

Research Article

# The Politics of the United States (US) Campaign Towards Africa's Admission to The United Nations Security Council (UNSC)

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## Abstract

The study examined the politics in the United States (U.S.) campaign for Africa's inclusion into the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). The study utilized a descriptive analytical approach, providing a detailed description of the subject using secondary sources of information. The sources were selected due to their expansive perspective and historical context, which are essential in understanding the complexity of the U.S. position on African membership of the UNSC. Besides descriptive analysis, content analysis was applied as a complementary technique to scientifically scrutinize official papers, policy statements, speeches, and press statements. It helped to detect repetitive themes, strategic narratives, and rhetorical tropes that unveil hidden agendas within the U.S. campaign. Using both techniques afforded a richer, more multidimensional insight into the issue. Findings from the study revealed that while the United States has been vocal in supporting Africa's inclusion in the UNSC, this support can be interpreted as a strategic move to counterbalance China and Russia's growing influence on the continent. Despite its public stance as an ally to African governments, the U.S. has not advocated for veto power for African nations, should in case its campaign for African nations become a reality. This raises questions about its genuine commitment to full equality within the UNSC, with African nations included. The study also found that Africa's bid is complicated by internal divisions among African countries, which struggle to reach a consensus on a representative for the continent. In addition, bureaucratic inertia within the UNSC, particularly regarding reform efforts, continues to delay meaningful progress. Based on these findings, the study recommended that the U.S. should push for full veto rights for African nations in the UNSC if it becomes a reality, to ensure equitable representation. It also urged African nations, through the African Union (AU), to unify and present a coordinated, single candidacy to strengthen their position in UNSC negotiations. Finally, the UNSC was advised to streamline its reform processes to avoid delays in decisions related to membership expansion, including Africa's inclusion.

## Keywords

Admission, Africa, Campaign, Politics, Security Council

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## 1. Introduction

The US has called for reforms in the global governance structures, especially regarding the composition of the UN Security Council. Due to its emerging geopolitical significance, Africa is at the core of the debates on the UNSC expansion. On this issue, the US has steadily maintained strong support for the position that African representation on the Council should be permanent and commensurate with the continent's size and its role, which is increasingly sought in global affairs. The importance of Africa to global world affairs cannot be overemphasized. The continent has provided a foundation for economic and technological advancement, as its raw materials are widely sourced to feed the European, American, and Asian markets. Generally, Africa serves as an important entity for global market expansion. Also, the continent has continued to support global peace and security. No wonder, Kenya recently proved this by sending its police contingent to the Caribbean as peacekeepers in Haiti. The UNSC approved the deployment of 1,000 police peacekeeping contingents from Kenya to curb escalating gang violence [3, 9]. This gesture by Kenya has positioned Africa as a major player in maintaining world peace, making the continent worthy of having a permanent seat in the UNSC. The ongoing Russo-Ukrainian conflict has further showcased Africa's important role in maintaining world peace, as African leaders have continued to play a neutral role by not supporting any party and demanding a ceasefire from Russia and Ukraine. This gesture makes it more necessary for Africa to have a permanent seat at the UNSC. This and lots more interest are why the U.S. is a major front-runner in the quest for Africa's permanency in the UNSC [11].

In 2022, President Joe Biden echoed this position at the U.S.-Africa Leaders' Summit when he called for "a more just international system where Africa has a full and fair share in global decision-making in the United Nations, including a permanent seat on the Security Council" [21]. This indicates a recognition that Africa is emerging as an important economic and political actor [14]. The continent comprises 54 countries, over a quarter of the UN's membership, and yet, it does not have a permanent voice in one of its most powerful bodies. The current five permanent members include China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States, all reflect the post-World War II order that no longer reflects the geopolitical reality today [19]. In supporting Africa's candidature, the U.S. attempts to acknowledge such developments while strengthening its relations with African countries in the process. The support which Africa has received from the US for its candidature, in a way, has been part of broader efforts by the U.S. aimed at reinforcing its partnership with African countries in the wake of growing influence wielded across the continent by China and Russia [10].

However, this U.S. support for the inclusion of Africa does not come without its challenges. Bureaucratically and politically, it creates obstacles within the U.S. to lead such a reform

agenda, especially because other global powers like China and Russia might be unwilling to accept this change, as they would emerge as losers, due to their strategic interest in Africa. Second, the process through which an African country would secure a permanent seat in the council is not straightforward. Because the African states have differing views over which country would represent the continent, it will become hard to choose between South Africa, Nigeria, or even Egypt; the intra-continental rivalry may prohibit the materialization of US desires toward African UNSC membership [6]. Besides internal dynamics, there's much to be added from the external ones, too. The U.S. also has to work on broader international consensus-building to see UNSC reforms achieved. Modifications in the UN Charter, which prescribes the structure of the Security Council, need a two-thirds majority in the General Assembly and the agreement of all five permanent members. For this high threshold, African inclusion in the UNSC would require not only U.S. backing but also diplomatic work to get Europe, Asia, and Latin America to go along with it. Thus, the requirement of strategic alliances and global consensus suggests that the U.S.'s move for African inclusion might be a long-term diplomatic challenge.

## 2. Materials and Methods

The research design adopted for the study of politics in the U.S. campaign for Africa's inclusion into the UN Security Council was a descriptive analysis. This approach clearly described the study subject, relying entirely on secondary data sources. These secondary sources were selected because they presented a wide range of viewpoints and historical background required to comprehend such complexity within the U.S. position on Africa's inclusion in the UN Security Council. This descriptive study employed an analytic approach to focus on patterns, trends, and influences that shape US foreign policy on this issue. Other secondary sources used in this research included academic journals sourced from the internet, which provided peer-reviewed articles discussing U.S. foreign policy strategies, international relations, and Africa's desire for a more critical role in global governance. These journals played an essential role in this research to obtain some in-depth analysis and expert views.

## 3. United States Geopolitical Interests in Africa and Security Council Reform

The United States has long regarded Africa as a continent of possibility and strategic importance, notably in the areas of natural resources, counterterrorism, and economic cooperation. Geopolitically, the United States has attempted to get access to Africa's massive mineral, oil, and natural gas reserves, which are critical to its industries and worldwide

competitiveness. Nigeria and Angola have played important roles in oil production, while the Democratic Republic of Congo is critical for cobalt and other rare earth minerals required for technological improvements. In recent years, the expansion of Chinese influence in Africa through its Belt and Road Initiative has raised U.S. anxieties, prompting a fresh push for deeper partnerships and investment on the continent. Washington's policy now involves strengthening African economies to balance Beijing's expanding influence [5]. Security concerns have also been a major driving force behind US interests in Africa, particularly in regions afflicted by terrorism and instability, such as the Sahel and the Horn of Africa.

The United States has collaborated with various African countries to combat the growth of terrorist organisations such as Boko Haram in Nigeria, al-Shabaab in Somalia, and Islamic State branches in the Sahel. The United States Africa Command (AFRICOM) is a key player in these operations, providing military assistance, information, and training to African security forces. Furthermore, peacekeeping actions in Mali and the Central African Republic illustrate the United States' role in promoting regional stability in Africa [4]. However, these security operations are frequently criticised for worsening local conflicts or imposing Western ideals of administration and order that may not be appropriate for African sociopolitical circumstances. In the context of UNSC reform, the United States has served as both a gatekeeper and a champion for extending the council to reflect the present geopolitical reality. Many African leaders have advocated for permanent representation on the UN Security Council, claiming that Africa's 54 countries are underrepresented in global decision-making. The United States has expressed support for reforms but is wary of disrupting the UN's power dynamic. For example, during his administration, President Obama stated support for a permanent African member on the council, but particular ideas have stagnated due to concerns about how changes may damage US dominance in the organisation [12]. This geopolitical tug-of-war continues, with African states advocating for a bigger voice and the United States seeking to maintain its strategic interests without ceding too much influence.

#### 4. The United States Campaign on Africa's Inclusion in the UN Security Council

The US has vigorously advocated for Africa's membership in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), recognising the continent's growing importance in global affairs. This effort has acquired traction as a result of high-profile meetings and conversations between US officials, African leaders, and other stakeholders. Notably, the United States has emphasized the significance of Africa's involvement in global decision-making processes in different summits. For instance,

during the Summit of the Future, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken stressed the importance of reforming the UN Security Council to better represent the developing countries and, more broadly, the world as it exists now. In his words, "The United States believes that this should include two permanent seats for Africa, one rotating seat for Small Island Developing States, and permanent representation for Latin America and the Caribbean, in addition to the permanent seats for countries we've long supported: Germany, Japan, and India" The United States favours beginning negotiations on immediate council reforms [21].

He additionally pushed for a more equal representation on the UN Security Council, emphasising Africa's contributions to continental peace and security, as well as its growing involvement in international diplomacy. Similarly, during the US-Africa Leaders' Summit in 2022, President Joe Biden called for "a more just international system where Africa has a full and fair share in global decision-making in the United Nations, including a permanent seat on the Security Council" [21]. This indicates a recognition that Africa is emerging as an important economic and political actor. The United States has also used alternative diplomatic channels to rally support for Africa's UNSC membership, including involvement with numerous African regional entities such as the African Union (AU).

During these meetings, US delegates addressed future reforms that could result in African nations receiving permanent or non-permanent seats on the UN Security Council. In addition to bilateral and international debates, the United States made an effort to emphasise Africa's challenges and opportunities through policy papers and public pronouncements. Through this route, the US wants to reinforce the case for increased African involvement in the UN Security Council and encourage member states to consider African countries' unique perspectives and experiences in decision-making processes [21]. The push for Africa's membership in the UN Security Council is part of a larger US effort to strengthen ties with African nations while simultaneously fostering democratic governance and stability. There is another variation on why the U.S. has continued to push for Africa to be permanently represented in the UNSC. While quoting the U.S. Ambassador to the U.N., [20, 21] opined that the United States supports creating two permanent United Nations Security Council seats for African states and one seat to be rotated among small island developing states. This move comes as the U.S. seeks to repair ties with Africa, where many are unhappy about Washington's support for Israel's war in Gaza, and deepen relations with Pacific Island nations important to countering Chinese influence in the region [13]. One can say that as meetings and discussions continue, the United States remains committed to pressing for reforms that represent African countries' goals. Recognising Africa's contributions to global peace and security is an important part of this effort, with US officials stating that a more inclusive UNSC will boost its credibility and efficacy in addressing contemporary

global challenges.

## 5. Political and Strategic Interests of the United States in Africa's Quest for a Seat in the United Nations Security Council

Because of Africa's growing strategic relevance, the United States is becoming more interested in its bid for a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). Africa, with its large resources, burgeoning raw material markets, and substantial geopolitical importance, provides a chance for the United States to increase its influence in global governance. The United Nations recognises that Africa's presence in the UNSC might boost international credibility, particularly as the continent accounts for more than a quarter of UN member nations. Supporting Africa's campaign for a permanent seat will strengthen the United States' strategic relationships across the continent, ensuring American interests are safeguarded in global decisions [16]. Global powers, especially the United States, have long recognised Africa's economic potential. With a permanent seat on the UN Security Council, African nations would have greater influence over international economic policies, many of which have direct implications for US interests in the region. The United States might use its support for Africa's seat to secure advantageous commercial partnerships and preserve a competitive advantage over other global actors, such as China, which has been extending its influence in Africa [20]. China and Russia have recently become major players in Africa, making it a major setback for the United States. The United States considers economic stability and growth in Africa to be critical to global economic balance, and a permanent seat would allow Africa to argue more strongly for policies that coincide with US trade and investment interests. The US, through its influence, has championed world peace and the economic prosperity of developing countries [8].

Strategically, Africa's relevance is linked to its growing influence in global security issues, particularly counterterrorism and peacekeeping. African countries make considerable contributions to UN peacekeeping missions, many of which are in areas of critical importance to US security interests. In supporting Africa's quest for the UN Security Council, the United States may strengthen its counterterrorism relationships and improve regional stability. Furthermore, having a permanent African presence on the Security Council can provide the United States with a more reliable friend in dealing with security concerns originating from Africa and elsewhere. Politically, the United States recognises the symbolic significance of backing Africa's demand for a UN Security Council membership. The addition of an African nation to the Council would be viewed not just as a corrective move to remedy past inequities in global governance, but also as a demonstration of the United States' commitment to multilateralism and global

equity. This might considerably boost the United States' image in Africa, refuting notions of neocolonialism and generating goodwill among African countries. Such goodwill could be critical for the United States' diplomatic efforts on the continent, notably in establishing political alliances and influencing key policy decisions. Africa's growing diplomatic assertiveness in global affairs makes US assistance strategically essential. The continent has progressively come together on many international problems, and a permanent seat on the UN Security Council would strengthen Africa's collective voice. The United States would gain from working with African countries on several international resolutions, particularly those involving conflict resolution, climate change, and commerce.

In aligning its interests with Africa's demand for representation, the United States might counteract the growing influence of other global powers attempting to dominate the continent's political environment [17]. Another strategic objective for the United States is to ensure that its influence in Africa exceeds that of other global powers such as China, which is quickly increasing its footprint across the continent. China's backing for Africa's UNSC candidacy is part of a larger strategy to increase its influence in international institutions. In response, the United States sees its support for Africa's seat as a way to offset Chinese influence, ensuring that African nations remain aligned with Western interests in global governance rather than drifting towards authoritarian methods of development. Furthermore, the U.S. has a vested interest in fostering democratic governance and human rights across Africa. Supporting an African UNSC seat allows the U.S. to promote these values on the global stage, ensuring that international decisions reflect democratic principles. A permanent African seat could serve as a platform for advancing U.S. foreign policy priorities, such as human rights, in a region that continues to experience governance challenges. In backing Africa's bid, the U.S. reinforces its commitment to supporting democratic institutions on the continent and demonstrates its leadership in the international system. Overtly, the U.S. support for Africa's quest for a permanent seat on the UNSC is driven by a combination of economic, political, and strategic interests. Africa's inclusion would enhance the legitimacy of the UNSC while providing the U.S. with a valuable partner in promoting its foreign policy objectives. In supporting Africa's representation, the U.S. aims to strengthen its geopolitical influence on the continent, counterbalance the growing influence of rival powers, and ensure that Africa's growing global presence aligns with Western values and interests [18].

## 6. Challenges and Opposition to Africa's Inclusion in the United Nations Security Council

Africa's membership in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has experienced several hurdles, despite

growing international support for reform. The African Union (AU) endorsed the Ezulwini Consensus in 2005, which called for two permanent seats with veto power and five non-permanent seats for the continent [1]. However, nearly two decades later, the document's goals remain unrealised. The delay in UNSC reforms is due to the need for consensus among the permanent five members (P5), consisting of the United States, Russia, China, France, and the United Kingdom [15]. These countries must agree on any reform, making structural reforms such as African representation difficult to implement. This process is further hampered by opposing interests among the P5, each of whom is concerned about losing control over the Council [22]. While the US has openly supported Africa's desire for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council, it has been hesitant to embrace providing African governments with veto power [2]. This pushback reflects concerns over the prospect of more fragmentation of global decision-making, as the veto has historically been used by the P5 to maintain geopolitical balance. The US approach is similar to George Orwell's *Animal Farm* analogy [7], in which all animals are equal, but some are more equal than others. In this instance, while Africa may be seen as deserving a membership, its potential influence would be restricted without veto power, perpetuating the Council's unequal power dynamics. This generates the impression that Africa would not have the same authority as current permanent members, undermining the genuine basis of equality.

A further obstacle is the clashing geopolitical priorities of global powers. The permanent members, particularly Russia and China, are wary of extending the Council in ways that would reduce their power. African countries, with their growing populations and increasing strategic relevance, are regarded as critical to world governance. However, the potential of giving Africa a major voice, particularly through the veto, threatens to alter power dynamics. As a result, reform ideas have faced strong opposition or drawn-out discussions, delaying genuine African state membership. Africa's cries for reform, founded on historical injustices and under-representation, continue to meet a complicated web of resistance. Furthermore, Africa may confront internal issues with representation. The continent has encountered challenges that do not reflect the dreams of its forebears. Recent incidents include xenophobic attacks in South Africa and coups in Mali and Burkina Faso, among others. This means that if a permanent seat in the UNSC is finally accepted, it may not go smoothly because numerous interests would be represented.

## 7. Conclusion

In conclusion, the United States has been outspoken in calling for Africa's inclusion in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), but this appeal can be viewed as a strategic manoeuvre to offset China and Russia's expanding economic and military dominance on the continent. While the United States governments present itself as a "good brother" to Af-

rican governments, its support might be perceived as mere posturing, as it fails to press for veto power for African members, unlike the current permanent members. Africa's bid for UNSC membership may be hampered by internal divisions among African nations over who should represent the continent, as competing national interests make consensus difficult. Likewise, bureaucratic inertia in the UNSC, particularly regarding reforms, continues to hinder meaningful progress. Despite the rhetoric of the United States, Africa's bid for UNSC membership faces significant internal and external challenges.

## 8. Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study was able to generate some recommendations that will help to improve the politics in the US campaign on Africa's inclusion into the UN Security Council for the benefit of African states. These recommendations include: The United States should press for Africa's complete veto rights, ensuring true equality and representation alongside the other permanent members of the UN Security Council. African states, through the African Union (AU), should engage in coordinated, strategic discussions to present a single, strong candidacy for UNSC participation, reducing internal differences and increasing collective negotiating leverage.

The United Nations Security Council should streamline its reform processes to avoid bureaucratic delays, enabling more prompt and effective decisions on membership expansion, including Africa's admission.

## Abbreviations

AU	African Union
AFRICOM	United States Africa Command
UN	United Nations
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
US	United States

## Author Contributions

**Agaba Halidu:** Methodology, Writing – original draft

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**Oyefeso Musibau Olanrewaju:** Formal Analysis, Writing – original draft

## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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