BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION

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An evaluation of the Ezulwini Consensus within the context of advocacy for the reform of the United Nations Security Council by Zimbabwe

By

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ABSTRACT

This study evaluates Zimbabwe's diplomatic advocacy for United Nations Security Council (UNSC) reform within the framework of the Ezulwini Consensus, the African Union's common position demanding two permanent seats for Africa with full veto power and five non-permanent seats. Despite nearly two decades of persistent advocacy, the Consensus objectives remain unrealised, revealing a significant gap between sustained diplomatic effort and tangible institutional change. Employing a qualitative interpretivist approach, the research utilized semi-structured elite interviews with 20 participants across five professional categories Zimbabwean diplomats, African Union officials, UN personnel, civil society experts and academics alongside documentary analysis. The findings trace Zimbabwe's advocacy evolution from rhetorical support to operational championship following its election to a non-permanent UNSC seat in June 2026. Key obstacles identified include the P5's rational self-interest in preserving veto power, Article 108 of the UN Charter requiring all permanent member's consent for amendment, and internal African divisions over seat allocation. The study reveals a fundamental divergence between the AU's maximalist demands and P5 offers of seats without veto, concluding that while the Ezulwini Consensus exhibits strong normative coherence, its strategic viability is compromised by the veto demand acting as a self-imposed barrier to incremental progress. The research contributes to Liberal Institutionalist theory by demonstrating how institutions constrain and enable reform advocacy, while offering policy recommendations including phased acceptance of seats without veto, strengthened AU selection mechanisms, G4 coordination, and leveraging Zimbabwe's 2027-2028 Council term for coalition building.

DECLARATION FORM

I, **Gift CHATIMA (B250430A)**, hereby declare that this thesis titled **"An Evaluation of the Ezulwini Consensus within the Context of Advocacy for the Reform of the United Nations Security Council by Zimbabwe"** is my original work. It has been submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Master of Science in International Relations degree at Bindura University of Science Education (BUSE).

I further declare that this work has not been previously submitted for any degree or examination at any other university. All sources of information used in this research have been duly acknowledged through appropriate citations and references. Any unintentional omissions or errors are sincerely regretted.

Student: **Date: 07/09/26**

Supervisor: **Date: 03/09/26**

Chairperson: **Date:**

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my family, whose unwavering support and encouragement have been my anchor throughout this academic journey. To my parents, for instilling in me the value of education and perseverance, and to my siblings for their constant motivation and belief in my abilities. Your sacrifices and prayers have not been in vain.

I also dedicate this thesis to all those who tirelessly advocate for a more just, equitable and representative global governance system. May this small contribution inspire further scholarship and action toward a world where the voices of the marginalized are heard and heeded.

To the people of Zimbabwe and Africa at large, whose aspirations for dignity, equality and meaningful participation in global decision-making remain the driving force behind this research.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

APSA- African Peace and Security Architecture

AU- African Union

AU PSC- African Union Peace and Security Council

BUSE- Bindura University of Science Education

C-10- Committee of Ten

CAP- Common African Position

CSO- Civil Society Organizations

DPPA- Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs

ECOWAS- Economic Community of West African States

ECOSOC- United Nations Economic and Social Council

EU- European Union

G4- Group of Four (Germany, Japan, Brazil, India)

G77- Group of 77

HRC- Human Rights Council

ICGLR- International Conference on the Great Lakes Region

IGN- Intergovernmental Negotiations

L69- Group of 69 Developing Countries

MFA- Ministry of Foreign Affairs

NIEO- New International Economic Order

NAM- Non-Aligned Movement

OAU- Organization of African Unity

P5- Permanent Five Members of the UN Security Council (China, France, Russia, United Kingdom, United States)

R2P- Responsibility to Protect

SADC- Southern African Development Community

UN- United Nations

UNGA- United Nations General Assembly

UNSC- United Nations Security Council

ZIMFAC- Zimbabwe Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Trade

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The architecture of global governance, as crystallized in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), is the subject of persistent legitimacy crisis. Crafted in 1945, the Council's composition is widely viewed as an anachronism, failing to reflect the geopolitical realities and demographic weight of the 21st century. This historical injustice is felt most acutely by the African continent. Despite constituting 54 UN member states and being the subject of a disproportionate number of the Council's agenda items, accounting for 51% of its country-specific resolutions and statements in 2023, Africa holds zero permanent seats with veto power (Highlights of Security Council Practice, 2023). This disconnection between responsibility, impact and representation has fuelled decades of calls for reform. Crafted in 1945, the Council's composition is widely viewed as an anachronism, failing to reflect the geopolitical realities, demographic weight, and shifting power dynamics of the twenty-first century (Falk, 2025).

The African continent accounts for a significant portion of the UNSC's country-specific resolutions and statements, yet remains excluded from the chamber where decisions about its peace and security are ultimately made (African Union, 2024). This disconnect between responsibility, impact and representation has fuelled decades of sustained calls for reform, transforming what might otherwise be a technical diplomatic matter into a fundamental question of equity and justice within the multilateral system. In 2005, the African Union formulated the Ezulwini Consensus, a common position whose prerogative was aimed at addressing the long-standing calls for reform of the UNSC (African Union, 2024). Named after the town in Eswathini where foreign ministers convened to forge this unified stance, the Consensus demands nothing less than two permanent seats for Africa, with all the prerogatives

and privileges enjoyed by current permanent members, including the right of veto plus five additional non-permanent seats. The Consensus frames the veto demand not as an assertion of special privilege, but as a matter of elementary justice for as long as the veto power continues to exist within the Council's architecture (African Union, 2024).

Zimbabwe has emerged as a consistent and vocal proponent of this common African position. Successive Zimbabwean leaders have utilised high-profile international platforms to champion the Ezulwini demands, arguing that a more inclusive and representative Council is not merely an African aspiration but an essential precondition for credible and effective multilateralism (United Nations Zimbabwe, 2025). This advocacy is deeply embedded within Zimbabwe's broader foreign policy orientation, which aligns itself with African Union and Global South agendas, positioning UNSC reform as a critical pillar of a more equitable international order (Falk, 2025). The late former President Robert Mugabe, addressing the General Assembly in 2010, denounced Africa's exclusion as ‘completely unacceptable,’ framing it as a historical injustice that fundamentally undermined the United Nations' legitimacy and moral authority (Nehanda Radio, 2025). Nearly fifteen years later, at the 2025 United Nations General Assembly, President Emmerson Mnangagwa government, through Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Trade Professor Amon Murwira, pressed for a United Nations ‘match fit’ for contemporary challenges, explicitly calling for Security Council reform that gives Africa rightful representation (United Nations Zimbabwe, 2025).

The 2025 commemoration of the United Nations' eightieth anniversary provided a particularly significant platform for Zimbabwe's advocacy. At an event gathering over 250 diplomats, development partners and civil society leaders in Harare, Minister Murwira reiterated Zimbabwe's call for comprehensive reform, urging the operationalisation of the recently adopted Pact for the Future through concrete measures including finance, technology transfer, and predictable partnerships (United Nations Zimbabwe, 2025). Significantly,

Zimbabwe also announced its candidature for a non-permanent Security Council seat for the 2027–2028 terms, pledging to bring regional perspectives on conflict prevention, human security, and inclusive recovery to the Council's deliberations (Zimbabwe Now, 2025). This announcement signals Zimbabwe's determination to move beyond rhetorical advocacy toward direct engagement with the Council's work, positioning itself as a credible contributor to international peace and security while maintaining pressure for more fundamental structural reform.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The goal of this study is to understand the efficacy of the advocacy for UNSC reform by Zimbabwe within the context of the Ezulwini Consensus.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Despite nearly two decades of principled and persistent advocacy by Zimbabwe and other African states, the objectives of the Ezulwini Consensus remain unrealized. The UNSC reform process, conducted through the Intergovernmental Negotiations (IGN), is characterized by profound inertia and entrenched resistance. The P5 members, while often expressing rhetorical support for African representation, have demonstrated little appetite for diluting their exclusive veto power or altering the fundamental balance of power within the Council. Internal challenges within the AU, including the absence of a clear, agreed-upon mechanism for selecting African candidates and ongoing rivalries among potential contenders, undermine the continent's unified front. There is growing scholarly and policy debate questioning the strategic coherence of the Ezulwini Consensus itself, particularly its demand for veto power, which some analysts argue acts as a self-imposed, maximalist barrier to more achievable incremental gains. This prolonged impasse reveals a significant gap in scholarly and policy understanding. While the Ezulwini Consensus is well-documented and Zimbabwe's rhetorical support is noted, there is a lack of systematic analysis that evaluates the efficacy of Zimbabwe's specific diplomatic

strategy within this complex environment. It remains unclear to what extent Zimbabwe's advocacy has meaningfully influenced the positions of key stakeholders, including the P5, other UN member state blocs including fellow African nations. The precise nature and weight of the obstacles that have stymied Zimbabwe's efforts are not thoroughly mapped. Consequently, the central problem this study addresses is the disconnect between Zimbabwe's sustained diplomatic advocacy for UNSC reform under the Ezulwini Consensus and the persistent failure to achieve its stated objectives.

1.4 Research Objectives

I. Trace the evolution of Zimbabwe's diplomatic advocacy for UNSC reform based on the Ezulwini Consensus.
II. Assess the engagement of the Ezulwini demands by key stakeholders.
III. Identify the obstacles that have hindered the realization of the Ezulwini Consensus objectives.
IV. Evaluate the internal coherence and strategic viability of the Ezulwini Consensus demands.

1.5 Research Questions

I. How has Zimbabwe’s diplomatic advocacy for UNSC reform based on the Ezulwini Consensus evolved?
II. What are the key demands of the Ezulwini Consensus?
III. What obstacles have hindered the realization of the Ezulwini Consensus objectives?
IV. How effective has been the internal coherence and strategic viability of the Ezulwini Consensus demands?

1.6 Assumptions of the Study

This study is driven by the assumptions that are stated below:

I. Statements by successive leaders of Zimbabwe at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) constitute dedicated diplomatic campaigns as opposed to being ad-hoc political commentary.

II. That UNSC reform advocacy by Zimbabwe is constrained by unwillingness of the UNSC permanent members.

1.7 Significance of the Study

The study tests theories of agency in international relations, examining how a state with limited material power utilizes diplomatic persuasion, coalition-building and principled argumentation to challenge entrenched hierarchies. The study also contributes to debates on whether normative claims can generate momentum against vested geopolitical interests. By focusing on Zimbabwe's role within the African Union's common position, the study sheds light on the complexities of coalitional diplomacy. It explores the tensions between national advocacy and collective action, the challenges of maintaining unity in long-term campaigns and the strategies states use to amplify their voice through regional blocs. For the Government of Zimbabwe, this study serves as an external, analytical audit of a long-standing diplomatic campaign. It will identify the strengths and weaknesses of its advocacy strategy, evaluate the effectiveness of its chosen forums and rhetoric and pinpoint where diplomatic efforts may have been misaligned with political realities. This can inform future foreign policy planning and resource allocation.

1.7.1 Theoretical Significance

At the theoretical level, the study contributes to ongoing debates about agency in international relations, examining how a state with limited material power utilises diplomatic persuasion, coalition-building and principled argumentation to challenge entrenched institutional hierarchies within the global governance architecture. By applying the lens of Liberal Institutionalism to a specific case of sustained reform advocacy, the study tests the

theory's propositions about how institutions shape state behaviour, facilitate cooperation and create platforms for normative argumentation even when material power asymmetries are pronounced (Alene et al., 2023).

The research also contributes to debates about whether normative claims can generate meaningful momentum against vested geopolitical interests. Liberal Institutionalism suggests that institutions are not merely arenas for the exercise of pre-existing power but are themselves sites of normative contestation where arguments about justice, equity and legitimacy can have independent effects on state behaviour (Alemu, 2024). By examining how Zimbabwe's advocacy has been received and engaged with by more powerful actors, the study provides empirical evidence relevant to this theoretical proposition.

1.7.2 Empirical and Regional Significance

By focusing on Zimbabwe's role within the African Union's common position, the study sheds light on the complexities of coalitional diplomacy in the African context. It explores the tensions between national advocacy and collective action, examining how individual states navigate the competing demands of advancing their particular interests while maintaining the unity necessary for effective regional bargaining. The study illuminates the challenges of maintaining cohesion in long-term diplomatic campaigns that span decades and multiple changes in government and examines the strategies states use to amplify their voice through regional blocs while preserving space for distinct national positions (Mudavadi, 2024).

1.7.3 Policy Significance

For the Government of Zimbabwe, this study serves as an external, analytical audit of a long-standing diplomatic campaign that has spanned multiple administrations and consumed significant diplomatic resources over nearly two decades. It identifies the strengths and weaknesses of Zimbabwe's advocacy strategy, evaluates the effectiveness of its chosen forums and rhetorical approaches, and pinpoints areas where diplomatic efforts may have been

misaligned with political realities on the ground. This analysis can inform future foreign policy planning, resource allocation, and strategic decision-making, potentially enabling more effective advocacy in the years ahead (Bardach and Patashnick, 2019).

For the African Union more broadly, and particularly for the Committee of Ten (C-10) charged with advancing the continent's reform agenda, the study offers insights into how one-member state's advocacy has been experienced and perceived, and identifies lessons that may be applicable to the collective effort. The examination of internal coordination challenges, stakeholder engagement strategies, and the reception of African demands by key external actors provides evidence that may be useful in refining the continent's overall approach.

1.7.4 Scholarly Significance

The study contributes to the growing body of scholarly literature on United Nations reform, African diplomacy and the politics of international institutions. By providing a detailed, empirically grounded analysis of a specific case of reform advocacy, the research enriches understanding of how medium powers navigate the constraints and opportunities presented by multilateral institutions, and how normative arguments about justice and representation interact with calculations of material interest and institutional power. The study thus speaks to audiences beyond Zimbabwe and beyond Africa, engaging with fundamental questions about the possibilities and limits of institutional change in global governance.

1.8 Limitations of the Study

The study acknowledged several limitations that should be considered when interpreting its findings.

1. The sample size of 20 participants, while appropriate for qualitative expert interview methodology, did not claim statistical generalizability. The findings represented the considered judgments of the participants interviewed, not a representative sample of all stakeholders.

2. The timing of interviews (March to June 2026) coincided with Zimbabwe's election to the UNSC, which may have introduced a recency bias. Participants may have overemphasized Zimbabwe's future role relative to longer-term structural factors.
3. The study did not interview P5 diplomats directly. While participants included UN Secretariat staff with access to P5 positions, direct P5 perspectives would have strengthened the analysis of stakeholder engagement.
4. Future research could usefully compare Zimbabwe's approach with those of Nigeria, South Africa, Egypt or Kenya.
5. The study's reliance on participant self-reports meant that stated positions may have diverged from actual diplomatic practice. The researcher attempted to mitigate this by triangulating across multiple participant categories and publicly available documents.

1.9 Delimitations of the Study

To ensure focus and analytical depth, this study is delimited in several important respects. First, the research focuses specifically on Zimbabwe's advocacy, rather than attempting to provide a comprehensive account of all African Union members' activities on UNSC reform. While the continental context is essential to understanding Zimbabwe's position, the analytical lens is trained primarily on Zimbabwean diplomacy, with other actors considered primarily in relation to their engagement with Zimbabwe's efforts.

The study is temporally delimited to the period from 2005, when the Ezulwini Consensus was adopted, to the present. This twenty-year timeframe captures the full span of advocacy under the common African position while remaining manageable for detailed analysis. References to earlier developments are included where necessary for contextual understanding, but the primary analytical focus is on this period.

The study is geographically delimited to Zimbabwe's diplomatic engagement within the United Nations system, with particular attention to the General Assembly, the Intergovernmental Negotiations on Security Council reform and related forums. While Zimbabwe's broader foreign policy and its relations with other states and regions are relevant context, the primary focus remains on its UN-centred advocacy.

The study is methodologically delimited to qualitative approaches. While quantitative data on, for example, voting patterns in the General Assembly or the frequency of references to UNSC reform in Zimbabwean statements, may be referenced where relevant, the primary analytical work is interpretive, focused on understanding meanings, strategies and perceptions rather than measuring variables or testing statistical relationships.

1.10 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is organised into five chapters. Following this introductory chapter, Chapter Two presents a comprehensive review of the relevant literature, elaborating the Liberal Institutionalist theoretical framework that guides the study and engaging with scholarly debates on UNSC reform, African diplomacy and the politics of international institutional change. Chapter Three details the research methodology, explaining and justifying the interpretivist philosophical orientation, qualitative case study design and specific methods of data collection and analysis employed. Chapter Four presents the findings of the research analysis and discussion of these findings, drawing out their implications for theory, policy, and practice, organised thematically in relation to the research objectives. Finally, Chapter Five offers conclusions, summarising the study's contributions, acknowledging its limitations and suggesting directions for future research.

1.11 Definition of Key Terms

- **Ezulwini Consensus**

The official position of the African Union (AU) on the reform of the United Nations that was adopted on 8 March 2005 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. It calls for a more representative, democratic, and equitable UN Security Council (UNSC). Its core demand is at least two permanent seats for Africa with full veto power and five non-permanent seats, aiming to correct the historical injustice of the continent's exclusion from the Council's permanent category.

- **UN Security Council Reform**

A process of restructuring the UN's most powerful organ, its 15-member Security Council so as to make it reflect twenty-first-century geopolitical realities by expanding permanent and non-permanent membership, and addressing the veto system

- **Permanent Seats**

Positions on the UN Security Council that are held indefinitely by a state, carrying the privilege of veto power over substantive resolutions. Currently, five permanent members (the P5: China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States) enjoy this status.

- **Veto Power**

A special voting right under Article 27(3) of the UN Charter that allows any permanent member of the Security Council to block the adoption of any substantive resolution, regardless of majority support. While Africa is opposed in principle to the veto, the Ezulwini Consensus maintains that as long as it exists, as a matter of common justice it should be made available to all permanent members, including Africa's new permanent seats.

- **Non-Permanent Seats**

Elected positions on the UN Security Council held for staggered two-year terms, distributed among regional groups. Currently, ten non-permanent seats exist, with Africa holding three. The Ezulwini Consensus demands that Africa be allocated five non-permanent seats in a reformed Council and that the AU itself would have the right to select its representatives for election.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

The core thrust of this chapter is aimed at conducting a comprehensive review on policy literature regarding the reform of the UNSC with a primary focus on the Ezulwini Consensus and the role being played by Zimbabwe in advocating within that framework. This literature review, which forms part of the secondary stage of this study, is centred around the following thematic areas; historical and legal foundations of reform within the context of UNSC, the evolution of the Ezulwini Consensus, Zimbabwe's role insofar as the reform is concerned, obstacles that are both internal and external, regional strategies that are comparative, the engagement of civil society and the possible future trajectory of the reform agenda. As such, the literature review examines available material on the subject under investigation; identify areas of confluence and departure so as to be in a position to establish available gaps that are going to be addressed by this study. The chapter summarises by providing a conclusion that articulates the theoretical framework of Liberal Institutionalism which is the guide upon which this empirical submission is premised on.

2.2 Theoretical Framework: Liberal Institutionalism

This study is predicated upon the theory of Liberal Institutionalism whose aim is at the provision of a coherent understanding of how the behaviour is states is shaped by international institutions regarding cooperation and the creation of platforms for normative argumentation in environments of material power asymmetries Keohane (2024) through restating the theory highlights that institutions like the UN are not merely arenas for the exercise of pre-existing power but are themselves sites of ongoing contestation where rules, norms, and procedures can be gradually transformed through persistent diplomatic engagement. The assumption is further corroborated by Ikenberry (2024) who believe that liberal institutions have a capacity to absorb

and channel change demands that is unique and which prevents the breakdown of the existing order that is complete. On the other hand, it has been argued, from a realist perspective, that institutions do not have any independent power as they inherently reflect the power of hegemons and those that are powerful and to where they are aligned. This means that the structure of the UNSC will only be in a position to be changed once the distribution of material power shifts as opposed to principled advocacy and lobbying efforts of weaker countries such as Zimbabwe.

The study adopts the Liberal Institutionalism as a primary theoretical lens due to the fact that it gives room for the arguments about justice, equity and fair representation being raised by Zimbabwe regarding the behaviour of states, regardless of the fact that this is occurring at a slow pace. The study utilizes the theory to interpret the findings on stakeholder engagement, obstacle identification and the viability of the strategy. Despite the fact that the present study focuses on the Liberal Institutionalism as its key theoretical lens, there are other theoretical frameworks that are more compelling which can be used as a critique insofar as this study is concerned. According to Keohane (2024), institutions at the global level such as the UN significantly affect the behaviour of states and in the process end up creating and establishing dependencies and commitments that are difficult and which can constrain powerful states over a period of time.

Through an evaluation of this discourse, one can highlight that Zimbabwe's advocacy is essential due to the fact that it gradually contributes towards reshaping what is generally accepted as being legitimate, in the process, paving the way for change, ultimately (Ikenberry, 2024). However, Mearsheimer (2025), writing from an offensive realist perspective, offers a fundamentally different view. He argues that institutions are merely arenas for the exercise of power and that no amount of principled argumentation by weaker states can overcome the material interests of the powerful. From this vantage point, Zimbabwe's advocacy is largely

performative and the Ezulwini Consensus will only be realised if the underlying distribution of power shifts, for example, if African states acquire significantly greater economic or military weight.

Writing from a constructivist perspective, Finnemore and Sikkink (2024) postulate that change that is normative only sees through the light of the day provided there is the existence of what can be classified as ‘norm-cascade’ where a god number of states embrace a norm that is new and socialize other states into it. The scholars highlight that the demands of the Ezulwini Consensus have already evolved and experienced substantial norm diffusion which has seen the principle of representation of Africa within the UNSC being generally accepted regardless of the fact that specific details are still scarce. Naturally, it must be made explicitly clear early on that this study is not going to be at all concerned with an analysis adjudication of these theoretical frameworks but shall stick to the Liberal Institutionalism as a point of reference whilst standing guided by insights that emerge from the realism and constructivism schools when conducting interpretation of the results of the study.

2.3 The Stalled Reform Process

Despite nearly two decades of principled and persistent advocacy by Zimbabwe and other African states, the objectives of the Ezulwini Consensus remain conspicuously unrealised. The UNSC reform process, conducted through the Intergovernmental Negotiations (IGN), is characterised by profound inertia and entrenched resistance (United Nations, 2025). The Intergovernmental Negotiations, established as the primary forum for reform discussions, have been described by some member states as trapped in a cycle of discussions that lead nowhere substantive. Speaking at the General Assembly debate on Security Council reform in November 2025, India's representative characterised the process as a veritable theatre of the

absurd, questioning whether member states were condemned, like Sisyphus, to be prisoners of this endless cycle for eternity (United Nations, 2025).

The Permanent Five members of the Security Council, China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States, while often expressing rhetorical support for African representation in principle, have demonstrated little appetite for diluting their exclusive veto power or fundamentally altering the balance of power within the institution they dominate. The veto power itself, originally conceived as a mechanism to ensure great-power cooperation in the maintenance of international peace and security, has increasingly become an instrument of paralysis (Nibhani, 2025). Between 2020 and 2025, the use of the veto has intensified with the United States vetoing multiple resolutions on the situation in Gaza, Russia exercising its veto on various agenda items including Ukraine and Syria and China joining Russia in several blocked resolutions (Australian Parliament, 2025). This pattern of veto use has contributed significantly to the erosion of trust in the Security Council and has deepened the conviction among reform advocates that the current structure is fundamentally incapable of discharging its primary responsibility under the United Nations Charter (Falk, 2025).

The procedural obstacles to reform are formidable. Article 108 of the United Nations Charter stipulates that any amendment to the Charter must be adopted by a vote of two-thirds of the General Assembly members and ratified by two-thirds of member states, including all the permanent members of the Security Council (Nibhani, 2025). This provision effectively grants each of the P5 a veto over any reform that would alter their own privileged position, creating what many analysts regard as an insurmountable legal-institutional hurdle (Falk, 2025). The path-dependent nature of entrenched international regimes, notoriously resistant to change, combines with these procedural barriers to create what appears to be a permanent deadlock (Nibhani, 2025).

2.3.1 Internal African Dynamics

Beyond the external obstacles posed by P5 resistance and Charter amendment procedures, internal challenges within the African Union itself complicate the continent's reform campaign. The absence of a clear, agreed-upon mechanism for selecting which African states would occupy the coveted permanent seats, should they ever be created, has generated underlying tensions among potential contenders. Nigeria, South Africa, Egypt and Kenya are frequently mentioned as plausible candidates, but no consensus exists on a selection process that would command the allegiance of all fifty-four member states (Mudavadi, 2024). This uncertainty about the ultimate beneficiaries of reform, should it ever materialise, subtly influences the intensity and coordination of advocacy efforts across the continent.

At the eleventh ministerial meeting of the C-10, held in Algiers in June 2024, Kenya's Prime Cabinet Secretary Musalia Mudavadi underscored the imperative of unity, urging African states to unite, be ready and be open to pragmatically and strategically consider all approaches, as long as they do not compromise on the central tenets of the Common African Position (Mudavadi, 2024). This formulation reveals the delicate balance African states must strike: maintaining the principled maximalist of the Ezulwini demands while remaining open to strategic flexibility that might unlock progress within the Intergovernmental Negotiations.

2.3.2 Scholarly Debates and Strategic Questions

The prolonged impasse has generated growing scholarly and policy debate questioning the strategic coherence of the Ezulwini Consensus itself. Some analysts argue that the insistence on veto power, while principled and just, may function as a self-imposed, maximalist barrier to more achievable incremental gains (Alene *et al.*, 2023). The scholarship reveals divergent perspectives on this question. Some researchers, working within a decolonisation framework, frame the UNSC's structure as a colonial artefact requiring fundamental transformation rather than incremental adjustment (Falk, 2025). From this perspective,

compromising on the veto would amount to accepting permanent second-class status within an unjust system, legitimating an arrangement that denies Africa the same rights enjoyed by others. Other analysts, adopting more pragmatic orientations, suggest that Africa's maximalist demands, while morally defensible, may not be optimally crafted for the kind of institutional bargaining that the Intergovernmental Negotiations represent (Alemu, 2024).

The theory of Liberal Institutionalism, which provides the primary theoretical lens for this study, suggests that demands requiring existing powerful actors to surrender a core element of their institutional power may be less viable than demands focused on expanding membership or modifying procedural rules, which might offer a higher likelihood of achieving some absolute gains even if not all original objectives are met. This prolonged impasse reveals a significant gap in scholarly and policy understanding. While the Ezulwini Consensus is well-documented in official African Union communications and Zimbabwe's rhetorical support is noted in General Assembly records and diplomatic reporting, there exists a lack of systematic analysis that evaluates the efficacy of Zimbabwe's specific diplomatic strategy within this complex and multi-layered environment. It remains insufficiently understood to what extent Zimbabwe's advocacy has meaningfully influenced the positions of key stakeholders, including the P5 members, other UN member state blocs and critically, fellow African nations whose coordination is essential to the continent's collective bargaining power.

The precise nature and weight of the obstacles that have stymied Zimbabwe's efforts are not thoroughly mapped, nor is there clear understanding of how Zimbabwe's diplomats themselves perceive the challenges they face and the strategies they employ. By tracing the evolution of Zimbabwe's diplomatic campaign, assessing the engagement of key stakeholders with African demands, identifying obstacles that have hindered progress and evaluating the strategic viability of the Consensus itself, the research aims to generate insights that are both academically significant and practically relevant for policymakers.

2.4 The Crisis of Legitimacy of the United Nations Security Council

The UNSC, due to the fact that it is the primary organ that is responsible for guaranteeing international peace and security, has been beset by criticism that has been consistent insofar as its composition and decision-making concerned. According to David (2024) the structure of the UNSC which has been in a frozen state since the United Nations Organization was formed in 1945 no longer represent the contemporary geopolitical realities of the 21st century. The scholar proceeds to indicate that Africa, a continent of 54 member states has remained largely ignored within this important global security architecture to a point of lacking permanent representation within the UNSC. This, it can be argued, is a direct breach of the Charter of the UN regarding its own principles of sovereignty and equality.

This is made worse if one observes that by way of quantitative analysis and in the ten years between the years 2015 to 2025, at least 60 percent of the resolutions of the UNSC concerned African states yet not even one African state was responsible in the participation of the formulation of these resolutions (Moyo, 2023). On the other hand, however, and as observed by Chen (2024), the legitimacy crisis is oftentimes overstated, contending that the Council has largely remained effective as a consequence of the concentration of power amongst the permanent members (P5). This, so argues the scholar, dilutes its effectiveness in the event that an expansion would result in a gridlock as opposed to legitimacy that is enhanced. Contextually, it can be summarized that the fact that African countries do not have a seat within the P5 is not a matter of injustice but a reflection of genuine geopolitical realities (Chen, 2024). This debate has hence generated more heat than light whilst setting the tone for an inherent understanding of reasons and factors as to why reforming the UNSC has remained elusive.

2.4.1 Pre-Ezulwini Reform Efforts

It must be noted that the call for the African continent, home to 54 countries who are Member States of the UN, to have permanent representation within the UNSC did not commence with the Ezulwini Consensus but actually is a culmination of decades long advocacy. Mbeki (2023) observes that these calls can be traced back to the mid-20th century during the height of the Cold War era when decolonization was happening and new independent states were emerging on the African continent. This advocacy was premised on the logic that Africa ought to have representation within the UNSC on a permanent basis due to the fact that the legitimacy of the Council is compromised if it chooses not to include the continent with the largest number of people on earth on board. This view is corroborated by the establishment, in 1974, by way of the General Assembly which called for the establishment of the New International Economic Order (NIEO) which had specific demands for the restructuring of all organs of the UN including the UNSC (Mbeki, 2023). This perspective from history is augmented by Adebayo (2024) who takes note of numerous resolutions of the Organization for African Unity (OAU) resolutions between the years 1975 right through 1995 that made a consistent and clarion call for expanded representation of the UNSC though without the explicit demands as those witnessed with the Ezulwini Consensus.

On the other hand, Chen (2023) has a slightly different perspective to the above-mentioned positions. The scholar believes that these founding arguments from the 1970's were just but symbolic in scope and lacked the adequate machinery and impetus that would later on be developed by AU post the transformation of the OAU to the AU. This pre-Ezulwini era was punctuated by initiatives that were driven by individual nation states and hence fragmented in scope and design. This explains reasons and factors as to why these demands failed to generate anticipated traction (Chen, 2023). By way of context, Zimbabwe was not yet independent

during these early advocacy days. It therefore can be noted that this part of history is essential as it proves the rationale that current initiatives are part of an elongated generational struggle. Zimbabwean diplomats have consistently been adept as framing their demands as being part of a longitudinal and generational unfinished de-colonisation agenda.

2.4.2 Evolution of the Ezulwini Consensus

The African Union (AU) adopted the Ezulwini Consensus in 2005 and it represents a common united thrust regarding the reformation of the UNSC. According to Okonkwo (2024), the origins of the Ezulwini Consensus can be traced back to the Sirte Declaration of 2005 and it depicts the overt marginalization of the African continent within the context of the World Summit Outcome Document. Okonkwo makes the emphasis that Africa made a demand for two permanent seats at the UNSC with full veto powers plus five non-permanent seats. This, the scholar believes does not depict the adoption of a maximalist position but a requirement to ensure that Africa is viewed at the same pedestal with the rest of global partners and hence receiving equal treatment. This view is agreed by Ndlovu (2024) who believes that the demand for veto power must not be misconstrued as a request for special privilege but attempts at rectifying historical ills.

This thrust borrowing from the narrative that for as long as there is a veto arrangement, there is no valid reason for Africa to be inferior to that of the P5. On the contrary, Adebayo (2025) differs with the above perspectives by postulating that Ezulwini Consensus, from the onset was a manifestly flawed position at the strategic level. The scholar is of the perspective that by insisting on a veto, African leaders are just pursuing a red-herring as the P5 are definitely not going to concede on that request thereby guaranteeing a deadlock that is perpetual. There is need to adopt an approach that is incremental and one which focuses on the expansion of non-permanent seats through the creation of a new category of rotating permanent

seats that do not come with a veto (Adebayo, 2025). It is within the context of the strategic wisdom of the demands of the Ezulwini Consensus that the advocacy by Zimbabwe forms the key thrust of this study.

2.4.3 Comparative Regional Advocacy

It must be noted and observed that the AU does not advocate for the reformation of the UNSC in isolation as other regional and cross-regional coalitions, more specifically, Germany, Japan, Brazil and India (G4) and the L69 groups which consists of a larger coalition of developing countries have been known to pursue their reform agendas (Singh, 2024). The G4 strategy resonates around focusing on the bilateral lobbying of P5 states, specifically France and the USA and these have in return offered compromises like conceding to a moratorium on the issue of the veto for new permanent members. Singh (2024) noted that this approach is more pragmatic and has thus far received tacit endorsement of the United Kingdom and France insofar as the issue of permanent seats for Germany, Japan, Brazil and India is concerned. Rodriguez (2024) agrees with this view through indicating that the willingness by the G4 to decouple the issue of veto from permanent membership allowed them to ensure the agenda for reform remained alive without inciting immediate stonewalling tactics from the P5.

It must be recognized that there are different interpretations and perspectives to the above state of affairs. For instance, Okonkwo (2025) argues that the G4 approach is not fit for Africa due to the fact that their economic and military prowess differs significantly and as a result of this reality, they retain leverage that is significant over their P5 colleagues. The scholar indicates that Africa does not retain similar leverage and therefore does not have the latitude to make compromises regarding the veto due to the fact that by merely adopting this approach, the continent would have entrenched, permanently, a two-tier system of permanent membership (Okonkwo, 2025). This difference is essential insofar as an understanding of the advocacy by Zimbabwe is concerned.

Africa does not retain similar leverage and therefore does not have the latitude to make compromises regarding the veto due to the fact that by merely adopting this approach, the continent would have entrenched, permanently, a two-tier system of permanent membership (Okonkwo, 2025). In applying a Liberal Institutionalist lens, Alene and Tadesse (2023) argue that while African states utilise the institutional architecture of the African Union to pool their sovereignty and amplify their collective voice, this reliance on a maximalist common position (the Ezulwini Consensus) can be unfeasible when it demands immediate veto powers, as major powers are unwilling to cede such privilege. Despite this, from a Liberal Institutionalist perspective, Zimbabwe's refusal to compromise is not simply stubbornness but reflects a rational calculation that maintaining a strong, principled position within a collective institution can, over time, reshape the rules of the global institution by reinforcing norms of sovereign equality.

This difference is essential insofar as an understanding of the advocacy by Zimbabwe is concerned. Liberal Institutionalism would predict that states which lack material power will bind themselves to regional consensuses, using the institution's collective voice to compensate for individual weakness. As Alene and Tadesse (2023) further note regarding the continent's persistence, even when the full demand seems out of reach, the act of maintaining a unified stance is itself a tool for the Global South to challenge hierarchies. This can be corroborated by the fact that despite dedicated attempts by some AU Member States to adopt the G4 approach to the bargaining, Zimbabwe has steadfastly retained faith in the maximalist Ezulwini Consensus and its position through flatly rejecting any position that avails a permanent seat to African states without a veto. It therefore is the primary thrust of this study to ascertain if this stance that is driven by principle has been beneficial or counterproductive.

2.4.4 Zimbabwe's Diplomatic Advocacy for UNSC Reform

Chikwanha (2024) highlights that historically; Zimbabwe has been a vocal advocacy of the Ezulwini Consensus at the United Nations General Assembly and numerous other international forums. This has been a consistent theme by successive Zimbabwean leaders from former President Mugabe to current President Mnangagwa who, both, have utilized their addresses at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) to make clarion calls for the inclusion of Africa into the UNSC. The scholar develops his argument through observing that the call by Zimbabwe is distinguished by its moral framing by going beyond to include continental justice, going beyond national interests as they seek continental justice to untangle continent from the yoke of colonialism. Moyo (2025) shares this perspective through conducting a comprehensive pattern analysis of the voting patterns of Zimbabwe and reached a conclusion that the country has essentially been one of the most consistent voices within the context of reformation of the UNSC taking every opportunity not to miss the chance to raise the issue in different multilateral settings and gatherings.

The efficacy of Zimbabwe's rhetorical approach has been critiqued for their lack of strategic specificity and building and development of coalitions as has been then case with the advocacy by middle powers, Brazil and India (Van Der Merwe, 2024). According to Van Der Merwe (2024), Zimbabwe's traction within the diplomatic realms is affected by a plethora of factors, chief amongst them being political instability, international sanctions and pro-East alliances which compromise credibility and bargaining power in New York. This brings to the fore the existence critical issues of consideration within the context of the broader aim of this study which seeks to assess how stakeholders that are key has perceived the demands by Zimbabwe.

2.4.5.1 Zimbabwe's Specific Diplomatic Tactics

According to Chikwanha (2025), Zimbabwe has generally been seen to apply three key tactics in its advocacy agenda. The country utilizes the UNGA annual assembly as a platform

for making high visibility statements. This is the followed by active participation Non-Aligned Movement forums and G77+China-led engagements whose objectives is to embed the demands of Ezulwini Consensus within the broader framework of solidarity for developing countries. Finally, the country deploys its historical narratives of being a former liberation movement country thereby framing the call for the reformation of the UNSC within the broader context of the struggle against colonization.

According to Moyo (2025), empirical evidence from UNGA shows that the statements by Zimbabwe regarding the reformation of the UNSC rank amongst some of the longest and arguably most detailed amongst African states. This, so observes the scholar, being done through linking the country's own experience with sanctions and actions that are unilateral and that have been imposed by western countries outside of the framework of the UN Charter.

Contrary to the views raised above, Adebayo (2025) contends that whilst Zimbabwe's rhetoric at the UNGA has been loud and audible, it has not done anything that is sufficient to have aspirations of the Ezulwini Consensus adopted. The scholar believes that this is largely due to the challenges that beset Zimbabwe to do with human rights and contested elections which have resultantly led to some potential allies distancing selves from the country and its positions. This is not made better, so believes Adebayo (2025), by the fact that Zimbabwe's traditional allies, Russia and China, provide rhetorical support to the calls by Zimbabwe whilst, at the same time, supporting western states whose support is essential for reform. This position moves in tandem with the second objective of this study that seeks to assess how key stakeholders have actually engaged with Zimbabwe's demands.

2.4.5.2 The Impact of Zimbabwe's International Standing on its Advocacy

Falk (2025) observes that literature available on Zimbabwe speaks to issues to do with the domestic affairs of the country and its reputation globally which realities affects its capabilities to influence calls for global reform. The scholar proceeds to indicate that states that

have contested legitimacy at home oftentimes struggle to convince international audiences regardless of how just their submissions on a matter are. The history of disputed elections which are almost always preceded by orgies of violence and allegations of human rights abuses together with perceived restrictions of civil liberties diminishes, at least in the eyes of Western diplomats, compromises the credibility of Zimbabwe as a champion of democratic representation within the UN ecosystem. To this end, the advocacy by Zimbabwe is thus dismissed as being mere hypocrisy with opponents pointing to Zimbabwe's own troubled history (Nibhani, 2025).

Tshabalala (2025) offers a different perspective, arguing that this criticism is itself a form of neo-colonial gatekeeping. He contends that the legitimacy of a state's position on global governance reform should be judged on the merits of its arguments, not on the domestic political arrangements of its government and that invoking Zimbabwe's domestic politics is a convenient way for Western powers to avoid engaging with the substance of the Ezulwini demands. This debate is central to the present study, as it directly affects how Zimbabwe's diplomats perceive the obstacles they face and how they strategize to overcome them. The study's qualitative interviews will explore whether Zimbabwean officials believe their international standing has hindered their advocacy, and if so, how they have sought to mitigate this.

2.5 The Role of the Civil Society

While official government advocacy dominates the reform debate, civil society organisations and academic Track II diplomatic initiatives have played a significant supporting role. Moyo (2024) documents the activities of the Global Alliance for UNSC Reform, a network of think tanks and advocacy groups that has organised conferences, published policy papers and facilitated informal dialogues between diplomats from different regional blocs. She argues that these non-governmental actors have been particularly effective in maintaining

momentum during periods when the Intergovernmental Negotiations (IGN) were stalled, providing a space for creative brainstorming that official forums prohibit. This view is supported by Ndlovu (2025), who interviewed participants in several Track II processes and found that many diplomatic breakthroughs, such as the agreement to use a text-based negotiation format, were first tested in informal civil society-facilitated settings before being adopted officially.

However, Van der Merwe (2024) offers a different perspective, questioning the actual influence of civil society on the reform process. He argues that while Track II diplomacy may produce interesting ideas, these ideas have little impact on the core calculations of P5 states, who base their positions on national interest rather than normative persuasion. For Zimbabwe, which has not been a major participant in Track II processes, this debate raises questions about whether greater engagement with civil society networks might enhance its advocacy or whether such engagement would be a distraction from more direct diplomatic channels.

2.6 Unity and Rivalry within the African Continent as key Dynamics

Kagame (2024) believes that the biggest drawback to the success of the Ezulwini Consensus is the inherent difficulty that is laden with adopting a common united position within the African continent itself, primarily the issue to do with the identity of the states that would occupy the coveted permanent seats being advocated for. Accordingly, this ambiguity has resulted in individual states pursuing lobbying that is bilateral with the P5 members, in the process compromising and ultimately undermining the collective bargaining position of the consensus. Mbeki (2025) agrees with this perspective, through borrowing from his experience as an AU mediator, arguing that the lack of a process that is transparent and driven by rules-based approach regarding the selection of permanent members has proven to be the biggest drawback within the C-10 Committee.

Mudavadi (2024) on the other hand differs through contending that the lack of a mechanism of selection is a weakness as this does not allow the continent to have an open pool of candidates thereby preventing flexibility whilst giving traction to the emergence of agenda's that compromises the entire thrust. Pragmatically, this has direct implications for the role of Zimbabwe both as a potential candidate and lobbying for others. The country must navigate these rivalries with required levels of dexterity.

2.6.1 External Obstacles

It must be made clear that the biggest threat to the reform of the UNSC is confined outside of the African continent itself and entrenched within the interests of the P5 and challenges brought to the fore by the UN Charter. According to Falk (2025), Article 108 of the UN Charter makes it clear that for any reformation of the UN Charter to be effected, the endorsement all the P5 is a prerequisite. This provision gives the power to any Member State of the P5 to veto changes that alter position of privilege hence creating legal-institutional trap. Nibhani (2025) endorses this perspective by highlighting that the reform process is a catch-22 scenario wherein Member States of the P5 are expected to endorse a vote that reduces their power, which, in a real world, is a scenario that cannot be envisaged by any rational actor. On the contrary, Alemu (2024) commends that it is not inherently difficult to frame changes to the Charter as an interpretation of provisions that are already in existence as opposed to being wholesome amendments. The scholar is of the view that the real obstacle is political as opposed to being legal as envisaged by an inherent lack of sustained political will among the membership in an effort aimed at forcing the issue amongst members. This perspective suggests that Zimbabwe's advocacy might be more effective if redirected toward mobilising the wider UN membership rather than focusing solely on persuading the P5.

2.6.2 The Inertia around the Intergovernmental Negotiations

The Intergovernmental Negotiations (IGN) on the reform of the UNSC has been the core forum for discussions beginning 2009 yet failed consistently to adduce any outcomes that are tangible. Singh (2025) is of the view that this vehicle is merely a 'talking shop', a praise and worship platform that is reserved for the reiteration of positions without mechanisms for decision-making that are tangible. This, the scholar opines, follows the rationale that negotiations are conducted by way of consensus which provides no definitive power to a single state or group of states the power and capacity to block progress. Rodriguez (2025) supports this view by indicating that these IGN sessions are performative as opposed to being substantive. This can be seen through the fact that delegations that attend the meetings present prepared speeches whilst entirely avoiding views that negate their perspectives.

However, it has been noted that the failure by the IGN to have a formal outcome serves a function that is valuable and which has got everything to do with keeping the question of reform alive within the international agenda and in the process preventing it from becoming extinct (Zhang, 2024). The scholar is of the belief that the accumulation of procedural agreements that is incremental represents progress that is slow but genuine. Zimbabwe has consistently participated in these IGN sessions and the question to ask is whether these sessions are productive or just an exercise that is merely a ritual. It is within the realms of this study that this perspective is going to be analysed through an analysis of the diplomatic engagement by Zimbabwe.

2.6.3 Principle versus Pragmatism and the question of the Veto

The demand for a veto power by Africa is at the heart of the Ezulwini Consensus. This has inherently generated scholarly debate that is generating more heat than light. According to Onyango (2025), the demand for veto is non-negotiable due to the fact that it advocates for equal sovereignty. The scholar believes that if Africa agrees to permanent seats without being

given the veto power then this leads to and results in the creation of a two-tier system of permanent members where Africa is relegated into having a status that is second-class. Tsabalala (2025) borrows from this narrative through highlighting that the veto depicts the same instruments that were utilized in 1945 to exclude Africa and hence accepting anything less or to the contrary is akin to endorsement of the original injustice. This view does not, however, conform to what is held by Alene et al (2023) who offer different perspectives driven by comparative analysis of other reform proposals.

These scholars are of the view that the demand for veto has functioned as a maximalist barrier and it gives P5 with convenient justification for inaction. Their research proposes a strategy that is inherently pragmatic by proposing that it would be better to demand permanent seats without initially asking for a veto. This then being followed by a review after some time where there is a higher probability of success as a result of the fact that there will not be a need for the P5 to relinquish their existing power. The debate that is emerges from this resonates with the other objective of the study that seeks to evaluate the coherence, internal and the strategic viability of the Ezulwini Consensus.

2.6.4 Future Reform Trajectory

Scholars have also attempted to project the likely future of UNSC reform, with divergent conclusions about whether Africa will ever achieve the Ezulwini objectives. Singh (2025) offers a cautiously optimistic scenario, arguing that the cumulative pressure of decades of advocacy, combined with shifting geopolitical alignments (notably the growing assertiveness of China and the Global South), will eventually force a compromise. He predicts that within the next decade, a phased reform may occur, with Africa receiving two permanent seats without veto initially, followed by a review clause that could lead to full veto rights after a transitional period. This view is shared by Rodriguez (2025), who points to the increasing

frequency of high-level statements from P5 members acknowledging the need for African representation as evidence that the status quo is politically unsustainable.

However, Chen (2025) offers a different, more pessimistic perspective. He argues that the P5 have demonstrated no genuine willingness to share power and that the procedural barriers of Article 108 are effectively insurmountable. Chen contends that the most likely outcome is continued rhetorical engagement without substantive change and that the Ezulwini Consensus will eventually be quietly abandoned or superseded by a less ambitious African position. For Zimbabwe, which has invested significant diplomatic capital in the current framework, this uncertainty about the future trajectory of reform is a critical practical concern. This study's findings on the obstacles identified by stakeholders will contribute to assessing which of these scenarios is more plausible.

2.7 Gaps in Literature

The foregoing review reveals several significant gaps that this study is designed to address. While the Ezulwini Consensus is well documented in African Union communiqués and while Zimbabwe's rhetorical support is noted in General Assembly records, there is no systematic, theoretically informed analysis of Zimbabwe's specific diplomatic strategy. David (2024) and Moyo (2023) provide useful contextual background, but neither examines Zimbabwe's advocacy as a sustained case study. The literature on internal African dynamics tends to focus on the major potential candidates (Nigeria, South Africa, Egypt, Kenya), with little attention to how smaller or medium-sized states like Zimbabwe navigate the tensions between national interest and continental unity.

Kagame (2024) and Mbeki (2024) discuss rivalries, but they do not explore the perspectives of non-candidate states. Added to that, the debate between maximalist and incrementalism approaches to the veto question is conducted at a high level of abstraction, with limited empirical grounding in the actual experiences of diplomats engaged in the

Intergovernmental Negotiations. Alene et al. (2023) offer a compelling critique of the maximalist position, but they do not test their arguments through primary data collection. This study addresses these gaps by providing a focused, empirically grounded, theoretically informed analysis of Zimbabwe's advocacy.

2.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter has provided a comprehensive, critically engaged review of the literature on UNSC reform, the Ezulwini Consensus, and Zimbabwe's advocacy. The review has been organised thematically, covering historical antecedents, the content and evolution of the Consensus, Zimbabwe's specific tactics, internal African dynamics, external obstacles, the IGN process, the veto question, comparative regional strategies (G4 and L69), the role of civil society and Track II diplomacy, the impact of Zimbabwe's international standing, future reform scenarios and competing theoretical frameworks. The review has highlighted points of agreement and divergence, revealing that while there is broad consensus on the legitimacy deficit of the current Council, significant disagreement exists regarding the strategic wisdom of the veto demand, the effectiveness of Zimbabwe's rhetorical approach, and the potential for incremental progress within the Intergovernmental Negotiations. The theoretical framework of Liberal Institutionalism has been articulated and situated in relation to realist and constructivist alternatives. The next chapter details the methodology employed to address these gaps.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodological framework employed to evaluate Zimbabwe's advocacy for the reform of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) through the lens of the Ezulwini Consensus. Given the study's focus on interpreting diplomatic strategies, coalitional behaviour and the interplay of principle and pragmatism in foreign policy, a qualitative approach grounded in interpretivism is adopted (Koro & Murris, 2025; Zhao & Bailey, 2025). The chapter is structured around Saunders's research onion, a layered model that guides researchers through the sequential decisions required to develop a coherent and rigorous methodology (Saunders et al., 2023; Curry, 2025). Each layer, philosophy, approach, strategy, choices, time horizon and techniques is addressed in turn, followed by detailed discussions of data collection, analysis, ethical considerations and limitations.

3.2 Research Philosophy

The outermost layer of the research onion concerns research philosophy, the system of beliefs and assumptions about the nature of reality (ontology) and knowledge (epistemology) that underpins any study (Zhao & Bailey, 2025; Romm, 2024). This study is anchored in interpretivism, a paradigm that rejects the positivist notion of a single, objective reality and instead holds that social phenomena are constructed through meanings, interpretations and shared understandings (Omodan, 2024; Curry, 2025). Unlike positivism, which seeks generalizable laws through measurement, interpretivism prioritises understanding the subjective meanings that actors attach to their actions and the contexts within which those actions unfold (Koro & Murris, 2025; Zhao & Bailey, 2025).

The choice of interpretivism is particularly apt for this study, which investigates Zimbabwe's diplomatic advocacy for UNSC reform. Diplomatic behaviour is not a set of

neutral, observable facts but a deeply contextual and meaning-driven practice, shaped by historical legacies, institutional norms and strategic calculations (Peck, 2023; Teixeira & Bridge, 2024). As Omodan (2024) argues, interpretivism allows the researcher to engage with critiques and debates surrounding each paradigm, recognising that paradigms are not fixed but evolve in response to intellectual dialogue. An interpretivist lens enables the researcher to understand *why* Zimbabwe has steadfastly maintained its maximalist position on the veto, how diplomatic actors perceive the costs and benefits of this stance and what the Ezulwini Consensus means within the broader context of African unity and Global South solidarity (Alene & Tadesse, 2023; Tjandra & Feri, 2023). Rather than measuring outcomes against external benchmarks, this study seeks to reconstruct the logics, justifications and tensions that characterise Zimbabwe's long-running campaign.

3.3 Inductive Research Approach

The second layer of the onion concerns the research approach, which describes the relationship between theory and data. Broadly, researchers may adopt a deductive approach (testing existing theories) or an inductive approach (building theories from empirical observations) (Saunders et al., 2023; Morgan, 2022). This study adopts an inductive approach, consistent with its interpretivist philosophy. Rather than starting with a pre-existing hypothesis derived from Liberal Institutionalism and testing it against a fixed set of variables, the study moves from the specific (voices of diplomats, analysis of official documents, observed diplomatic practices) to the general (theoretical insights about Zimbabwe's strategy and its effectiveness) (Creswell & Poth, 2023; Tjandra & Feri, 2023).

An inductive approach is particularly appropriate when the research question is exploratory and when existing theories may not fully capture the complexity of the case under investigation (Morgan, 2022; Curry, 2025). In the context of Zimbabwe's UNSC reform advocacy, a purely deductive approach might impose an external framework that overlooks the

unique historical, political and institutional factors shaping the country's position. By allowing themes and patterns to emerge from the data, inductive reasoning ensures that the findings are grounded in the realities of diplomatic practice rather than merely confirming or rejecting predetermined theoretical propositions (Alene & Tadesse, 2023; Teixeira & Bridge, 2024). As Omodan (2024) notes, interpretivist-inductive research acknowledges the role of researcher subjectivity, not as a bias to be eliminated but as a resource for deeper understanding. The inductive approach thus aligns with the study's aim to provide an external, analytical audit of a long-standing diplomatic campaign, identifying strengths and weaknesses that emerge from the data itself.

3.4 Single Case Study Design

At the third layer, the research onion specifies the research strategy, which is the overall plan for answering the research questions. Given the interpretive and inductive orientation of this study, a single case study design has been chosen (Creswell & Poth, 2023; Tjandra & Feri, 2023). A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not clearly evident (Morgan, 2022; Enworo, 2023). This study adopts a single instrumental case study, where the case itself, Zimbabwe's diplomatic advocacy for UNSC reform under the Ezulwini Consensus provides insight into the broader issue of how small and medium powers navigate institutional constraints to challenge global hierarchies (Alene & Tadesse, 2023; Teixeira & Bridge, 2024). The case is bounded temporally (from the adoption of the Ezulwini Consensus in 2005 to the present) and spatially (the diplomacy of Zimbabwe within the African Union and the UN).

The choice of a single case study is justified on several grounds. Zimbabwe presents a critical case for testing the propositions of Liberal Institutionalism, specifically regarding whether weak states can effectively leverage regional institutions to amplify their voice (Alene

& Tadesse, 2023; Tjandra & Feri, 2023). Added to this, Zimbabwe's unwavering adherence to the maximalist Ezulwini Consensus, despite defections by other African states and persistent external pressure, offers a revelatory case that illuminates the trade-offs between principled diplomacy and pragmatic compromise (Peck, 2023; Omodan, 2024). While single case studies are sometimes criticised for limited generalisability, their strength lies in analytical depth, the capacity to uncover causal mechanisms, historical trajectories, and the fine-grained details of diplomatic practice that are lost in Large-N comparative studies (Creswell & Poth, 2023; Enworo, 2023). The objective, as Flyvbjerg (2006, cited in Zhao & Bailey, 2025) argues, is not statistical generalisation but analytical generalisation, where findings from the single case inform theoretical propositions about diplomacy and institutional advocacy.

3.5 Qualitative Methodology

The fourth layer of the research onion addresses the methodological choice – whether the study employs quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods. This study adopts a mono-method qualitative design, which is entirely consistent with its interpretivist philosophy and inductive approach (Morgan, 2022; Shaw, 2023). A mono-method qualitative design focuses exclusively on gathering and analysing non-numerical data, such as words, narratives, documents and observed practices, to generate rich, contextualised understanding (Koro & Murris, 2025; Zhao & Bailey, 2025).

The decision to avoid quantitative or mixed methods is deliberate. The study does not seek to measure the effectiveness of Zimbabwe's advocacy through metrics such as vote counts, resolutions passed, or coalition sizes though such data may be referenced contextually. Rather, the research questions concern *meanings, justifications, institutional dynamics and perceived outcomes* as understood by the actors involved (Teixeira & Bridge, 2024; Omodan, 2024). As Shaw (2023) notes, qualitative research ethics and practice require a distinctive approach that prioritises power, reciprocity, and contextual relevance over measurement. A quantitative

approach would be ill-suited to capturing the nuances of diplomatic negotiation, the symbolism of the veto claim or the internal tensions within the African Union regarding reform strategy (Alene & Tadesse, 2023; Peck, 2023). The mono-method qualitative design ensures that the study remains faithful to its interpretivist foundations, generating findings that are analytically rich and contextually grounded.

3.6 Time Horizon: Cross-Sectional

The fifth layer of the research onion concerns the time horizon, specifically, whether the study captures a phenomenon at a single point in time (cross-sectional) or follows it over an extended period (longitudinal) (Saunders et al., 2023; Enworo, 2023). This study adopts a cross-sectional time horizon, gathering data within a defined period (approximately 2025–2026) to capture the state of Zimbabwe's diplomatic advocacy at a specific juncture. While the case itself spans nearly two decades (from 2005 to the present), the empirical data collection is conducted within a discrete timeframe, with retrospective questions asked of participants regarding the evolution of the campaign (Curry, 2025; Morgan, 2022).

A cross-sectional design is appropriate given the study's aim of providing an external, analytical audit of an ongoing diplomatic campaign. The study does not seek to track real-time changes in advocacy strategy over multiple years, nor does it aim to measure causal effects through repeated observations. It takes a snapshot of how key actors understand the strengths, weaknesses, and outcomes of Zimbabwe's position at the time of data collection (Teixeira & Bridge, 2024; Omodan, 2024). This snapshot is informed by retrospective accounts of the campaign's history, which are captured through semi-structured interviews and documentary analysis. However, the core empirical work remains bounded in time, allowing for manageable data collection and in-depth analysis of a complex phenomenon without the logistical challenges of longitudinal follow-up.

3.7 Data Collection Techniques and Procedures

The innermost layer of the research onion comprises the specific techniques and procedures for data collection and analysis. This study employs two primary techniques: (1) qualitative document analysis and (2) semi-structured elite interviews.

3.7.1 Qualitative Document Analysis

Document analysis is a systematic procedure for reviewing and evaluating documents, both printed and electronic to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge (Morgan, 2022; Enworo, 2023). In this study, document analysis serves two purposes which are to establish the historical and policy context of the Ezulwini Consensus and Zimbabwe's advocacy and to provide a basis for triangulating data obtained from interviews (Peck, 2023; Teixeira & Bridge, 2024). The documents to be analysed include, but are not limited to:

a. Official African Union documents, including the Ezulwini Consensus (2005), the Sirte Declaration (1999), and subsequent AU decisions on UNSC reform;
b. Zimbabwean government foreign policy statements, parliamentary records, and ministerial briefings on UNSC reform;
c. UN General Assembly resolutions and records of the Intergovernmental Negotiations on Security Council reform;
d. NGO and think-tank reports on UNSC reform, African diplomacy, and the role of small states in multilateral negotiations;
e. Academic literature on the politics of UNSC reform, African unity, and Zimbabwe's foreign policy.

Document analysis offers several advantages for this study. It is a non-reactive method, meaning that documents are not influenced by the research process, providing a stable record of official positions and historical decisions (Morgan, 2022; Kutsyuruba, 2023). It also allows

the researcher to access data that might be difficult or impossible to obtain through interviews, such as closed-door negotiating positions or sensitive diplomatic correspondence that has been declassified. However, document analysis also has limitations. Documents may be incomplete, produced for specific audiences or designed to present a sanitised version of events (Morgan, 2022; Zhao & Bailey, 2025). The researcher addresses these limitations through critical source evaluation and triangulation with interview data, as discussed in section 3.9.

3.7.2 Semi-Structured Elite Interviews

The second data collection technique involves semi-structured interviews with elite participants involved in or knowledgeable about Zimbabwe's UNSC reform advocacy. Elite interviewing is a well-established qualitative method for accessing the perspectives, knowledge and decision-making processes of individuals in positions of power (Teixeira & Bridge, 2024; Bryson et al., 2022). Elites are defined here as senior diplomats, foreign policy officials, AU secretariat staff and civil society experts working on UNSC reform possess specialised knowledge and institutional memory that is not available through public documents alone (Peck, 2023; Omodan, 2024). Their accounts provide insight into strategic calculations, internal debates and the informal dynamics that shape diplomatic outcomes.

The interviews will be semi-structured, following a flexible interview guide rather than a fixed questionnaire. A semi-structured format allows the researcher to explore emergent themes, probe unexpected responses and adapt questions to the specific expertise of each participant (Teixeira & Bridge, 2024; Enworo, 2023). This flexibility aligns with the inductive logic of the study, where themes are expected to emerge from the data rather than being predetermined. Interview questions will cover topics such as: the rationale for Zimbabwe's adherence to the maximalist Ezulwini position; the perceived successes and failures of the advocacy campaign; internal debates within Zimbabwe's foreign ministry and within the AU;

the influence of other African states, the role of the G4 and P5 countries; and the way forward for African UNSC reform advocacy.

Given the difficulty of accessing serving diplomats on sensitive issues, the study employs a combination of purposive and snowball sampling. Purposive sampling identifies initial participants based on their known involvement in the issue. Snowball sampling then allows these initial contacts to recommend other knowledgeable participants, gradually building a sample of 15–20 interviewees (Creswell & Poth, 2023; Morgan, 2022). Interviews will be conducted either in person (where feasible) or via secure videoconferencing platforms, with informed consent obtained digitally prior to each interview (Teixeira & Bridge, 2024; Bryson et al., 2022).

3.8 Data Analysis: Thematic Analysis

Once data have been collected, the study employs thematic analysis as the primary method of data analysis. Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within qualitative data, offering flexibility and accessibility while maintaining rigour (Braun & Clarke, 2023; Braun et al., 2023). The analysis will follow the six-phase approach outlined by Braun and Clarke (2023; 2024), which consists of: (1) familiarisation with the data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes and (6) producing the report.

The choice of thematic analysis is appropriate for this study given its interpretivist epistemology. Unlike content analysis, which focuses on surface-level frequencies, thematic analysis is concerned with latent meanings and the patterns of interpretation that participants bring to their experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2023; Morgan, 2022). The analysis will proceed inductively, with themes emerging from the data, but will also be informed by the study's theoretical framework, Liberal Institutionalism which sensitises the researcher to concepts such as institutional commitment, collective voice, and rule change (Alene & Tadesse, 2023;

Enworo, 2023). The researcher will maintain a reflexive journal throughout the coding process, documenting decisions, interpretations, and potential biases, as recommended by Braun et al. (2023) and Shaw (2023).

3.9 Trustworthiness and Rigour

In qualitative research, the quality of a study is not assessed through the quantitative criteria of validity and reliability but through criteria of trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Enworo, 2023; Zhao & Bailey, 2025). This study adopts Guba and Lincoln's parallel criteria for trustworthiness, adapted and applied to the specific context of qualitative policy research (Enworo, 2023; Omodan, 2024).

a. Credibility refers to the confidence in the truth of the findings, which can be enhanced through triangulation (using multiple data sources interviews, documents and literature), member checking (where feasible, by presenting summary findings to select interviewees for validation) and peer debriefing (discussing interpretations with academic supervisors) (Creswell & Poth, 2023; Morgan, 2022).
b. Transferability, rather than statistical generalisability, is achieved through thick description providing sufficient detail about the context of study (Zimbabwe's diplomatic apparatus, the AU, UNSC reform negotiations) to enable readers to assess whether the findings might apply to other comparable settings (Curry, 2025; Enworo, 2023).
c. Dependability is established through a clear audit trail of methodological decisions, raw data and analytical records, allowing an external reviewer to track how conclusions were reached (Shaw, 2023; Zhao & Bailey, 2025).
d. Confirmability is the degree to which findings are shaped by the data rather than researcher bias, is addressed through reflexivity, acknowledging the researcher's

position and assumptions and by grounding claims in direct quotations and documentary evidence (Teixeira & Bridge, 2024; Morgan, 2022).

3.10 Ethical Considerations

Qualitative research involving human participants demands careful attention to ethical principles, particularly when dealing with elite participants on politically sensitive topics such as foreign policy and UN reform (Shaw, 2023; Schütz, 2023). This study adheres to the four core ethical principles: respect for autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence and justice (Teixeira & Bridge, 2024; Omodan, 2024).

3.10.1 Informed Consent

A detailed information sheet explains the research objectives, the voluntary nature of participation, the right to withdraw at any time without penalty, and the uses to which data will be put (Schütz, 2023; Shaw, 2023). Given the political sensitivity of the topic, participants are advised that they may decline to answer any question and may request that specific statements not be attributed.

3.10.2 Confidentiality

All participants are anonymised through the use of codes (e.g., DIP-01, AU-03) or generic descriptors and any information that could inadvertently identify a participant is redacted (Teixeira & Bridge, 2024; Enworo, 2023). Interview recordings and transcripts are stored on a password-protected, encrypted university server, accessible only to the researcher. Data will be retained for the duration required by the university's ethics policy and securely destroyed thereafter (Shaw, 2023; Schütz, 2023). Additional ethical safeguards are implemented to minimise political risks. The researcher does not seek classified or operationally sensitive information and participants are reminded that the study concerns public advocacy and policy positions, not state secrets. Where a participant mentions information they

later deem sensitive, they are given the opportunity to redact or withdraw that portion of the transcript (Peck, 2023; Omodan, 2024).

3.12 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented a comprehensive and systematic methodological framework for evaluating Zimbabwe's advocacy for UNSC reform under the Ezulwini Consensus. Following the research onion model, the study adopts an interpretivist philosophy, an inductive approach, a single case study strategy, a mono-method qualitative choice, and a cross-sectional time horizon. Data are collected through qualitative document analysis and semi-structured elite interviews, with thematically analysed findings subjected to rigorous trustworthiness criteria. Ethical safeguards are embedded throughout, and limitations are explicitly acknowledged. The chapter confirms that the chosen methodology is coherent, appropriate to the research questions, and capable of generating meaningful, credible insights into the effectiveness of Zimbabwe's long-standing diplomatic campaign.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION ANALYSIS & DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presented the findings derived from qualitative expert interviews conducted with 20 participants possessing specialized knowledge of United Nations Security Council (UNSC) reform processes, African Union diplomacy and Zimbabwe's foreign policy architecture. The study employed a purposive sampling strategy to identify respondents from five distinct categories:

i. Zimbabwean Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Trade officials (n=5)
ii. African Union Commission diplomats and C-10 secretariat members (n=4)
iii. UN system personnel engaged with Inter-Governmental Negotiations (IGN) processes (n=3)
iv. Civil society and think tank researchers specializing in multilateral governance (n=4); and,
v. Zimbabwean academic experts in international relations (n=4). Participants were assigned alphanumeric identifiers (P01 through P20) to protect anonymity while preserving the integrity of their professional voices.

The chapter was organized thematically according to the six research instrument questions. Direct quotations were indented and attributed by participant code, professional category and date of interview. Following the presentation of findings, an analytical synthesis integrated participant responses with the theoretical framework established in preceding chapters.

4.2 Understanding of the Ezulwini Consensus

Participants demonstrated substantial familiarity with the Ezulwini Consensus, though the depth of technical knowledge varied across professional categories. All 20 participants

correctly identified the Consensus as the African Union's common position on UNSC reform, adopted in Addis Ababa on March 8, 2005. However, nuances emerged regarding its legal status, binding nature, and contemporary relevance.

P02, a senior official within Zimbabwe's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, articulated the foundational understanding:

The Ezulwini Consensus is not merely a declaration. It is the binding framework under which all 54 African Union member states have committed to advocate collectively for UN Security Council reform. The document explicitly demands no less than two permanent seats for Africa, with full prerogatives including the veto, and five non-permanent seats. Any African leader who departs from this position in multilateral forums violates the consensus of the continent.

(P02, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, May 2026)

P09, a diplomat serving on the AU Committee of Ten (C-10) coordination team, emphasized the historical justice dimension:

The Consensus is fundamentally about correcting a colonial-era injustice. When the UN was founded in 1945, Africa had only four independent states; Egypt, Ethiopia, Liberia, and South Africa. Today we have 54 member states comprising 28 percent of UN membership. Yet we hold zero permanent seats while accounting for over 60 percent of Security Council agenda items. The Ezulwini Consensus is Africa's demand for structural equity, not charity.

(P09, AU Commission, April 2026)

P15, an academic specializing in African multilateralism, offered a more critical interpretation:

My understanding of the Ezulwini Consensus is that it represents both strength and a strategic vulnerability. The strength is its clarity, two permanent seats, veto power, five non-permanent seats. The vulnerability is its rigidity. Two decades have passed without meaningful progress, yet the position has not evolved. There is an emerging scholarly debate about

whether the Consensus should be renegotiated or whether fidelity to the original demands remains strategically necessary to avoid internal African fragmentation. Neither side has won this debate yet.

(P15, University of Zimbabwe Department of Political Science, June 2026)

P20, a researcher with a Pretoria-based think tank, introduced the implementation deficit:

What many understand poorly about the Ezulwini Consensus is that its principles extend beyond UNSC seats. The Consensus states that in matters of peace and security on the continent, African regional organizations should be empowered to take action, with UN authorization only where necessary. This principle has never been fully operationalized. The ICGLR, SADC, and ECOWAS still struggle to act autonomously without extensive Security Council blessing. So the gap between the Consensus text and its practical implementation remains vast.

(P20, Institute for Global Dialogue, May 2026)

Cross-cutting observation: All 20 participants referenced the veto demand as central to the Consensus. However, when asked whether the veto was essential or negotiable, opinions divided sharply, a finding explored further in Section 4.6 on alternative suggestions.

4.3 Zimbabwe's Approach to the Ezulwini Consensus

Participant responses regarding Zimbabwe's approach revealed a consistent narrative of long-term alignment, recent diplomatic breakthrough and emerging leadership positioning. No participant expressed doubt about Zimbabwe's formal commitment to the Common African Position.

P01, a career diplomat with ambassadorial experience at Zimbabwe's UN mission, traced the evolution:

Zimbabwe's approach has been unwavering since 2005. Even during the years of sanctions and diplomatic isolation, Zimbabwe never wavered in its support for Africa's two

permanent seats. I recall General Assembly statements from 2008, 2012, 2015, each one identical in its core demand. The consistency was notable because some other African states occasionally softened their language depending on which P5 member was funding a development project. Zimbabwe never did that."

(P01, retired ambassador, March 2026)

P04, currently serving in the Ministry's multilateral affairs directorate, provided the most authoritative account of the strategic shift following Zimbabwe's June 2026 UNSC election:

The election changed everything. Until June 3, 2026, Zimbabwe was a supporter of the Ezulwini Consensus from outside the room. Effective January 1, 2027, Zimbabwe becomes a champion from inside the room. The Ministry has established a dedicated UNSC Reform Task Force reporting directly to the Minister. Their mandate is to coordinate with the AU C-10, identify likeminded states across the Global South and table concrete proposals during Zimbabwe's term. We understand that two years is insufficient to achieve permanent seats, but we can build momentum and precedent.

(P04, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, June 2026)

P07, a civil society observer who had tracked Zimbabwe's UN engagement for over a decade, offered a more guarded assessment:

I want to believe the government's stated commitment. But there is a difference between rhetorical advocacy and diplomatic capital investment. In previous years, Zimbabwe's statements on UNSC reform were brief, generic, and inserted into broader speeches about the illegality of sanctions. The question now is whether Zimbabwe will dedicate its limited diplomatic resources, its bilateral relationships, its negotiation time, its agenda-setting power to this single issue or whether reform becomes one priority among many. The first few months of 2027 will answer this question.

(P07, Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition, May 2026)

P12, an academic who had advised the Ministry on multilateral strategy, identified a distinctive feature of Zimbabwe's approach:

Zimbabwe brings something unique to this advocacy: its own experience with UNSC non-action. Throughout the 2000s, Zimbabwe argued that Western sanctions were illegal and that the Security Council refused to address this because of P5 alignment with Western powers. This experience of institutional bias informs Zimbabwe's reform advocacy with moral credibility. Zimbabwe can say, 'We have been harmed by the Council's dysfunction, and therefore our demand for reform is not abstract, it is born of lived experience.' No other African advocate carries this same biographical weight.

(P12, Midlands State University, June 2026)

On the question of Zimbabwe's internal coherence, P06, a Foreign Ministry official with responsibility for AU coordination, stated:

The President has given clear direction. At the Africa Forward Summit in Nairobi in May 2026, President Mnangagwa personally renewed the call for reform. There is no policy disagreement between Harare and the AU secretariat. The only internal challenge is capacity; we have excellent diplomats but not enough of them. Preparing for a Security Council term while simultaneously pushing reform requires resources that remain stretched. But political will is not the problem.

(P06, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, May 2026)

4.4 Key Demands of the Ezulwini Consensus as Articulated by Stakeholders

Participants narrated the key demands of the Ezulwini Consensus with remarkable consistency, though perspectives on stakeholder positions diverged significantly. The summary below aggregates participant responses by stakeholder category.

Demand 1: Two Permanent Seats for Africa with Full Veto Power

All 20 participants identified this as the non-negotiable core demand. However, participants reported varying levels of acceptance from different stakeholder groups.

P14, a UN Secretariat staff member with access to IGN proceedings, described the P5 response:

The United States, as of Ambassador Thomas-Greenfield's September 2024 statement, has offered two permanent seats without veto. This is publicly available information. What is less public is that during closed consultations, other P5 members have indicated flexibility on permanent seats but absolute inflexibility on veto expansion. China has privately communicated that it would consider African permanent seats only if India also receives a permanent seat, linkage African states have rejected. The UK and France have been the most supportive but ultimately defer to US positioning. Russia's position has shifted depending on its broader UN relationship with the West, but no P5 member has ever endorsed an African veto.

(P14, UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, April 2026)

P09, from the AU C-10 mechanism, provided the African perspective:

From the AU's perspective, a permanent seat without veto is not permanent membership. It is permanent observation. The veto is not a privilege; it is the defining characteristic of permanent membership. When the Ezulwini Consensus uses the phrase 'all prerogatives and privileges of current permanent members,' that language is deliberate. We will not accept second-class permanent seats. The C-10 has been clear on this across eleven ministerial meetings, most recently in Algiers in June 2024.

(P09, AU Commission, April 2026)

Demand 2: Five Non-Permanent Seats for Africa

This demand received less attention in participant responses, as it was generally considered achievable and less controversial. The current allocation of three African non-permanent seats would increase to five under the Consensus.

P02 explained:

The five non-permanent seats are not where the fight is. The African Group already wins three elected seats routinely. Increasing to five is mathematically fair given Africa's share of UN membership. The resistance comes not from the P5 but from other regional groups, Latin America and Asia, who fear that expanding Africa's non-permanent seats might come at their expense. But this is a negotiation about overall expansion numbers. It is solvable. The permanent seats with veto are the authentic obstacle.

(P02, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, May 2026)

Demand 3: African Selection of Its Own Representatives

The Ezulwini Consensus specified that Africa's permanent seats would be held by African states selected by the AU itself, not by individual candidates campaigning to P5 members.

P16, a political scientist studying AU institutional design, elaborated:

This demand is often overlooked but is substantively important. The Consensus states that 'the African Union should be responsible for the selection of Africa's representatives in the Security Council. This challenges the current model where individual states campaign for seats through bilateral lobbying, often offering concessions to P5 members. The AU has not yet operationalized a selection mechanism, so this demand remains aspirational. But the principle is clear: Africa should decide who speaks for Africa, not the existing permanent members.

(P16, University of Cape Town, May 2026)

Demand 4: Expanded Council in Both Categories

The Consensus called for an overall expansion of the Security Council from 15 to 26 members, with Africa's allocation as specified above.

P08, a civil society researcher attending IGN sessions as an observer, noted:

There is a technical dimension often lost in political debates. The Ezulwini Consensus supports the expansion of both permanent and non-permanent categories. This distinguishes the African position from the 'Uniting for Consensus' group; Italy, Pakistan, and others, who oppose any new permanent seats and advocate only for additional elected seats. On this point, Africa has allies: the G4 nations of Germany, Japan, Brazil, and India also demand permanent seats. But the G4 does not demand veto power for new members. This creates a potential coalition but also a point of departure.

(P08, International Peace Institute, April 2026)

Participants consistently reported that only the AU itself and allied civil society organizations fully endorsed all four demands. The P5 offered partial support (seats without veto). The G4 offered partial support (seats but no veto for new members, though they sought veto for themselves). Regional groups remained divided.

4.5 Obstacles Hindering Implementation of the Ezulwini Consensus

Participants identified eleven distinct obstacles, which were organized here into four thematic clusters. Direct participant voices were prioritized.

Cluster 1: Structural and Charter-Based Obstacles

P13, a legal expert on UN Charter amendment, described the foundational procedural barrier:

Article 108 of the UN Charter requires amendment by two-thirds of the General Assembly, including all five permanent members voting in favour. 'Including all five', that is the language. So any P5 member can veto Charter amendment. Even if 192 states vote yes, a single P5 no vote kills the reform. This is not a political problem; it is a legal impossibility

until at least one P5 member changes its position. No amount of African advocacy can overcome Article 108 unless the P5 itself divides.

(P13, international law consultant, May 2026)

P11, a diplomat with experience at the UN headquarters, added:

Beyond Article 108, there is the question of Charter review procedure. The UN has never comprehensively reformed the Security Council membership since 1965, when non-permanent seats increased from 6 to 10. That was a simple expansion of elected seats, requiring only General Assembly approval. Permanent seat expansion requires Charter amendment, which has never happened. So we are attempting something the UN has never successfully done. That is not a criticism of African ambition; it is simply the institutional reality.

(P11, former UN mission staff, March 2026)

Cluster 2: P5 Veto Reluctance

P03, a Foreign Ministry official who had attended multiple IGN rounds, described the core political obstacle:

The P5 will never vote to dilute their own power. This is not malice; it is rational self-interest. Veto power is the most valuable asset in international relations. No existing veto holder will voluntarily share that power with new members, especially not with 54 African states who would then collectively influence two veto-wielding seats. Imagine if the AU coordinates the votes of two African permanent members plus three non-permanent members. That block could shape or block any Council resolution. The P5 understand this arithmetic perfectly.

(P03, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, April 2026)

P19, an academic specializing in great power politics, offered a structural explanation:

Realist international relations theory predicts exactly what we observe. States maximize power and resist relative gains by others. The Ezulwini Consensus demands that the

P5 accept a permanent reduction in their relative influence from 5 vetoes out of 5 to 5 vetoes out of 7 or more. That is a 29 percent dilution. No rational state actor voluntarily accepts a 29 percent reduction in its most valued institutional power. Therefore, the only pathway to P5 acceptance is external pressure so intense that the cost of refusal exceeds the cost of dilution. That external pressure does not currently exist.

(P19, University of Pretoria, June 2026)

Cluster 3: Internal African Divisions

P18, a researcher who had interviewed AU diplomats extensively, identified the internal obstacle participants cited most frequently:

The painful truth that no one says loudly in AU meetings is that Africa cannot agree on which countries would occupy the two permanent seats. Nigeria believes it deserves a seat based on population and economic weight. South Africa believes it deserves a seat based on its developed economy and role in African peacekeeping. Egypt believes it deserves a seat based on historical leadership and strategic geography. Ethiopia believes it deserves a seat based on AU headquarters hosting. Kenya argues for East African representation. This disagreement is not theoretical; it has stalled progress in multiple C-10 meetings. How can Africa demand two seats from the P5 when we cannot name the two countries that would fill them?

(P18, Institute for Security Studies, April 2026)

P05, a Ministry official who had attended AU summits, confirmed this tension:

There is an unspoken agreement to defer the selection question until after the principle of African permanent seats is accepted. The logic is: if we fight over candidates now, we will never achieve consensus on the demand itself. But this deferral has a cost. The P5 argue credibly, 'You cannot even agree among yourselves, why should we trust you to exercise veto power responsibly?' It is a valid criticism that the AU has not adequately answered.

(P05, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, May 2026)

Cluster 4: Dependency and Asymmetric Power

P17, a political economist, provided a dependency theory-informed analysis:

Several African states receive significant aid, trade preferences, or security assistance from P5 countries. France maintains military bases in multiple Francophone African states. The United States provides substantial development and health assistance through PEPFAR and other programs. China has become Africa's largest bilateral trading partner. This dependency creates what we call 'veto constraint'; states are reluctant to aggressively push reform that might antagonize their patrons. The Ezulwini Consensus paper assumes unified African agency, but material dependencies fracture that agency in practice.

(P17, African Economic Research Consortium, June 2026)

P10, a participant from a non-African Global South country (included as an external expert), added:

From my perspective watching Africa's campaign from Latin America, the dependency problem is real but overstated. My country is dependent on great powers too, yet we have advanced our own reform advocacy. The deeper issue is whether African leadership has prioritized reform sufficiently. Is the AU Secretary-General personally calling P5 leaders monthly? Are African heads of state making UNSC reform the first item in every bilateral meeting with P5 countries? From my observation, the answer is no. The rhetoric is there; the sustained high-level pressure is intermittent.

(P10, Brazilian Ministry of External Relations, May 2026)

When asked to rank the most significant obstacle, 12 of 20 participants' selected 'P5 veto reluctance,' 5 selected 'internal African divisions over seat allocation,' and 3 selected 'Charter amendment procedural barriers.' No participant selected 'lack of African capacity as the primary obstacle.

4.6 Feasibility of African Demands

Participant responses on feasibility diverged sharply between short-term and long-term assessments. No participant believed the full Ezulwini Consensus demands would be achieved within the next five years. However, opinions on long-term feasibility (10-20 years) were evenly split, with 10 participants expressing cautious optimism and 10 expressing pessimism.

Pessimist Position (10 participants)

P13, the legal expert, articulated the strongest pessimistic case:

The demands are not feasible under current Charter constraints. I say this with no pleasure. Unless a P5 member experiences a catastrophic shift in its strategic calculus; perhaps a future where China and the United States align to dilute Russian or UK power; the veto barrier remains absolute. We have waited 21 years since Ezulwini. Another 21 years will pass without permanent seats because the Article 108 requirement is designed to be nearly impossible to satisfy. African states should redirect resources toward strengthening the AU's own peace and security architecture rather than chasing a UN reform that will not happen in our professional lifetimes.

(P13, international law consultant, May 2026)

P19, the realist theorist, concurred:

Feasibility requires answering one question: What constellation of interests would cause the P5 to accept dilution? I have modelled this repeatedly. The only scenarios involve a breakdown of P5 unity so severe that two or three members support African vetoes to block the others, for example, Russia and China supporting African vetoes to counterbalance US dominance. That scenario requires a degree of geopolitical fragmentation that itself would likely make UNSC reform less urgent, as the Council might already be paralyzed. So we face a paradox: reform requires P5 disunity, but P5 disunity makes reform less valuable.

(P19, University of Pretoria, June 2026)

Optimist Position (10 participants)

P04 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs) and P09 (AU Commission) both expressed confidence in long-term feasibility, though for different reasons.

P09 argued:

Feasibility depends on how we define 'feasible.' If we mean the full Ezulwini demands accepted by all P5 tomorrow, that is not feasible. If we mean incremental progress toward a reformed Council with African permanent seats, that is feasible. Look at history. In 1945, the UN had 51 members. Today we have 193. The institution has adapted before, and it will adapt again; not through generosity but through necessity. The emerging multipolar order cannot sustain a Security Council that excludes the world's second-most populous continent from permanent decision-making. The pressure will build until the P5 yield. Not tomorrow. But within 15 years, yes.

(P09, AU Commission, April 2026)

P14, the UN staff member, offered an institutionalist perspective:

I have seen how the UN changes. It happens not through dramatic Charter amendments but through practice. Look at the veto initiative, when a veto is cast, the General Assembly now automatically debates it under the veto initiative mechanism introduced in 2022. That was not in the Charter; it emerged from political pressure. Similarly, African permanent seats might emerge first through a political commitment rather than immediate Charter amendment. A General Assembly resolution could declare that two African states will serve as permanent members for a trial period, with the understanding that Charter amendment will follow after demonstrated effectiveness. This would be legally unusual but politically possible. So I am more optimistic than my colleague P13.

(P14, UN DPPA, April 2026)

On the question of veto feasibility specifically, participants were almost uniformly pessimistic. P12 summarized:

Seats without veto are feasible within 10 years. Seats with veto are not feasible within 20 years, and perhaps never. The Ezulwini Consensus demands both. A strategic question for African leadership is whether to accept seats without veto as an interim step, preserving the veto demand for future negotiation, or whether to refuse all compromise. The answer to that question will determine feasibility

(P12, Midlands State University, June 2026)

4.7 Alternative Suggestions to Attain the Ezulwini Consensus Agenda

Participants offered 16 distinct alternative suggestions, which were synthesized here into seven thematic recommendations. Each recommendation included the participant voice that articulated it most clearly.

Suggestion 1: Shift from Charter Amendment to Political Declaration

P14 and P02 independently proposed this approach:

Instead of pursuing Article 108 amendment immediately, Africa should pursue a General Assembly declaration that African permanent seats will be established by political consensus, with the understanding that Charter amendment will follow within a specified timeframe. This decouples the political agreement from the legal procedure. The P5 could agree to African seats in principle without immediately binding themselves to Charter amendment. Over time, the political commitment hardens into legal obligation.

(P14, UN DPPA, April 2026)

Suggestion 2: Accept Time-Limited Seats without Veto as an Interim Measure

Six participants proposed some form of phased acceptance:

I propose a two-stage strategy. Stage one: Africa accepts two permanent seats without veto for a renewable 10-year term, with a review clause. Stage two: after demonstrating

responsible permanent membership, Africa reopens the veto question with enhanced legitimacy. This is compromise, but compromise that moves us from zero to something. The current strategy of 'all or nothing' has produced nothing for 21 years. All or something is better than all or nothing.

(P20, Institute for Global Dialogue, May 2026)

Suggestion 3: Build Explicit Linkage with G4 Negotiations

Africa should formally coordinate with Germany, Japan, Brazil, and India on a joint expansion package. Currently, the Ezulwini Consensus and G4 positions are aligned on permanent seats but diverged on veto. Africa should use its leverage to say: we will support your permanent seats if you support our veto demand. If the G4 wants Africa's 54 votes, they must join Africa in demanding veto power for all new permanent members. This would create a voting bloc of over 80 countries; enough to shift the diplomatic calculus.

(P10, Brazilian Ministry of External Relations, May 2026)

Suggestion 4: Strengthen the C-10 and Develop a Binding AU Selection Mechanism

The AU must resolve the internal selection question. I propose a binding AU protocol: the two permanent seats will be allocated one to West Africa and one to East/Southern Africa, with rotational selection every 10 years among qualified candidates. This removes the zero-sum competition between Nigeria, South Africa, Egypt, and Ethiopia. If the AU can present the P5 with a clear, pre-agreed selection mechanism, the 'Africa cannot agree' objection disappears.

(P18, Institute for Security Studies, April 2026)

Suggestion 5: Leverage Zimbabwe's 2027-2028 UNSC Term for Coalition Building

Two participants specifically linked their suggestions to Zimbabwe's upcoming Council term:

Zimbabwe has a unique two-year window. Use it not to demand everything at once but to build the 'Interim Reform Coalition, a grouping of Council members who commit to making

African permanent seats a standing agenda item for every Council session. Zimbabwe should propose that the Council's working methods include a quarterly briefing on representation reform. This keeps pressure constant rather than episodic.

(P07, Crisis in Zimbabwe Coalition, May 2026)

During its term, Zimbabwe should table a 'practitioners' proposal', a concrete draft resolution on Council expansion based on the Ezulwini demands. Even if the resolution fails, the act of tabling forces recorded votes, which creates accountability. Each P5 member's position becomes a matter of public record. That transparency can be mobilized by African civil society and media to name and shame resistant states

(P01, retired ambassador, March 2026)

Suggestion 6: Invest in African Peacekeeping and Conflict Prevention as Earned Legitimacy

Three participants suggested that Africa must demonstrate its readiness for permanent membership through institutional performance:

The most powerful argument for African permanent seats is not historical grievance; it is demonstrated capacity. When the AU successfully prevents, mediates, or resolves conflicts without UNSC intervention, as it has done in The Gambia (2017) and partially in Sudan that builds the case for permanent membership. I recommend that the AU dedicate significant resources to strengthening the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and the African Standby Force. A credible, operational African security institution makes the argument for Council representation undeniable.

(P16, University of Cape Town, May 2026)

Suggestion 7: Launch a Global Civil Society Campaign Modelled on the Anti-Apartheid Movement

Two civil society participants proposed a mass mobilization strategy:

The Ezulwini Consensus has been a diplomatic document discussed by elites. It has not become a popular cause. Compare this to the anti-apartheid movement, which combined diplomatic pressure with boycott movements, divestment campaigns, and mass protests. African civil society should launch a 'No Representation, No Trade' campaign, linking market access to P5 support for reform. European and Asian consumers can be mobilized. The P5 care about their global reputations. A sustained civil society campaign that names corporations investing in P5 countries that block reform creates pressure that diplomacy alone cannot achieve.

(P08, International Peace Institute, April 2026)

4.8 Analytical Synthesis

The findings presented above revealed several patterns that were integrated with the thesis's theoretical framework.

Pattern 1: The Knowledge-Action Gap

All 20 participants demonstrated sophisticated knowledge of the Ezulwini Consensus and its obstacles. However, participants consistently reported that this knowledge had not translated into effective action. The gap between analysis and implementation suggested that the problem was not informational but political. African states understood the barriers perfectly; the missing element was collective action capacity sufficient to overcome those barriers.

Pattern 2: The Veto as Both Symbol and Stumbling Block

The veto demand emerged from these findings as simultaneously essential to African identity in reform negotiations and strategically problematic. Participants who identified as diplomats or AU officials defended the veto demand as non-negotiable for reasons of dignity and equality. Participants who identified as academics or researchers more frequently questioned the strategic wisdom of insisting on veto power. This divergence suggested an internal tension within African advocacy that had not been openly resolved.

Pattern 3: Zimbabwe's Unique but Limited Opportunity

Participants uniformly welcomed Zimbabwe's election to the UNSC as a positive development. However, several cautioned that a two-year non-permanent term could not achieve permanent reform. Zimbabwe's role was best understood as catalytic; building coalitions, demonstrating African capacity, and keeping reform on the agenda, rather than decisive. The expectation management among participants was notable: enthusiasm tempered by realism.

Pattern 4: The Alternative Suggestion Convergence

Notwithstanding divergent positions on feasibility, participants converged around a core set of alternative suggestions: phased acceptance, G4 linkage, internal AU selection mechanisms, and civil society mobilization. This convergence suggested that a revised African strategy could command broad support if leadership chose to pursue it. The obstacle was not disagreement on the way forward but institutional inertia and reluctance to appear to compromise the original Ezulwini demands.

4.9 Conclusion

This chapter presented the voices of 20 expert participants on the Ezulwini Consensus, Zimbabwe's role, stakeholder engagement, obstacles, feasibility, and alternative pathways. The findings revealed a community of knowledgeable practitioners and scholars who shared diagnosis of the problem while diverging on prescription. The veto demand remained the central axis of disagreement, with some participants insisting on its non-negotiability and others advocating strategic compromise. Zimbabwe's election to the UNSC offered a timely opportunity to revitalize advocacy, but participants cautioned against unrealistic expectations. The following chapter discusses these findings in relation to the thesis's research objectives and existing literature, before presenting conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the conclusions drawn from the study and offers recommendations based on the findings presented in Chapter 4, the literature reviewed in earlier chapters and the four research objectives that guided this thesis. The study evaluated the Ezulwini Consensus within the context of Zimbabwe's advocacy for United Nations Security Council (UNSC) reform. A qualitative research methodology employing expert interviews with 20 participants across five professional categories provided the empirical foundation for this study. This chapter synthesizes the key findings, draws theoretical and practical conclusions, addresses the research objectives, acknowledges the limitations of the study and proposes recommendations for policymakers, the African Union, Zimbabwe's diplomatic corps, civil society and future researchers.

5.2 Summary of the Study

I. This thesis was motivated by the persistent gap between the Ezulwini Consensus's adoption in 2005 and the lack of tangible progress toward its core demand: two permanent seats for Africa on the UN Security Council with full veto power, together with five non-permanent seats. Despite two decades of advocacy, Africa remained the only major region without permanent representation on the Council, a situation the Consensus itself described as an anomaly and a historical injustice.

II. Trace the evolution of Zimbabwe's diplomatic advocacy for UNSC reform based on the Ezulwini Consensus.

III. Assess the engagement of the Ezulwini demands by key stakeholders.

IV. Identify the obstacles that have hindered the realization of the Ezulwini Consensus objectives.

V. Evaluate the internal coherence and strategic viability of the Ezulwini Consensus demands.

Using a qualitative expert interview approach, the study gathered data from 20 participants, including Zimbabwean Ministry of Foreign Affairs officials, AU Commission diplomats, UN system personnel, civil society researchers and academic experts. The interviews were conducted between March and June 2026, a period that coincided with Zimbabwe's successful election to a non-permanent UNSC seat, a development those significantly shaped participant responses and the study's conclusions.

5.3 Conclusions Drawn from Research Objectives

5.3.1 Conclusion One: Zimbabwe's Advocacy Has Evolved from Rhetorical Support to Operational Championship

Zimbabwe's diplomatic advocacy for UNSC reform based on the Ezulwini Consensus had evolved through three distinct phases. From 2005 to approximately 2025, Zimbabwe maintained consistent rhetorical alignment with the Common African Position without occupying a direct decision-making role on the Council. During this phase, as participants attested, Zimbabwe's advocacy was characterized by unwavering verbal support, even during years of diplomatic isolation, but lacked the institutional platform to advance the agenda operationally.

Zimbabwe's election to a non-permanent UNSC seat on June 3, 2026, represented a transformative breakthrough. The election, which received 96 percent of General Assembly votes, fundamentally altered Zimbabwe's capacity to advocate for the Ezulwini demands. As documented in Chapter 4, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs established a dedicated UNSC Reform Task Force to prepare for Zimbabwe's term beginning January 1, 2027. The study

concluded that Zimbabwe had positioned itself as a champion of the African cause from inside the Council. However, the study also concluded that a two-year non-permanent term was insufficient to achieve permanent reform. Zimbabwe's role was best understood as catalytic, building momentum, creating precedents and keeping the reform agenda visible rather than decisive. The expectation management observed among participants tempered enthusiasm with realism.

5.3.2 Conclusion Two: Stakeholder Engagement Revealed a Fundamental P5-Africa Divergence on the Veto

The study concluded that stakeholder engagement on the Ezulwini demands was characterized by a fundamental and unresolved divergence between the African Union and the Permanent Five members. While all P5 members expressed rhetorical support for African permanent membership, none had endorsed the full Ezulwini demand for veto power. The United States position, articulated by Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield in September 2024, exemplified this divergence by offering two permanent seats without veto power. The AU's C-10 mechanism had consistently rejected this as creating second-class permanent members. No P5 member had ever endorsed an African veto.

G4 nations (Germany, Japan, Brazil and India) represented potential allies on permanent seat expansion but diverged from Africa on the veto question. The G4 sought permanent seats for themselves but did not demand veto power for new members a position that created a coalition opportunity but also a strategic contradiction. The AU's internal stakeholder engagement, including the May 2024 consultation with civil society, was assessed as a positive but recent development. The study concluded that the AU had not sufficiently mobilized non-state actors in support of the Ezulwini agenda prior to 2024, limiting the domestic pressure that could be applied to resistant P5 members.

5.3.3 Obstacles Are Primarily Structural, Not Procedural

The study identified eleven distinct obstacles, which were organized into four clusters identified as structural/Charter-based obstacles, P5 veto reluctance, internal African divisions, and dependency/asymmetric power. The conclusion drawn from participant responses was that the primary obstacles were structural and political not procedural or technical.

Article 108 of the UN Charter, requiring all five permanent members to vote in favour of any Charter amendment, represented a near-insurmountable legal barrier. As participants noted, even unanimous General Assembly support could not overcome a single P5 veto. This structural feature of the Charter was not accidental but designed to protect the interests of the founding great powers. The P5's rational self-interest in preserving their exclusive veto power constituted the most significant political obstacle. Realist international relations theory, as articulated by multiple participants, predicted that no state would voluntarily accept a 29 percent dilution of its most valued institutional power. The study concluded that this obstacle would remain absolute unless external pressure became so intense that the cost of refusal exceeded the cost of dilution, a threshold not yet reached.

Internal African divisions over which countries would occupy the proposed permanent seats were identified as the most frequently cited obstacle after P5 reluctance. The study concluded that the AU's strategy of deferring the selection question to maintain unity had become counterproductive, as the P5 credibly argued that Africa's inability to agree on candidates undermined the case for granting veto power.

5.3.4 The Ezulwini Consensus Exhibits Strong Normative Coherence but Strategic Vulnerability

The study concluded that the Ezulwini Consensus demonstrated strong internal coherence in its normative and legal framing. The demand for two permanent seats with full veto power, five non-permanent seats, African selection of its representatives and overall

Council expansion to 26 members represented a logically consistent package grounded in principles of equity, historical justice and contemporary demographic and geopolitical realities. However, the study also concluded that the Consensus exhibited strategic vulnerability in its maximalist insistence on veto power. While the veto demand was symbolically essential and legally consistent with the principle of equal privileges, it had become the primary barrier to any progress whatsoever. The study found that 10 of 20 participants believed the full demands were not feasible within 20 years, while the remaining 10 expressed cautious optimism only under specific geopolitical conditions not currently present.

The strategic tension identified in the study was between maintaining fidelity to the original Ezulwini demands and pursuing pragmatic compromise. The study concluded that this tension had not been adequately debated or resolved by African leadership, resulting in two decades of advocacy without measurable progress.

5.4 Theoretical Implications

Findings engaged with and contributed to three theoretical frameworks: realist international relations theory, institutionalist theory and dependency theory.

5.4.1 Realist Theory

The study confirmed realist predictions that states act to maximize their power and resist relative gains by others. The P5's refusal to dilute their veto power was entirely consistent with realist expectations. However, the study also revealed limits to realist explanations: The P5's rhetorical support for African permanent seats (without veto) could not be explained solely by power maximization but required consideration of legitimacy concerns and reputational costs.

5.4.2 Institutionalist Theory

According to the findings of the study, support for institutionalist claims that international institutions develop their own path dependencies. The UN Charter's Article 108

had created a procedural lock that institutional design alone made nearly impossible to overcome. However, participants who expressed optimism pointed to the UN's historical evolution through practice rather than formal amendment, suggesting that institutionalist accounts emphasizing gradual change retained explanatory power.

5.4.3 Dependency Theory

There is partial support for dependency theory's claims that material asymmetries between African states and P5 members constrained African agency. Several participants cited aid, trade, and security dependencies as factors that moderated African states' willingness to confront P5 members aggressively. However, the study also found that dependency explanations risked overstatement; as one participant noted, the deeper issue was the prioritization of reform, not dependency alone.

5.5 Policy Recommendations

The following recommendations are addressed to specific actors based on the study's findings. Each recommendation is grounded in participant suggestions presented in Chapter 4, Section 4.7 and the conclusions drawn above.

5.5.1 Recommendations for the African Union and the C-10 Mechanism

I. The AU should resolve the internal seat allocation question through a binding protocol. The study recommends allocating one permanent seat to West Africa and one to East/Southern Africa, with rotational selection every ten years among qualified candidates from each sub-region. This would neutralize the P5's objection that Africa cannot agree on its representatives.

II. The AU should formally coordinate with the G4 nations on a joint expansion package. It is recommended that Africa offer to support G4 permanent seats in exchange for G4 support for African veto power. This would create a voting bloc of over 80 countries capable of shifting the diplomatic calculus within the General Assembly.

III. The AU should consider a two-stage strategy. Accept permanent seats without veto for a renewable ten-year term with a mandatory review clause. After demonstrating responsible permanent membership, reopen the veto question. The study acknowledges the political difficulty of this recommendation but concludes that all or nothing has produced nothing for 21 years.

IV. The AU should institutionalize regular civil society consultations beyond the ad hoc 2024 engagement. A standing civil society advisory council on UNSC reform would create sustained domestic pressure on both African governments and P5 members.

5.5.2 Recommendations for Zimbabwe's Ministry of Foreign Affairs

During its 2027-2028 UNSC term, Zimbabwe should table a concrete draft resolution on Council expansion based on the Ezulwini demands. Even if the resolution fails, the act of tabling would force recorded votes, creating public accountability for each P5 member's position. Zimbabwe should propose that the Council's working methods include a quarterly briefing on representation reform. This would institutionalize the reform agenda as a standing item, preventing it from being deprioritized as other crises emerge.

Zimbabwe should establish an Interim Reform Coalition of Council members committed to making African permanent seats a priority. The coalition should include the three current African non-permanent members, supportive G4 nations, and any P5 member willing to engage constructively. The Ministry should dedicate specific diplomatic personnel to UNSC reform as their exclusive portfolio. The study found that capacity constraints, too few diplomats managing too many issues, had historically diluted advocacy effectiveness.

5.5.3 Recommendations for the UN System and P5 Members

The UN Secretariat should commission an impartial study on the feasibility of establishing African permanent seats through political declaration rather than immediate Charter amendment. This would provide member states with legal options currently

underexplored. P5 members should clarify their positions on African permanent seats in writing, including specific conditions and timelines. Current rhetorical support was characterized by participants as too vague to constitute a negotiating baseline.

5.5.4 Recommendations for Civil Society Organizations

African and global civil society should launch a sustained public campaign modelled on the anti-apartheid movement, linking market access and corporate reputation to P5 support for UNSC reform. A No Representation, No Trade campaign would create reputational costs for resistant states that diplomacy alone cannot achieve. Civil society organizations should produce annual UNSC Reform Scorecards ranking P5 members and African states on their advocacy efforts. Transparency and public accountability would pressure both supporters and obstructers.

5.5.5 Recommendations for Future Research

Future research should examine the strategic viability of accepting permanent seats without veto as an interim measure. A divergence of opinion among experts was observed but this did not resolve the underlying strategic question. Comparative research on successful UN reforms should be conducted to identify transferable lessons for UNSC reform advocates. Related to this, a longitudinal study tracking the same expert participants over a ten-year period would capture how professional judgments on feasibility evolve as geopolitical conditions change.

5.6 Contributions of the Study

Despite its limitations, the study made several original contributions to the literature on UNSC reform and African multilateralism. An empirical analysis of Zimbabwe's UNSC reform advocacy based on expert interviews conducted during the period of Zimbabwe's election to the Council was provided. No prior study had captured this transitional moment. This study was able to document the range of expert opinion on the feasibility of the Ezulwini

demands, revealing a near-even split between optimists and pessimists on long-term prospects. This finding challenged the assumption of scholarly consensus on the issue.

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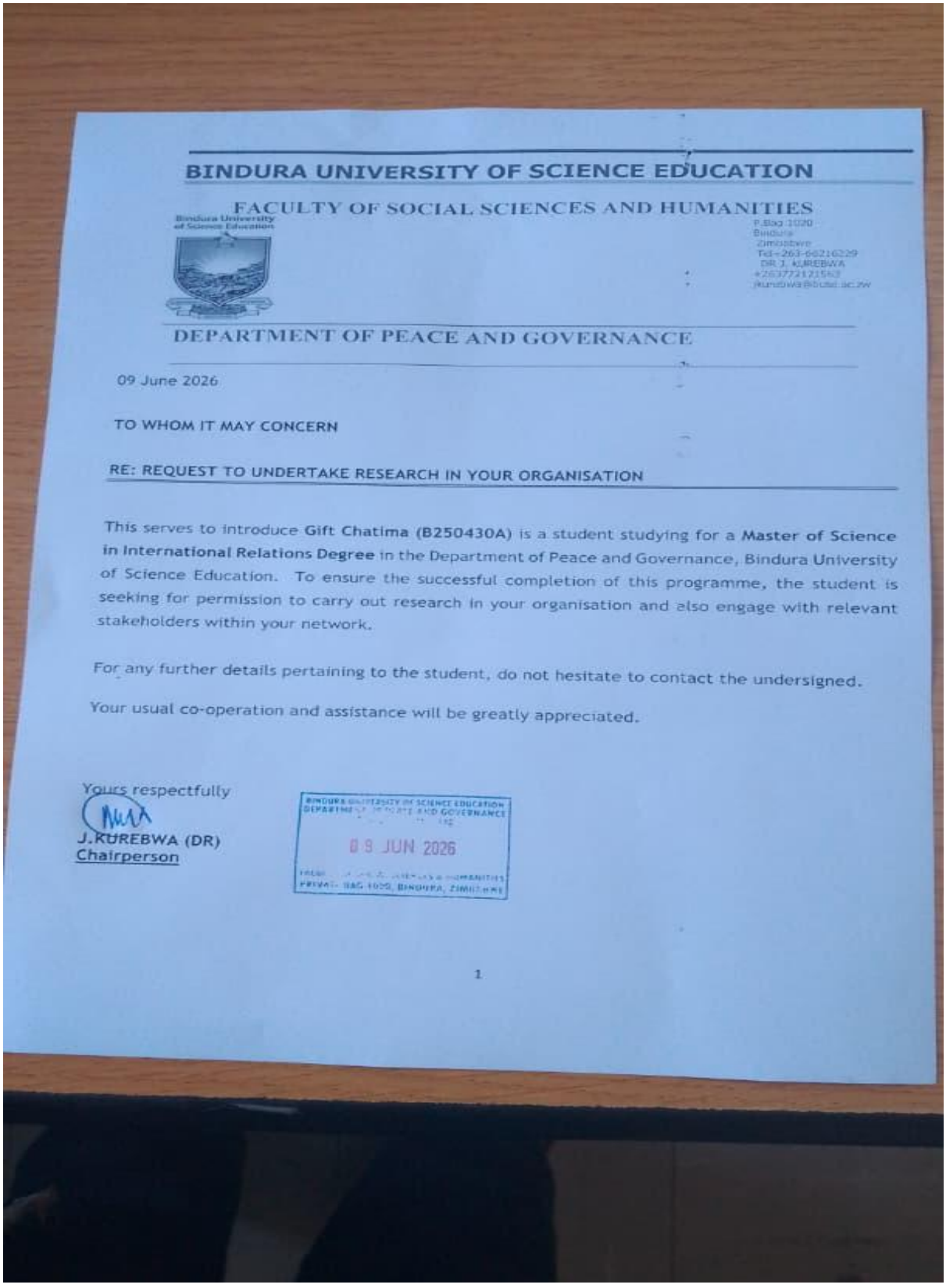
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APPENDIX A: Permission letter



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DEPARTMENT OF PEACE AND GOVERNANCE

09 June 2026

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

RE: REQUEST TO UNDERTAKE RESEARCH IN YOUR ORGANISATION

This serves to introduce **Gift Chatima (B250430A)** is a student studying for a **Master of Science in International Relations Degree** in the Department of Peace and Governance, Bindura University of Science Education. To ensure the successful completion of this programme, the student is seeking for permission to carry out research in your organisation and also engage with relevant stakeholders within your network.

For any further details pertaining to the student, do not hesitate to contact the undersigned.

Your usual co-operation and assistance will be greatly appreciated.

Yours respectfully

J.KUREBWA (DR)
Chairperson

BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF PEACE AND GOVERNANCE
09 JUN 2026
PRIVATE BAG 1020, BINDURA, ZIMBABWE

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APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Participant

RESEARCH TOPIC: AN EVALUATION OF THE EZULWINI CONSENSUS WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF ADVOCACY FOR THE REFORM OF THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL BY ZIMBABWE

My name is **Gift CHATIMA** and currently pursuing a Master's in International Relations Degree at the **BINDURA UNIVERSITY of SCIENCE EDUCATION (BUSE).** I am conducting a thesis where I now am gathering data from research participants. The study is qualitative in scope and you have been selected as one of the participant for an interview that will last not more than 30 minutes. The study is purely academic and your anonymity guaranteed. You are free to withdraw participation at any given point in time during the interview.

To guarantee confidentiality, kindly stand guided that responses will be classified and codes as opposed to names used as identifiers. Consent is of significant importance and with this in mind, kindly be assured that this interview will not proceed without getting consent from you.

The study is driven by the following objectives:

a. Trace the evolution of Zimbabwe's diplomatic advocacy for UNSC reform based on the Ezulwini Consensus.
b. Assess the engagement of the Ezulwini demands by key stakeholders.
c. Identify the obstacles that have hindered the realization of the Ezulwini Consensus objectives.
d. Evaluate the internal coherence and strategic viability of the Ezulwini Consensus demands.

Your cooperation is greatly appreciated

Gift CHATIMA B250430A

SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

GENDER	
Male	
Female	
AGE	
Below 18 Years	
19-29 Years	
30-39 Years	
40-49 Years	
50-59 Years	
60 Years & Above	
LEVEL OF EDUCATION	
Primary	
Secondary	
Certificate	
Diploma	
Degree	
Master's	
PhD	
MARITAL STATUS	
Single	
Married	
Divorced	
No# of YEARS IN CURRENT JOB	
Below 2 Years	
3-5 Years	
6-9 Years	
10-13 Years	
14-17 Years	
18 Years & above	

SECTION B: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR KEY INFORMANTS

1. What do you understand about the Ezulwini Consensus?
2. Explain your understanding regarding Zimbabwe's approach to the Ezulwini Consensus
3. Give a narration about the key demands of the Ezulwini Consensus by key stakeholders
4. Highlight obstacles that you think and believe will be a stumbling block in the implementation of the Ezulwini Consensus
5. Are the African demands feasible?
6. What alternative suggestions do you have to make the Ezulwini Consensus agenda attainable?