

Global Insight covers areas of topical interest and is meant to provide the reader with an initiation to the subject and its policy implications. The analysis is meant to be simple yet elegant, and without sacrificing depth, useful to a broad policy community. We welcome and encourage comments and suggestions.

*From Addis Ababa to New York:
Africa and the challenge of
negotiating the complexities of UN
Reform*

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Introduction

Although the full package of reforms proposed by the United Nations' (UN) Secretary General's High-level Panel is wide-ranging, the proposed democratisation and enlargement of the Security Council (SC) has received the most attention. Not only has SC reform brought divisions within regional blocks into sharp relief, but the success or failure of the reform process may also come to rest on this important issue. Even within the AU, the only continental block to come up with a unified position popularly known as the 'Ezulwini Consensus',¹ disturbing signs of division have started surfacing as the date of the Millennium Summit due in mid-September has drawn closer. However, since the rejection of a compromise deal some AU members had reached with the Group of 4 (G4) – Brazil, India, Japan and Germany - to rethink the 'Ezulwini Consensus' and drop the condition of a veto by AU Heads of State in Addis Ababa in August 2005, some analysts have questioned the wisdom of the AU leadership's refusal to compromise, particularly on the issue of veto. Revealingly, the debate has been loudly silent on the merits of the AU position. What was the G4 really offering the AU in exchange for dropping the veto in its proposals? Is Africa's insistence on the veto a matter of principle, pragmatism or simply obstructionism?

¹ It refers to the Common African Position on the proposed reform of the United Nations, named after the location in the Swaziland Mountain Kingdom where African leaders brokered the consensus. It was arrived at after African leaders had deliberated on the Report of the UN High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change. Aside from proposals on the reform of the Security Council, the Ezulwini Consensus also addressed reforms of the UN General Assembly, the Secretariat, the Economic and Social Council, the Commission on Human Rights. It also touched on collective security issues, including questions of poverty, disease, environment, trade negotiations at the WTO, terrorism, peace keeping, etc.

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