challenge lies in the anarchic nature of the international system, where no supreme authority with enforceable coercive tools exists to ensure compliance with its decisions. At the same time, the African Union has struggled to uphold its stance against coups, declaring them illegitimate and unacceptable. However, the persistence of military takeovers since its declaration highlights the challenges in effectively enforcing this position across the continent.

The African veto faces significant procedural obstacles. Calls to accelerate negotiations on Security Council expansion often serve as a delaying tactic that preserves the status quo, benefiting dominant global powers while sidelining emerging and competing nations.<sup>38</sup> The core procedural challenge lies in the amendment process of the UN Charter, which mandates approval from two-thirds of General Assembly members, two-thirds of the Security Council, and unanimous consent from all permanent members (Articles 108 and 109). This framework allows permanent members to block reforms through their veto power, meaning any failure to secure the required votes results in stalled progress on structural change.

This procedural constraint serves a strategic purpose: preserving the structure of the current international order. Hypothetically, if an agreement were reached to admit six new permanent members with veto rights—including two from Africa—the selection of candidates would become a critical geopolitical question. If Africa, as part of the Global South, were to challenge historically colonial American and Western interests,

such a stance would likely be met with resistance from these dominant powers, while aligning with the geopolitical objectives of Russia and China. Conversely, if African permanent members chose to align with the West, it could be seen as compromising their African identity—one shaped by historical marginalization within the current international order—and dismissing long-standing calls for rectifying past injustices. This tension was notably reflected in former U.S. President Donald Trump's decision to suspend USAID assistance to South Africa, illustrating how geopolitical considerations influence foreign policy toward the continent.<sup>39</sup>

Beyond external geopolitical considerations, internal U.S. dynamics significantly influence any potential amendment to the UN Charter and the expansion of the Security Council. For any reform proposal to advance, the administration must secure at least 67 votes in the Senate—a formidable challenge that underscores the domestic political complexities surrounding international governance. Some diplomats argue that the U.S. endorsement of Council expansion, particularly Africa's inclusion, is motivated less by a genuine commitment to reform and more by strategic calculations aimed at countering China's growing influence in Africa. As such, this support is often viewed as a tactical maneuver rather than a concrete policy shift.<sup>40</sup>

### **Division of the African Position on Reform Projects**

Nigeria and South Africa have shifted their previously flexible stance on the African veto toward full alignment with a unified African position, reinforcing the continent's push for stronger representation. Algeria underscores this stance by linking Africa's inclusion in the Security Council to enhanced effectiveness, emphasizing that true representation requires full permanent-member privileges—most critically, the veto power.<sup>41</sup>

Within this framework, the African Peace and Security Council introduced the Oran Process—an initiative spearheaded by Algeria in 2013—to reinforce African unity under a singular, sovereign continental vision, capable of shaping global decision-making.<sup>42</sup> The process seeks to advance African-led solutions to African challenges while strengthening the collective security system in alignment with the UN Charter. During the 11th ministerial meeting of the African Union's Committee of Ten on Security Council reform, members reaffirmed their commitment to addressing historical injustices faced by Africa and reiterated the demand for rightful representation within the Security Council.<sup>43</sup>

The Oran Process underscores Africa's commitment to a unified position, yet it also reveals the persistent challenges in fully realizing its objectives since its inception—despite some progress. The 11th session, held in 2024, reaffirmed this commitment, but the timeline for achieving the African veto remains uncertain. Sierra Leone's Foreign Minister captured this reality, stating that “[Reform] must reflect current geopolitical

realities at various levels,”<sup>44</sup> emphasizing Africa’s continued marginalization within the international system from a geostrategic perspective.

Today, Africa must confront the concerns raised by the international community regarding its bid for permanent Security Council membership. Some voices argue that no African nation possesses the necessary stability, influence, or political and military capacity to hold such a seat—aside from South Africa, which joined the G20 in 2023, and Algeria, which has recently exhibited internal stability conducive to expanding its external roles. Algeria has also strengthened its soft power through national institutions such as the Algerian Agency for International Cooperation for Solidarity and Development, established in 2020, further positioning itself as a key contender in regional and global affairs.

Algeria’s growing leadership in African institutions strengthens its case for permanent Security Council membership. Its candidate’s election as Deputy Chairperson of the African Union Commission in February 2025, participation in the Committee of Ten, hosting of the Oran Process, and ongoing tenure as a non-permanent Council member (2024–2025) underscore its regional influence. Additionally, Algeria’s rising energy capabilities—amplified by the geopolitical shifts following the Russian-Ukrainian war—further bolster its credentials as a contender for permanent membership.

A Kenyan diplomat stressed that “a permanent member must possess real power and have the economic strength to bear responsibilities,”<sup>45</sup> arguing that a veto-holding member should not depend on food aid from another Council member. This perspective increases pressure on Africa to establish clear representation criteria for permanent membership if the process moves forward. The competition among African nations will be fierce, as the stakes for securing a permanent seat in the Security Council continue to rise, amplifying rivalries among the continent’s major powers.

Given these dynamics, the debate over African representation in the Security Council is likely to evolve into a quiet yet intense competition among African nations. This could deepen divisions within the 54-member African group in the UN General Assembly, as countries contend over identity, influence, and geopolitical standing. Illustrating these tensions, Nigeria has reportedly criticized South Africa for being ‘not black enough,’ while South Africa has accused Nigeria of excessive political disorder. Meanwhile, Egypt and Algeria have been labeled ‘too Arab,’ and South Africa ‘too white,’ reflecting the complex and often fraught intersection of identity and diplomacy in Africa’s bid for permanent membership.

Despite progress toward an African consensus, the unified African position still faces obstacles, as some nations remain inconsistent in their support, posing a significant challenge to securing the African veto. This concern was highlighted in the report of the Committee of Ten, presented at the 37<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session of the African Union in Addis Ababa on February 17–18, 2024. The report recommended that “member states of the African Union with dual membership should withdraw from all other interest groups,”<sup>46</sup>

referring to factions within Security Council reform discussions whose positions contradict the *Ezulwini Consensus* and the *Sirte Declaration*.

As previously noted, the challenge of advancing Africa's perspective on Security Council reform is intensified by internal divisions, further complicated by the structural constraints of an anarchic international order. These divisions risk undermining efforts to secure an African veto and could serve as justification for delaying its implementation. Recognizing these obstacles—and with no indication that the Committee of Ten's mission will conclude soon—the group's latest report recommended that “the Committee of Ten maintain its mandate until Africa achieves its goals regarding Security Council reform,”<sup>47</sup> highlighting the prolonged and difficult journey ahead in realizing the African veto.

## Conclusion

In his address at the opening session of the 79th UN General Assembly in 2024, UN Secretary-General António Guterres remarked that the Security Council was shaped by the victors of World War II, fostering a global system where impunity prevails despite widespread violations of international law and the UN Charter. His assessment echoes the concerns of many nations, except for the five permanent members, who continue to wield veto power to safeguard their own interests.

The Rwandan Genocide serves as a harrowing example of Africa's absence from the Security Council, where structural limitations in the international order hindered timely intervention despite clear warnings. Many Africans argue that if the continent had held permanent seats, this tragedy might have been averted. In response, they advocate for correcting historical injustices by securing stronger representation in the Council—an effort aimed at addressing internal polarization and paralysis while restoring the legitimacy of the global governance system.

To advance a unified African stance on Security Council reform, the African Union established the Committee of Ten Permanent Representatives to the UN (C-10) in 2005. This initiative led to the adoption of the *Ezulwini Consensus* and the *Sirte Declaration*, which called for two permanent seats with veto power and two additional non-permanent seats, bringing Africa's representation to five non-permanent members. While the principle of Council reform has gained international legitimacy, the African veto continues to face resistance from global powers—even as the 2024 Future Charter acknowledges the historical injustices Africa has endured and the need for their correction.

This study has examined the obstacles preventing the realization of the African veto. The first major challenge lies in securing approval from all permanent Security Council members while ensuring the proposal is not blocked by a veto—requiring a resolution of conflicting geopolitical interests. China, for instance, opposes the inclusion of the G4 nations (India, Germany, Japan, and Brazil) and previously threatened in 2005 to use its

veto against any expansion plan that included them. Russia views the Council as dominated by Western powers and rejects reforms that preserve the existing balance. Meanwhile, the United States supports adding six permanent seats, including two for Africa, but insists that new members should not receive veto power—effectively signaling a preemptive veto against any African veto initiative.

Another significant obstacle to the African veto is the proliferation of competing and contradictory reform proposals. The *G4* and *Uniting for Consensus (UfC)* groups present practical challenges to Africa's bid for veto power. The *G4*—comprising Brazil, Germany, India, and Japan—argues that its members deserve permanent seats based on their demographic and economic strength, which they claim surpasses that of some current permanent members. However, the *G4* opposes granting veto rights to new permanent members, directly contradicting the core of Africa's proposal, despite supporting an increase in African representation within the Council's permanent membership.

The *UfC* group, or the *Coffee Club*, opposes the expansion of permanent membership in the Security Council, advocating instead for restrictions on the use of the veto. While they align with Africa's demand for correcting historical injustices, they fundamentally reject the idea of granting African nations veto power, further complicating efforts to secure a unified reform agenda.

The final obstacle stems from the challenges in implementing international charters. While the Future Charter, adopted by the UN General Assembly, acknowledges the need to rectify historical injustices against Africa, it does not outline specific procedures for achieving this goal or formally address the African veto. Furthermore, procedural barriers to amending the UN Charter and restructuring the Security Council require approval from two-thirds of the General Assembly, two-thirds of the Council, and unanimous consent from all permanent members—a formidable challenge. U.S. domestic politics also play a critical role in any potential reform, as the administration must secure at least 67 Senate votes to advance amendments, making Security Council expansion a complex and uncertain prospect.

The final obstacle centers on divisions within Africa regarding reform proposals. The Oran Process was designed to unify African states in shaping international decisions, yet its 11th session in 2024 highlighted the stagnation of global governance in addressing historical injustices against the continent. Additionally, Africa has yet to reach consensus on criteria for permanent Security Council membership, a challenge that could weaken efforts to establish and utilize the African veto—potentially serving as justification for delaying its implementation. Acknowledging these complexities and the absence of any clear timeline for concluding the Committee of Ten's mission, its latest report recommended that the committee maintain its mandate until Africa achieves its goals on Security Council reform—reinforcing the long and difficult journey ahead for realizing the African veto.

## Footnotes:

- <sup>1</sup>- Article One of the UN Charter.
- <sup>2</sup>- António Guterres, "The Secretary-General Address to the General Assembly," New York, September 24, 2024.
- <sup>3</sup>- Ibid.
- <sup>4</sup>- Niguse Mandefero Alene et al., "Africa's Quest for Reform of the United Nations Security Council: A Just Cause Curbed by Unrealistic Proposals," *African Journal on Conflict Resolution*, 23(1), 2023, pp. 65-66.
- <sup>5</sup>- Khadija Ben Guena, "Why Does Algeria Oppose Expression? Interview with Algerian Foreign Minister Ahmed Attaf," (*in Arabic*), Atheer Platform, December 27, 2023.
- <sup>6</sup>- Cyril Ramaphosa (the President of South Africa), "79th UN General Assembly Debate," September 24, 2024, New York, USA.
- <sup>7</sup>- UN Security Council, "Security Council Report," December 13, 2022.
- <sup>8</sup>- USA Presidency, "Remarks by President Biden Before the 79<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly," New York, NY, September 24, 2024.
- <sup>9</sup>- United Nations, "Summit of the Future: September 20-21, 2024, New York, Pre-Workdays September 22-23," available at: <https://www.un.org/ar/summit-of-the-future>.
- <sup>10</sup>- UN General Assembly, "The Pact for the Future," September 20, 2024, p. 19.
- <sup>11</sup>- Rama Yade, "What Would It Mean for Africa to Have Two Permanent UN Security Council Seats?" Atlantic Council, September 23, 2024, available at: <https://shorturl.at/URivG>.
- <sup>12</sup>- Ibid.
- <sup>13</sup>- Alene et al., op. cit., p. 63.
- <sup>14</sup>- Ovigwe Eguegu et al., "Africa's Design for a Reformed UN Security Council," October 1, 2024, available at: <https://shorturl.at/TQn9W>.
- <sup>15</sup>- Alene et al., op. cit., p. 71.
- <sup>16</sup>- The African Union, "Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want," FRAMEWORK DOCUMENT, September 2015.
- <sup>17</sup>- Ibid.
- <sup>18</sup>- African Union, "Report of the Committee of Heads of State and Government of Ten on the Reform of the UN Security Council from His Excellency Julius Maada Bio, President of Sierra Leone," (*in Arabic*), AU Congress, 37<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, p.5.
- <sup>19</sup>- Guterres, op. cit.
- <sup>20</sup>- Chido Munyati, "The African Union Has Been Made a Permanent Member of the G20 – What Does It Mean for the Continent?" World Economic Forum, September 14, 2023, available at: <https://shorturl.at/Oi9e4>.
- <sup>21</sup>- Government of Canada, "Uniting for Consensus: Joint Statement," New York, September 26, 2024, available at: <https://shorturl.at/jfY73>.
- <sup>22</sup>- United Nations, "Türkiye, His Excellency Recep Tayyip Erdoğan," September 24, 2024, available at: <https://gadebate.un.org/en/79/turkiye>.
- <sup>23</sup>- CGTN Network, "Wang Yi Meets Co-Chairs of Intergovernmental Negotiations on Security Council Reform," (*in Arabic*), February 29, 2024, available at: <https://shorturl.at/sV7e1>.
- <sup>24</sup>- Ibid.
- <sup>25</sup>- Al Jazeera Net, "China Threatens to Use Veto to Stop Security Council Membership Expansion Plans," (*in Arabic*), August 8, 2005, available at: <https://shorturl.at/Ofrkn>.
- <sup>26</sup>- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, "Opening Remarks by Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov During Talks with Minister of State, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Chadians Abroad, Republic of Chad, Abderrahmane Kolamala," (*in Arabic*), N'Djamena, June 5, 2024, available at: <https://mid.ru/ar/1954710/>.
- <sup>27</sup>- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, "Remarks by Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and Responses to Questions at the 'Workshop' of the Second Paris Peace Forum," (*in Arabic*), Paris, November 12, 2019, available at: <https://mid.ru/ar/1475618/>.
- <sup>28</sup>- Amal Medlali, "Reforming the Security Council and the Obstacles of Major Powers," (*in Arabic*), Al-Middle East, September 21, 2024, available at: <https://shorturl.at/1qDqF>.
- <sup>29</sup>- Ibid.
- <sup>30</sup>- Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, "L.69 Annual Ministerial Meeting on the Margins of the 79<sup>th</sup> Session of UNGA High-Level Week," September 26, 2024, available at: <https://rb.gy/tuzold>.
- <sup>31</sup>- Medlali, op. cit.

- <sup>32</sup>- African Union, "Committee of Ten Report....," op, cit., p.12.
- <sup>33</sup>- India News Network, "Foreign Ministers of the G4 Push for Urgent Reforms in the UN Security Council," September 26, 2024, Indian News Network, available at: <https://shorturl.at/FFH9A>.
- <sup>34</sup>- Government of Canada, "Uniting for Consensus: Joint Statement," New York, September 26, 2024, available at: <https://shorturl.at/KFgnZ>.
- <sup>35</sup>- Ibid.
- <sup>36</sup>- Principality of Liechtenstein, "Reform of the UN Security Council," January 10, 2024, available at: <https://shorturl.at/fJKpv>.
- <sup>37</sup>- African Union, "Committee of Ten Report....," op, cit.
- <sup>38</sup>- Ibid, p.4.
- <sup>39</sup>- The Guardian, "US Suspends Aid to South Africa After Trump Order," March 6, 2025, available at: <https://shorturl.at/EWFKM>.
- <sup>40</sup>- Medlali, op, cit.
- <sup>41</sup>- Ben Guena, op, cit.
- <sup>42</sup>- Algerian Radio, "Attaf: The Oran Path Proves Its Central Role in Strengthening the African States," (in Arabic), December 18, 2023, available at: <https://news.radioalgerie.dz/ar/node/37408>.
- <sup>43</sup>- Ibid.
- <sup>44</sup>- Algerian Embassy in Brussels, "The Committee of Ten Africa: Historical Injustice Must Be Corrected by Granting Africa Its Due Representation in the Security Council," (in Arabic), available at: <https://rb.gy/zhqynf>.
- <sup>45</sup>- Committee of Ten Report, previous reference.
- <sup>46</sup>- Ibid.
- <sup>47</sup>- Ibid.