World Powers' Foreign Policies Approaches in Africa: An Examination

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Abstract

Considering the evolving nature of the international system, foreign policies of states are in constant flux. In this regard, the foreign policies of major world powers have undergone changes over the years which were determined by a given situation at a particular period of time in history. For example, World War II, and the Cold War that followed immediately were informed by the ideological rivalry between capitalist and socialist or communism; therefore, the foreign policy at that period was targeted towards ideology. However, after the Cold War, and the fall of Soviet

Union which ended the ideological war, world powers now focused on national interest as against ideology. What this foreign policy shift meant to African nations, and the application of this policy in Africa, by the world powers, are the questions this paper seeks to answer. This study is multi-disciplinary inclined, employing the historical descriptive approach in the analysis of the issues; while Hopson's theory of imperialism is used to provide the theoretical anchorage for the study. It is the position of this paper that foreign policy of world powers towards Africa is "condescending and gainless" for African States. This is because in all intents and purposes, the interest of the African States was never on contention. Therefore, there has to be a deliberate response by Africa to Change this ugly narratives.

Key words: world powers, foreign policy, Proxy war, zone of influence, Instability

Introduction

Over the years, the trend in international relations saw the central role played by ideology in the conception and projection of states foreign policy. Thus, ideology whether it is liberal democracy, communism, fascism or national liberations dominating global space for about 52 years, starting from 1939 when the World War II began[1]. The most visible expression of ideology as a central phenomenon in states foreign policies recently led to the cold war which ushered in a bi-polar international system. During the Cold War era, United States of America was seen to be representing liberal democracy, while Russia for Communism, and African countries were caught in between the influence of the United States and that of the Soviet Union[2]. Some of these states experienced alternating periods of Soviet and US influence: for example, Egypt leaned first in the 1950s and 1960s towards

[1] William Courtney and Donald Jensen, "*Russia's Great Power Future"* in The RAND Blog. March 21, 2016, https://www.rand.org/blog/2016/03/russias-great-power-future.html Accessed on march 7th 2020

[2] Tobias, Chumacher, and Nitoiu, Cristian, "Russia's Foreign Policy Towards North Africa in the Wake of the Arab Spring" Mediterranean Politics (2015) 5

the Soviet Union, and then reversed its policy, aligning to the US in the 1970s; Nigeria during the civil war between 1967 and 1970 was also seen to be alternating loyalty between Britain/USA and Russia; so was Angola in the 1970s crises over the oil rich Katanga region; and Rwanda during 1990 and 1994 crises which culminated in the 1994 genocide just to mentioned a few amongst others. Both superpowers aimed to establish a foothold in the continent, whilst also pursuing their own economic interests – for the Soviet Union this involved mainly securing and enhancing markets for its military industry.

However, with the collapse of the cold war in the early 1990s, the bi-polar international system could not hold. Countries started to fashion out foreign policies that took cognizance of the emerging realities. Ideology became less appealing in the face of other competing variables. The world is now engaged in the pursuit of economic superiority rather than ideology. Given the increasing uncertainty on economic prospects for future generations, the world is now engage in a new competition, and relations between states are now about national interests and not ideological righteousness. Russia, China, and even the United States of America no longer pursue global revolution, but national interest[3]. It is in this light that we shall examine the foreign policies of these nations towards Africa, and the strategies they deployed towards achieving these foreign policy objectives.

The concept of world powers.

World powers are nations that possess the capacity of expressing state power on a global level[4]. The concept of super power or world power as the

[3] Jacob L. Shapiro, "*Ideology Is Dead*", in Geopolitical Futures (GPF). https://geopoliticalfutures.com/ideology-is-dead/ Accessed on March 7th, 2020.

[4] Bernard B. Fyanka. Defence, Strategy and the Foreign Policy of World Powers. Femi Adegbulu (Edt). Topical Issues in International Relations. Osun: Babcock University Press.2014. 86

case may be has evolved over the years since the 18th century, into what we now have as world powers. The evolution can be traced into two major periods in history. First, were the periods between the 18th and 19th centuries when empires dominated the international system. Under these periods there were empires like those of Britain, France under Napoleon Bonaparte, Russia under the czars, and Germany under Hitler to mentioned but a few. However, the empire system started giving way for a new system following the notion of statehood and sovereignty that was given birth to at the treaty of Westphalia in1648, and was properly institutionalized by the French revolution in 1798 followed by the concert of Europe in 1814 which initiated a new balance of power system that would endure for about a century.

The second period was after the two World Wars of the 20th century when the word "world powers" actually has it root. World War I and II put to end the era of empires, and ushered in the era of world powers. Several of the world powers of the present era evolved from empires and great powers of the 18th and 19th centuries. After the Wars, world powers came to be identified by population and territory; resource endowment; economic capacity; political stability and competence; and most importantly military strength. By these criteria, Britain, Russia, Germany, France, China, Japan and the United State of America emerged as world powers in the 21st century international system. These world powers dominate the international system with their national interest through their respective foreign policies

Understanding foreign policy and concise survey of world powers foreign policies in Africa.

In the words of Remy Davidson[5]:

> Foreign policy may be defined as the objectives states pursue outside their territorial boundaries, the values that underlie those objectives, and the means or instruments employed to pursue them'.

In the light of the above, foreign policy of world powers is largely determined by national interest, which major powers on the world stage deployed different strategies aimed at achieving them[6]. The approaches, means or method used in achieving these objectives, which in this case defending the national interest of a nation forms an integral part of the foreign policy structure. Military option, diplomacy, trade negotiations, intelligence etc. forms part of the strategies use in achieving foreign policy objectives by world powers. It is in this regard that we shall take a concise and selective survey of the foreign policies of major world powers in Africa

Russia

Realizing that the cold war was over, Russia foreign policy shifted from unilateralism to multilateralism[7]. Russia now sees the importance for cooperation in all avenues, and thereby focuses both on a regional level and on a global level through multilateralism. Putin outlined his vision for a multipolar world and not with the idea of Russia as a global military superpower like the Soviet Union, but as a key player at the table of world affairs. Russia has been pursuing the goal of establishing new international rules for more than a decade. Russia's involvement in Africa is informed

[5] Mathew Ryan, "Foreign Policies of Great and Emerging Powers" n.d

[6] See Bernard B. Fyanka. Defence, Strategy and the Foreign Policy of World Powers. 85

[7] Chris Alden and Amnon Aran. Foreign Policy Analysis. London and New York: Routledge. 2017. 12-13

mostly by economic interests such as energy relations and the increasing penetration of the region by Russian companies, but also in regard to the arms trade, where Russia is seeking to rediscover, maintain or even enlarge its markets[8].

China and Japan

China's interest in Africa has been mainly economic especially with the Lusophone Africa, which started at the turn of the millennium[9]. This was in contrast to the deep ideological and anti-colonial support it provided to certain countries during the 1960s and 1970s, especially Angola and Mozambique. The contraction present China either as a neo-colonizer in that it is extending its political and economic influence over African countries and their people, or a promoter of "neo-decolonisation" as it helps African countries integrate into global value chains by enhancing their political and economic independence.

The principle of 'non-interference in internal affairs' is the defining feature of Chinese foreign policy towards Africa[10]. This is rooted in the age long principles outlined as early as 1954, the 'Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence' which was later expanded into eight principles to govern Chinese aid to foreign countries, specifically Africa. These include:

1. Mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity;
2. Mutual non-aggression;
3. Non-interference in each other's internal affairs;
4. Equality and mutual benefit;
5. Peaceful coexistence.

[8] See Tobias, Chumacher, and Nitoiu, Cristian, "Russia's Foreign Policy Towards North Africa in the Wake of the Arab Spring"

[9] Carvaho, Pedro Miguel Amakasu Rapso de Medeiros,"China's and Japan's Foreign Aid Policies Vis-à-vis Lusophone Africa". Hamburg: African Spectrum, 50.3(2015) 50

[10] See Bernard B. Fyanka. Defence, Strategy and the Foreign Policy of World Powers. 416

The principles of 'non-interference' and 'mutual benefit' are always at the core of Chinese relations with the rest of the world, especially for the countries of Africa. These principles all focus on economic cooperation, and they derive from the Eight Principles of Enlai in the 1960s

Japan's relation with Africa is connected with it interest in maintaining sphere of influence in the former Portuguese colonies in Africa [11]Both China and Japan never had colonies in Africa. Instead, China was involved in the liberation struggles in some countries, and Japan did the opposite by supporting colonial regimes in Africa, and latter even formed an alliance with the United States to maintain some sphere of influence in Africa particularly with the former Portuguese colonies of Angola, Mozambique, Sao tome and Principe so that its economic interest would be protected. This later formed the foreign policy of Japan towards African States.

France

The foreign policy of France towards Africa can be anchored in it interest in maintaining sphere of influence in the continent[12]. This is founded on the believe that France is a world power, and to keep this power it has to maintain it influence around the world through implicit or explicit geopolitical struggles, and improving the image of French power on the world stage. The fact of overseas influence, particularly in Africa, has helped to sustain the idea that the values of the French republic were universal. Therefore, French influence in Africa has been an essential aim of it foreign policy objectives. Thus Africa became a gauge of French power. To maintain its great power status, France signed about thirty (30) defense as well as military assistance agreements with African states, around the sixties and seventies, and by 1994, there were permanent military bases in

[11] See Carvaho, Pedro Miguel Amakasu Rapso de Medeiros,"China's and Japan's Foreign Aid Policies Vis-à-vis Lusophone Africa". 51-52

[12] Ng Wee Loon,"Europeanization of Frenc Foreign Policy: France and E U in Africa" European Studies Programme; National University of Singapore. (n.d) 10

Africa, and about 10000 French soldiers stationed in the sub-Saharan Africa. We are going to see how it used these in pushing and achieving it foreign policy objectives.

United State of America

American Foreign policy towards the African Continent is premise on three areas: realistic, geo-economistic, and meliorism[13]. Realistically, America channel its policy towards Africa to strategic approaches and security policies and originates in America's foreign policy structure which has taken top priority after the Cold War and the September 11 attacks. Geo-economically, America focuses on economic interests, business interests of private sectors, and cooperation with international financial institutes. Finally, Meliorism target at humanitarian policies and programs.

America's foreign policy towards Africa has been summarily based on two issues: war against terrorism and security threats and control of energy resources. The strategic importance of the African Continent is resulted from both positive and negative aspects of the Continent, that is, both the African Continent oil resources and threats against America from the continent have drawn America's attention more to the region. This is why Bush and Obama in the last decades turned to issues such as war against terrorism, control of oil resources, establishment of standing military bases in Africa, trade relations and use of African markets and resources, and fighting against radical Muslim groups.

It is important to note that these world powers use different approaches/strategies which are all targeted at achieving it respective foreign policies objectives. Below are some of the areas and examples of these approaches.

[13] Manoucherhr, Jofreh, Zargari, Hadi, and Nenati, Ayoub "Strategic Approach of America's Foreign Policy Towards Africa(Case; Sudan)" International Journal of Management and Humanity Sciences 2.7 (2013) 586-588

World Powers Foreign Policy Approaches/strategies in Africa: Profiting or Gain Less?

Major world powers have deployed several mechanisms in achieving, protecting or extending their foreign policy objectives in Africa. These ranges from military involvement, diplomacy, trade agreement etc. To what extend are these policies profiting or gain less to Africa? It is our firm belief that Proxy wars, Provoking instability and zone of influence are all tactics deployed by the world powers.

Proxy war

This concept was more into play during the Cold War. War by proxy was a key strategy of indirect conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union[14]. The reason for proxy wars was to either maintain or change the balance of power between the superpowers/great powers in conflict areas outside the central front in Europe. Within the condition of Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD), both the United States and the Soviet Union sought to avoid direct confrontation between their conventional military forces in regional conflicts out of fear that it would escalate to an all-out nuclear war. In this condition, both powers engaged minor powers rather than each other directly.

In this regard arms or military hard ware is supplied to foreign government or insurgent group with the intent of influencing the outcome in favour of the power involve. This does not automatically lead to direct involvement by a superpower in a conflict, but substitute for direct involvement because it allows a superpower to back one side in a conflict to fulfill national interests without becoming embroiled itself. The supply of material aid, such as weapons or other military equipment and logistical support, is the most significant support the superpower can offer, short of covertly

[14] Tafotie, Djr, Idahosa S.O, "Conflicts in Africa and Major Powers: Proxy Wars, Zone of Influence or Provokating Instability" Vstnik RUDN. International Relations 16.3 (2016) 453

dispatching its own troops. The transfer of military equipment aims to elevate the proxy's military capabilities with the hopes of influencing the outcome of the conflict itself. This is considered the most accepted and recognized aspect of proxy war

Examples of Proxy Wars: the case of China and the United State in Sudan
Presently the Cold War Era is over, but world Powers still engage the instrumentality of proxy for the pursuance of their various interests around the globe. China's growing economy, military capabilities, and it strategic interest regionally and globally, saw it clashing with America especially in Africa, which is now bringing back the strategy of war by proxy. Africa has become a main venue for United States — China strategic competition, as it was to some degree during the Cold War struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union.

China's growing industries and middle class demand new energy and raw material suppliers and Africa is also crucial to meeting these demands. China's increasing integration in the global economy, is equally rising with acquiring vital interests in more regions around the globe.

A good case on the clash of interest between the United States and China which got them into war by proxy is Sudan. For example, oil in Sudan had been discovered by the United States Company "Chevron" but because of the insecurity in the country due to the beginning of war in 1983, Chevron gave up to the oil exploitation project in Sudan in 1984. After the abandonment of oil exploration project by the United Stated Company Chevron, the Sudanese government contacted the Chinese company (China National Petroleum Company) in order to continue the project of oil exploitation, and finally in 1999 the oil exploitation was completed.

Since 1999 China has invested at least $15 bln in Sudan, and has built an oil pipeline from its concession blocs in southern Sudan, to a new terminal at

Port Sudan on the Red Sea where oil is loaded on tankers for China. With this, China takes up to 65 % to 80 % of Sudan's 500,000 barrels / day of oil production. This union between China and the government of Khartoum was not profitable for United States of America, because it was no longer possible for US to control the big oil potential of Sudan.

This got China and the United State into war by proxy. To weaken the power of Khartoum' regime, United States decided to finance and support firstly the rebel groups of South Sudan during the second Sudanese civil war, by training and arming the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army headed by John Garang until his death in 2005. In April 2005 Sudan's government announced that it had found oil in South Darfur which is estimated to be able when developed to pump 500,000 barrels / day. The announcement of oil discovery in Darfur by the Sudan's government, explains the renewed agitation of United States government. If the oil of Darfur was controlled by the regime of Khartoum only, China would be the privileged partner of oil exploitation in this region, and this situation will affect considerably United States interests in Sudan. China has always supported the power in Khartoum, in order to protect its oil interest in Sudan.

Fueling of Instability: a case of Western Powers and Russia in Libya

The role of world powers in fueling instability in Africa, as part of its strategy for achieving foreign policy objectives is alarming. They engaged military forces and economic resources in African armed conflicts thereby provoking an already intense conflict to achieve their aims[15].

The case of western powers particularly France under the auspices of UN's NATO on one hand, and Russia on the other, in Libya buttressed the argument here. Years before the ousting of Muammar Gaddafi he dealt with Western powers, he decided to change the orientation of Libyan foreign policy, and tilted towards signing several arms contracts with

[15] See Tafotie, Djr, Idahosa S.O, "Conflicts in Africa and Major Powers. 454-455

Russia. This shift by Gaddafi was not comfortable to western powers. They saw the cooperation between Gaddafi and Russia, with the possibility of China because of its close tie with Russia as a thread to their interest in Northern part of Africa. Thus, the western campaign against Muammar Gaddafi was launched, and the result was drastic and ultimately instability is now concrete fact in the region of Northern Africa. The Libyan rebel group known as National Transitional Council (NTC) was supported, funded and recognized by western powers and United Nations. Since the death and ousting of Gaddafi, and the regime change in Libya, the instability in Libya and ultimately in Africa through Sahel region to Lake Chad Basin and West Africa has become worst, thereby threatening security and peace in Africa.

Western powers and Russia in Angola

The same parties were involved the Angolan civil war of 1975. In the ensuing violence, the western powers especially Britain, USA, and western backed government of South Africa, were hand in glove with UNITA and FNLA to form a puppet government in Luanda. And Russia and Cuba were in support for the MPLA government in Angola[16]. The war by proxy engaged by the western power and Russia was over the interest on oil by both parties. This war by proxy even came to climax when the then American President Chime (1987) Gerald Ford, tried to convince African leaders against the communist Russia and Cuba involvement in the crises through a circular letter he sent. But the letter was dismissed by African leaders as an attempt at arm-twisting, an insult to the intelligence of African

[16] Anifowose, R. and Enemuo, F., (2005) *Elements of Politics.* Lagos, Nigeria: Sam Iroanusi Publications.

nations and scorn to the dignity of blacmen[17]. As a result, OAU tilted in recognition of the MPLA, which brought to it victory in 1975 (Akinboye, 1999)[18].

Zone of Influence: a Case of France in Francophone Africa

The zone of influence of major powers in the continent and the subsequent fight for influence has led them to intervene through political, security, economic and cultural connections, to maintain a hegemonic foothold in Africa[19]. For example, France viewed post-colonial Francophone Africa as an exclusive sphere of influence. It still maintains military influence and have its troops stationed across the continent, from western Senegal to the Horn of Africa. France also maintains its cooperation with the former colonies like, Chad, Niger, Mali, Cameroon, Central Africa Republic, Senegal etc. This ambition and power tussle of major powers is crystal clear in the battle of France for influence and control of strategic minerals and markets in its zone of influence.

The Lake Chad Basin has an estimated volume of 2.32 bln barrels of oil, 14.65 trillion cubic feet of natural gas, and 391 mln barrels of natural gas liquids. In total these are worth billions of dollars. The port of Le Havre is the final destination for the unrefined oil and it belongs to France. France stake in Niger's Uranium extraction, its dependent on 75 % sources of energy "nuclear" brings an understanding of her great dependency on Niger for uranium. France control 87 % of Areva and owned majority of the

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[17] Chime, S. "To Whom Much is Given: The Imperatives of Nigeria's Foreign Policy", University of Jos Postgraduate Open Lecture Series, Vol. 3, No. 1 June(1987) 25

[18] Akinboye, S.O. Nigeria's Foreign Policy R. Anifowose, and Enemuo,F.(Ed) *Elements of Politics*. Lagos: Sam Iroanusi Publication(1999)

[19] See Tafotie, Djr, Idahosa S.O, "Conflicts in Africa and Major Powers. 457

shares of three out of four uranium mining companies in Niger. Niger's recent produce of 5,000 tonnes of uranium per/day, will help make Niger the second largest uranium producer in the world.

France also supports these regions diplomatically, militarily and financially. For instance, Less than 48 hours after the attack in Ivory Coast on 13 of March 2016, the French forces in Burkina Faso, together with Ivory Coast, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger, Burkina Faso hosts 3,500 French troops who are part of Operation Barkhane — France's counter-terrorism operation.

Western powers and France in Nigeria

The Nigerian civil war provides another example where Britain and her western allies were engaged in war by proxy with France over influence in the West African sub-region. Thus, Nigeria became a battle ground of war by proxy between Britain, USA, and Russia on one hand; and France, Portugal and Russia on the other hand[20]. Even though Nigeria was seen to be alternating loyalty to Britain and Russia during the war, due to factor like arm supply, both Britain and Russia were on one camp against France[21]

Following Nigeria's historical evolution, and gaining of independence from Britain, Nigeria became highly committed towards establishing firm relations with Britain and its Western allies including the USA[22]. The Anglo-saxon influence in Nigeria, coupled with the fact that Nigeria was surrounded by weak French speaking African countries like Cameroon,

[20] Ezirim, Gerald Ekenedinchukwu" Fifty Years of Nigeria's Foreign Plocy: A Critical Review 4

[21] Akinboye, S.O. Nigeria's Foreign Policy R. Anifowose, and Enemuo, F.(Ed) *Elements of Politics*. Lagos: Sam Iroanusi Publication (1999)

[22] Akinbi, Joseph Olukayose " Exploring the Roles played by some European and Asiatic Powers During the Nigerian Civil War: 1967 – 1970. International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences, 5.8 August. (2015) 151-152

Ivory- Coast, and Chad that were still largely in France's sphere of influence, made France uncomfortable. Hence, France was following developments in Nigeria especially with the fear of a united, successful, and a strong Nigeria presenting a strong pole of attraction to the weak and fragmented Francophone states around it, which could upset the balance of power in the region to the detriment of French influence. Thus the Nigeria civil war provided France with the opportunity of strengthening the middle way between the world's two power blocs and asserting France's own independence from the Anglo –Saxons and the Russians who were conveniently behind the Federal government. So France came into the war in support of the Biafra not because it wanted the independent state of Biafra, but primarily to destabilize Nigeria, and prevent it from becoming one strong united entity which could pose a threat to France's sphere of influence in the region. It was for this reason that the war was prolonged for the periods of three years because France deployed the strategy of provoking/prolonging instability during the war, so that it could keep it influence in the region

Submission

What is clear from all of these is that world powers put first it national interest in the pursuit of it foreign policies in Africa at all cost without regard to it implication on the continent. This has been proven to be gain less and indeed condescending[23]. Again, a good case to buttress this argument was in 2010 when Nigeria was placed in the 'U.S list of 16 terrorist nations. It should be recalled that Mr. Farouk Abdul Mutallab, a 23 year old boy, who was trained as a diehard terrorist far away in Yemen, attempted bombing a U.S passenger plane, carrying over 240 passengers, on the 25th of December 2009. The United States of America in it hasty conclusion, included Nigeria in it terrorist blacklist for the first time, at a period when

[23] N. BOG, C. Osegbue, V. C. Iwuoha, "A Postmortem Analysis of Nigeria's Foreign Policy Under Yar'adua's Administration" Professor Bassey Andah Journal of Cultural Studies 3.1 (2012) 12

Nigeria should have ordinarily benefitted from the smooth diplomatic and foreign trade relations which the two countries have enjoyed. Nigeria was not even given the benefit of doubt.

Most recently is the hike in global oil price occasioned by Russia, and Saudi Arabia. In an attempt to control the oil market, both Russia and Saudi Arabia had engaged on oil price war head-on and has swiftly escalated[24]. It started when Russia refused to slash production during a meeting with the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries in Vienna on March 6th 2020. Saudi Arabia, OPEC's de facto leader, hit back with discounts to buyers and a promise to pump more crude. The price of Brent crude plunged by 24%, to $34 a barrel, on March 9th, 2020—its steepest one-day drop in nearly 30 years

The plummeting oil price as a result of the oil price war between Russia and Saudi Arabia has since send shock in the global market and panic about its impact on the global economy. The pain is even acute for smaller, unstable countries of Africa who depend on oil revenue, such as Nigeria. Nigeria has since been shivering as a result, and has also been forced into cutting its 2020 budget to safe cost.

It is therefore clear as crystal that world powers in their quest for supremacy and pursuit of foreign policy objectives, their interest comes first without concern to what pain it would inflict on others. Africa has always been in the receiving end of this pain. Power has always shifted between Saudi Arabia, Russia and America in the control of world oil prices out of the grip of OPEC. In 2014 Saudi Arabia sought to check America's ascendant shale industry by flooding the market with oil. The result was cataclysmic for all producers. Two years later OPEC restored its grip on output by forging an alliance with Russia and others. In all these, Africa takes much of the blow.

[24] The Economics. Mar 14th 2020 edition

Conclusion,

The quest for oil interests, other natural resources have formed the major targets of the world's powers foreign policy in Africa. As a result the continent has become victim of human rights abuses, environmental deterioration, and legitimization of illegitimate/pariah regimes, re-enforcing corruption and exploiting natural resources, which has indeed been gainless and condescending. To put an end to all of these, there have to be a sincere cooperation between the super powers, to serve the interests of long-term peace and stability, rather than short-term profit and politics, viz-a- viz respect for human life. It is true that there are no friends in international relations, but the respect for human life must motivate any action in human relations, otherwise the insecurity as is witnessed in many parts of Africa will continue unabated.

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