



The Impact of Chinese Government's Geopolitical System in Africa and Asia

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Abstract

China overtook the US as sub-Saharan Africa's biggest trading partner with its interest vested in Africa's reserves that have witnessed Angola ranked as China's second-largest oil supplier. The trade between China and African countries grew rapidly. Many African leaders compliment China for its contributions to their country's infrastructure, highlighting visible improvements that have contributed to the expanded economic activities. However, many scholars argue that China's involvement in the African continent is solely to take advantage of the available natural resources since it managed to identify most of the African countries' shortcomings in relation to managing their natural resources. African countries have natural resources, but they are impoverished and defined by financial constraints. Most governments do not have adequate skills to convert raw materials into finished products for export purposes. China is funding most African countries through loans and investments as its strategic thrust to infiltrate the African continent to lure African countries into forming alliances. Financial stability in Africa is a common fundamental problem faced by several countries. As a result of that, the study envisages investigating the authenticity of the provision of China's direct Foreign Investment in Africa. The main objective of the study is to investigate the impact of the geopolitical system in the African continent with specific reference to the Republic of China. The study adopted a desktop approach relying heavily on secondary data that is extracted from journal articles, electronic sources, and textbooks.

Keywords: *Geopolitical System; Natural Resources; Geographical Factors*

1. Introduction

The geopolitical system was first introduced in the late nineteenth century and disappeared from universities with the end of the Second World War (Gokmen, 2010: 3). Ancient Greek philosophers notable wrote about the effects of geography on politics as many other famed historical leaders and philosophers did (Ferguson, 2021). The industrial revolution of the 19th century gave rise to a large array of writing and literature about the concept of geopolitics. With that said, despite the wide range of

writings on the subject of geopolitics, the concept itself was not widely used until the Swedish political scientist Rudolf Kjellen who first coined the concept in 1899. As a result, the concept spread across Europe during World War I.

After World War II, geopolitics became synonymous with international relations and foreign policy mainly to benefit the interests of one's people or country (Ferguson, 2021). World War II served as an example of geopolitical forces at work in pre-war as well as post-war times. In this regard, the practice of the geopolitical system was at work as nations attempted to build up other nations in ways that would benefit their own which invariably led to conflict in subsequent years. The paper is conceptual and desktop data was used to provide theoretical arguments in relation to the geopolitical system in the African continent.

2. Conceptualisation of the Geopolitical System

Geopolitics involves the study of the effects of the earth's geography (human and physical) on politics and international relations (Overland, 2015). It focuses on political power embedded in geographical space. In this regard territorial waters and land is correlated with diplomatic history which involves the relations between the interests of international political actors focused on geographical elements which create a geopolitical system (Toncea, 2006). Thus, State entities embark into the geopolitical system to strengthen the defence of their countries mainly to harness peace or achieve a common goal through treaty agreements that are prompted by each country's geographical factors. Under this avenue, it can be argued that geography plays a key role in the development of geopolitical policies. According to Moisiu (2015), Kjellen and Ratzel played a role in pioneering the concept of geopolitics as an organicist theory of the state. It is within this background, that the state is not only bound to earth but determined by the earth's geographical elements itself. Therefore, for the countries to form an alliance with each other is mostly influenced by each country's natural resources that the country can produce. However, although geopolitical policies are based on the common good for all involved, others are enacted to bring more power to one group over another.

3. The Role of China in the African Continent

In 2009, China overtook the United States as sub-Saharan Africa's biggest trading partner (China Africa Research Initiative, 2022). Since China is the largest energy consumer in the world, its interest vested within the region's oil reserves which evidenced Angola ranked as China's second largest supplier of oil in 2016. The trade between China and sub-Saharan Africa grew from 10 billion dollar in the year 2000 to more than 220 billion dollars in 2014 (China Africa Research Initiative, 2022). China also provides loans, investment and financial support to the region which is traded off with raw materials and resources to fuel its rapidly growing economy as well as advantageous trade deals with African countries. Alden and Barber (2018: 2) also concurred that China's openness to economic engagement in all parts of Africa launched a period of rapid growth in bilateral economic ties which included multi-billion dollar concessional loans that enabled African countries with mineral deposits.

However, some experts perceive the involvement of China in the African continent negatively. Many believe that China's involvement in the African continent is only to take advantage of the availability of wealth in the form of natural resources since it managed to identify most African countries' economic shortcomings. The reality is that African countries are rich in raw materials but poverty-stricken and the situation create the opportunity for China to pretend as if it is contributing to the achievement of jobs and economic growth. Bassou (2017: 1) argues that the African continent is well endowed in terms of natural resources and significant reserves in comparison to world reserves and sometimes even in large percentages, which indicates that some materials include coltan mineral which is

found only in Africa. Therefore, it is for this reason that most think tankers believe that China's presence is predatory, not authentic.

The involvement of China in African security through cooperation at the level of the United Nation Security Council and the African Union in terms of deploying troops and providing greater financial assistance for peace support missions was greatly applauded (Alden and Barber, 2018). The initiative received further support with the announcement of a China-Africa cooperative partnership for peace and security in 2012 which promised integration of security into the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation process. Thus, despite China's radical aspirational commitment to a more institutionalised form of involvement, the challenges of security within the continent remains problematic in part. Because of China's uncertainty regarding the practical implications, this holds for its intense established interests.

Alden and Barber (2018) emphasise that China's contemporary phase of intensive engagement in African countries may have been instigated by a search for vital resources and market opportunities. Since traditional western sources had rejected investment on grounds that it will subsequently cause conflict, World Bank and other donors opted to make loans conditional on domestic policy changes in less developed countries. Thus in less developed countries like Angola the opportunity that this presented, benefitted China in gaining more access to untapped resources in the African markets as most countries will seek its financial assistance and sacrifice their rule of law in order to gain financial benefits.

3.1 Geopolitical Conflicts with African Countries

China is among the group of countries that mostly target their geopolitical power in an expanded engagement with African countries (Mano, 2021). With Beijing's never-ending foreign direct investment in African countries has raised concerns in the African media about high indebtedness and dependence on the rising media and soft power from Chinese-owned media (Zhang and Mwiinga, 2019). Thus in a world where people cannot eat, African countries desperate to develop themselves are vulnerable to being devoured by the tentacles of neoliberal global extractive capitalism that still lacks ethics and moral order (Nyamnjoh, 2018).

The trade agreements, economic forums, media overtures, soft power and diplomatic initiatives are the evidence of the incoming countries' incompleteness not because of the absences but due to endless possibilities including the possibility of expanding and eating other countries' resources (Mano, 2021). This covetousness of African resources between the global powers and emerging countries is also one of the principal factors influencing African geopolitics (Bassou, 2017: 5). Thus, alliances forged around natural resources determine the pattern of political relations between African countries and the rest of the world. According to Hanauer and Morris (2014), good governance watchdogs warn that China negotiates unfair deals that take advantage of African governments' relative weaknesses which encourage corruption as well as wasteful decision-making. As many believe that China is perpetuating a neo-colonial relationship in which Africa exports raw materials to China in exchange for manufactured goods (Hanauer and Morris, 2014); in which in some countries resentment at Chinese business practices has led to popular protests and violence against Chinese businessmen and migrants which exercise unfair practices as they will be discussed in the ensuing paragraph.

3.1.1 Zimbabwe

According to Mano (2021: 7), China's geopolitical interests in Africa are led by its strategic interests which have been viewed by many as its increasing involvement in the continent. Although China's interests have been growing rapidly which in some countries has helped to stabilise the stance of countries' economies, concerns have been raised by many scholars which cautioned some of the Chinese practices in many of its geopolitical partners. In countries like Zimbabwe, China was criticised for undermining local Zimbabwean industries and for its poor labour practices. Alao (2014: 20) many

Chinese employers pay their Zimbabwean workers low wages, thus most of the workers employed at Marange diamond mines by the Chinese are being paid an amount of only \$4 a day.

Furthermore, Mutsaka (2011) stated that Chinese employers are often alleged to inflict physical abuse on Zimbabwean workers which resulted in allegations of beatings and rapes. As a result of that, this has created resentment among many Zimbabwean nationals who perceive their government as sacrificing their rights and protection into the hands of the greedy elite (Alao, 2014: 20). Chinese business class who are boastful about having control over the affairs in the country due to the connections with some of the political office bearers. Which prompted Zimbabwean Congress of Trade Unions to argue that China is mainly in the African continent to satisfy its need for resources and that it has cut deals that have destroyed many industries in the country (Mano, 2021: 17).

Many Chinese nationals in the country engaging on small scale business which included electrical and home appliance stores, fast food outlets, grocery stores, and construction of hotels and shopping malls are known to sub-contract work that could have been done by the local companies to other Chinese companies (Alao, 2014: 10). Chinese textiles and leather goods are dominant in Zimbabwean markets sold at a predatory price which deter most of the local businesses out of the market. This has been exacerbated by the fact that most of the Chinese goods are not authentic and many Zimbabweans realised that China is using the country as a dumping ground for selling cheap and inferior quality products (Mutsaka, 2011). As a result this concurs with (Santos, 1970 cited in Samba, 2020) who argued that trade relations in the concept of dependency are based on monopolistic control in the market where the core state dominates the periphery state through export of capital and loans which will inflate the power of the dominant state to control the economies of the other states.

3.1.2 Ethiopia

China has deeply engaged and become an influential actor in the African continent (Antigegn, 2020). The trading relations between Ethiopia and China are growing at a rapid pace yielding approximately US\$55 billion in 2006 to US\$100 billion in 2010 (Gamora and Kay, 2010). Chinese imports from Ethiopia totalled US\$215 million which makes China the second destination of Ethiopia's export (Alemayehu, 2008). In this regard, although trade volume between the two countries continued to thrive rapidly, trade statistics indicate that China benefitted more than Ethiopia.

According to Alemayehu (2008), the Chinese share in overall exports of Ethiopia is found to be the highest for crude materials where the Chinese share constitutes to 45 per cent, followed by manufactured goods at 19 per cent as well as livestock amounting to 0.9 per cent. As a result of Ethiopia's imports, domestic consumers are benefitting from this trade through the provision of cheaper goods with entrepreneurs who are engaged in building small factories and service centres benefitting from the low cost of machinery and technology acquired from China. Similarly, despite Ethiopia's lack of skilled labour, the Chinese investors have been bringing in most of the workers at the managerial level from China instead of employing local experts and building their capacity (Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, 2009).

With that said, in the manufacturing sector, China's engagement has shown the potential in contributing to industrialisation which included the Chinese Special Economic Zones in the Eastern Industrial Park of Dukem in Ethiopia (Kim, 2013). That is Huajian, one of China's shoe manufacturing companies which managed to hire 1000 local people to curb unemployment in the country. Under this circumstance, it is argued that many Chinese investors move manufacturing firms to Africa as competition in China has become severe which prompted the Chinese government to encourage Chinese entrepreneurs to search for international markets (Baynton-Glen, 2012; Antigegn, 2020). Therefore, this going-out policy has helped China to explore other international markets which generated a revenue base and created an opportunity for China to be able to foster other poor countries including Ethiopia in Africa.

Which made many African leaders into believing that as a fellow developing country, China has more altruistic motives than Western governments (Hanauer and Morris, 2014). China has been praised for its contributions to their nation's infrastructure, highlighting visible improvements that contribute to expanded economic activity, job creation for local workers and tangible improvements such as roads, rail, bridges, and all things that benefit ordinary citizens. Although China's developmental strategic system is applauded by many including Ethiopia as a plan to follow which helped to uplift and stabilise many countries' economies in the continent. It is strongly believed that China is increasingly involved in Africa as a source of energy and raw material to fill its ever-expanding economy.

It is evident that Chinese investments in Ethiopia are global and politically motivated. Thus China has a singular focus on resource acquisition and commercial opportunism since Ethiopia is not a resource-rich African country whilst it does not produce raw materials that are critical to China with low bilateral trade with China as it does not even have direct access to the sea (Alden, 2005; Taylor, 2009 cited in Antiegn, 2020). As China could have opted to form an alliance under its strategic initiative, One Belt, One Road. A plan to develop a series of trade routes leading to and from China with the ultimate goal of advancing Chinese global dominance (Maru, 2019); as a way of integrating trade routes on countries that have access to the sea which will enable China's geostrategic plan.

As a result, China chose to divert its attention to using Ethiopia as an entry point to penetrate the African market to get access to resources (Antiegn, 2020). By targeting African Union, a continental union consisting of 55 member states located in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Since Ethiopia is the seat of the African Union, a political body which represents the continent (Antiegn, 2020). In this regard, China used this avenue to showcase its infrastructural development and investment benefits in Ethiopia to attract other African countries who are interested in this kind of partnership to build more connections in the African markets through geopolitical system.

3.1.3 Gambia

In the year 1949, the People's Republic of China was established which shared common struggles and experiences of colonialism with most African countries by the capitalists and imperialists (Lahtinen, 2018). Their common history of fighting against colonialism and imperialism to lead to national independence and economic revitalisation prompted China to support most African countries against colonialism (Samba and Jatta, 2021). During the 1955 Bandung conference in Indonesia is where China found some common ground and empathy for African countries.

According to Sun (2014), during the 1970s Chinese foreign aid highly contributed to building diplomatic relations with several African countries including Gambia. Since the renewal of the two countries diplomatic relations which commenced from 2016 to 2018, China has been giving developmental aid to Gambia. According to Jeffang (2017), approximately US\$50 million grant for the building of the international conference hall and the US\$165 million was provided by Chinese government which is aimed at providing Heavy-duty Fuel Oil (HFO) power plan. The project is meant for power supply in the Great Banjul Area with more than 60MW.

However, Samba and Jatta (2021) state that one of the most important economic interests of China in Gambia is the Port of Gambia which is located at a very strategic location in West Africa. The Port plays a significant role in coordinating trade and distribution of cargo to neighbouring countries such being Mali, Guinea Bissau, Senegal, and Guinea Conakry. According to Bojang (2000), the port of Gambia being at the strategic and geographic location is seen as the tunnel which allows access to the outside world and the supermarket of the sub-regions. Samba and Jatta (2021) the port of Gambia is in the Atlantic Ocean and is well-known in West Africa as a re-export centre which connects the sub-region countries to Europe, America, and other African countries. Thus, for Chinese government to maintain geopolitical relations with Gambia is of great importance since the alliance will provide an advantage to

China in having access to the port of Gambia. As the port of Gambia will help to initiate the One Belt, One Road plan.

The plan was introduced in 2013 to boost China's trade routes across the world through railways and ports. According to Suokas (2018), the plan includes the land-based Silk Road stretching from the western parts of China, Europe and the Middle East as well as the 21st Maritime Silk Road which connects the coastal parts of China to the South Pacific, Australia, Europe and Africa through the South China Sea together with Indian and the Arctic Ocean. Therefore, the Gambia became a country of interest to China due to its geographic location. Thus, the port of Gambia's geographic stance will help China to integrate its trade routes through the sea as well as rail roads which was important for China to resume diplomatic relations with the Gambia. As this will enable China to extract resources from Africa more easily without any hindrances that may be caused by a lack of transportation system.

The port of Gambia is considered a strategic potential due to its easy access to the Atlantic shipping lanes which is pivotal for China's economic growth and its One Belt, One Road plan (Samba and Jatta, 2021). China secured a deal of approximately US\$160 million for the upgrading of the port of Gambia (Global Security Organisation, 2017). Therefore, despite the resuming of diplomatic relations between China and Gambia which helped to stabilise some of the economic potential sectors in the country such as infrastructure, tourism, Agricultural businesses, and education which contributed 18% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of Gambia (Klomegah, 2018). This cannot be settled without predatory strategic conditions that take advantage of many developing countries in Africa.

According to Sidi, the Gambian Economist and former Minister of Foreign Affairs argued that although the port of Gambia is one of the most important interest of the Chinese government which will help in pioneering the One Belt, One Road plan. Since Gambia is taking loans from China to render some of its governmental activities, should Gambia fail to pay the debt, Gambia loses the port's rights of ownership to China. Therefore, this is a strategic use of debt which will give China total control over the Gambia's economy as the port is one of the country's economic potential infrastructures in generating more revenue. This is in line with the remarks made by John Bolton, the former US National Security Advisor in 2019 who reprimanded China for using bribes, opaque agreements as well as strategic use of debts to hold states in Africa captive to Beijing's wishes and demands.

Therefore, based on the above statement this can be deduced that China seems to fail to comprehend that it does not have all the necessary resources at its disposal to cater for its country's needs. Thus, some of the products that China produces, the first-hand raw materials are extracted from Africa and manufactured into the finished product and sold back across countries. Therefore, it has been extensively engaged in Africa seeking geopolitical alliances using aid and investments in exchange for the African countries' resources. It is evident, that a nation is not composite given its blatant and constant need for activation, potency, and enhancement through relationships (Nyamnjuh, 2018). Geopolitics needs to recognise the nuances arising from incomplete interrelationships between nations with the power relations, ethics and moral order that comes with it.

4. Controversies of Geopolitics in European Countries

The European Union enlarged eastwards and many countries joined the World Trade Organisation, including Russia (Goes and Bekkers, 2022). At the same time, China displayed spectacular growth rates, which saw China integrated into the world markets and recognised as a market economy by joining the World Trade Organisation (Goes and Bekker, 2022). As a result of that, the last decade has witnessed the beginning of a backlash against global trade integration. Thus United States of America's leaders now view China as a strategic competitor which seeks to upend the post-World War II liberal international order (Mazarr, Frederich, Drennan, Ellinger, Eusebi, Rooney, Stravers and Yoder, 2021).

The emergence of China as a new superpower country against the United States of America led to strategic competition wherein geopolitical forces and the desire to limit interdependence took primacy over win-win international cooperation (Wei, 2019; Wyne, 2010); which subsequently led to the trade war between these countries.

4.1 China-United States Trade War

Geopolitical conflicts have increasingly been a driver of trade policy. However, the China-United States trade war is an ongoing economic conflict between the People's Republic of China and the United States of America. As Swanson (2018) notes that in 2018 President Donald Trump began setting tariffs and other trade barriers on China with the goal of forcing China to make changes to what the United States of America says is unfair trade practices and intellectual property theft. In August 2017, the office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) was instructed to conduct investigations of Chinese economic practices (Kwan, 2019). In this regard, the report issued in March 2018 indicated many aspects of Chinese economic policy mainly on alleged technology transfer with stated cost the United States of America economy incurs annually which constituted 225 to 600 billion dollars (Kwan, 2019).

Trump ordered the imposition of tariffs on Chinese products which resulted in the filing of a World Trade Organisations case against China and restrictions on Chinese investment in high-tech sectors of the United States of America's economy. Furthermore, *the United States of America's Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer in the Washington Post news dated March 2018* mentioned that China maintains a policy of forced technology transfer which included buying up U.S technology companies and using cyber theft to gain technology. Thus it is for this background that Trump's administration was prompted to take steps to prevent Chinese state-controlled companies from buying up American technology companies as a way of trying to stop American companies from handing over U.S key technologies to China as a cost of entering their market (Meixin, Lin, Liugang and Miaojie, 2018).

This together with Obama's administration which also initiated a range of anti-dumping investigations against China for subsidising aluminium and steel production serves to ensure that the rule of legitimacy, accountability and transparency towards each country's geopolitical partners should be exercised. Therefore, both states with lower and high governance scores should exercise the principles of transparency and accountability in dealing with geopolitical agreements to avoid a communist political system which is engineered to venerate and sustain its single source of authority at the expense of its geopolitical partner's resources (Kynge, 2007).

China is not transparent about its geopolitical engagements with its fellow partner states. Countries such as India, Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines as well as Vietnam stood as China's most consistent critics and rivals which pushed back powerfully on Beijing's South China Sea Claims (Dollar, 2020). Its claims of sovereignty on foreign countries with an estimated 11 billion barrels of untapped oil and 190 trillion cubic feet of natural gas aggravated other competing claimants such as Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan, and Vietnam. Since China maintained that under international law, foreign militaries are not able to conduct intelligence-gathered activities such as reconnaissance flights in its exclusive economic zone (Centre for Preventative Action, 2022). Whilst the United States under the United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea stipulates that claimants' countries should have freedom of navigation through exclusive economic zones in the sea and are not required to notify claimants of military activities (United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea, 1982). Based on the above-mentioned statement, this can therefore be inferred that China's ambitions have turned into a Bourgeoisie State whose intention is to serve its own selfish interest without considering the state of other countries as China always seeks to covet every resource given its geopolitical means.

Therefore, this poses a question as to whether China conducts its activities in this regard given its coveted desire due to its ever-increasing population size, unique constraints from its geography and limited resources (Mano, 2022). According to Dollar (2020), there are some countries with high governance scores that have been subjected to some of the most wide-ranging Chinese Manipulation efforts which are discussed below in detail.

4.1.1 Australia and Greece

Kennedy (2009), states that the Australian economy has been hit hard by the global recession which propelled the country to continuously benefit from Chinese growth in such tough times. With that said, in 2010 Chinese government invested in the Australian resources sector which helped to stabilise the economy to withstand the global recession of 2008 (Pomfret, 2010). Given this circumstance, China started to take advantage of the geopolitical friendship by demanding a lower price of iron ore despite having its share due to the investment that has been made (Mazarr *et al.*, 2021). As a result, the Australian government did not agree with the price negotiations which incited unlawful behaviour from the Chinese government. Which propelled China having retaliated by detaining one of the Australian executives as a way of forcing the Australian government to succumb to its demands.

In addition, when Greece suffered hard financial difficulties in 2008, China Ocean Shipping Company first invested in Piraeus just as the country was grappling with a massive debt crisis and potential default (Kidera, 2021). Signing a 35-year lease agreement of 2 and 3 ports at the Port of Piraeus which constituted €100 million yearly into the government of Greece including €280 million to build a logistics centre to expand Euro cargo capacity for the China Ocean Shipping Company terminal (Jing, 2012). Grew exponentially handling five times as much cargo as it did back in 2010 which made ample economic sense (Mazarr, *et al.*, 2021). Domestic problems emerged due to a lack of domestic sourcing for materials used in the construction process at Piraeus. According to Kidera (2021), most of the equipment and materials used in China Ocean Shipping Company which led to construction at terminals 2 and 3 were brought in from China. As a result of that, this shrank the revenue base of local businesses that rely on selling building materials in the country. Thus, if these building materials could have been procured locally would have helped to grow local businesses economically.

Again, threats prompted by lack of unionisation led to 2,100 dockworkers who work in terminals 2 and 3 on strike due to the lack of a collective agreement that protects their rights (Ibanez, 2022). As many complained about the poor working conditions, some locals lamented that China created jobs but not good jobs which spurred resentment against Chinese government's involvement in Greece's labour market. Therefore, it is for this reason the dockworkers struggled due to a lack of representation of the growing lack of labour protection in Greece and the greed of multinational companies that take advantage of favourable laws to undercut benefits.

4.1.2 Japan and Mongolia

In September 2010, a serious but militarised dispute occurred between Japan and China (Yoshida, 2010). Japanese Coast Guard arrested the captain of Chinese boat in the East China Sea near Senkaku Island of Kubajima after a reported collision which has occurred between Japanese Coast Guard and the fishing trawler (British Broadcasting Corporation News dated September 2010). In this regard, the Chinese government responded by arresting four Japanese construction employees who were in China to bid for a project to dispose of chemical weapons from World War II. As the tension escalated, Beijing cut off ministerial-level contacts between the two countries and thousands of Chinese tourists dropped trips to Japan (BBC, 2010; Weymouth, 2014). Whilst concerts by Japan's top boy band SMAP due to take place in Shanghai were cancelled by the Chinese organisers.

According to Schneider (2012), China suspended the export of rare earth minerals to Japan as a way of launching an attack on the high-tech Japanese businesses that depend mostly on those minerals. However, given the pressures brought by China's invasion of Japan's territory, the country's defence force has responded forcefully to every attack. As a result of that, in order to tighten security, Japan leaned heavily on its alliances. Tokyo received assistance during the predicament from the United States enabled by the 2013 National Defence Authorisation Act. That is, the United States would consider the Senkaku Islands as Japanese territory under the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security and would thus protect the islands in case of an attack (National Defence Authorisation Act, 2013).

In addition, over the past 20 years Mongolian government has been living under pressure incited by China. Mongolia has been the beneficiary of most of the Chinese investment, predominantly in most of its commodities to aid with the growth of the economy. That being said, in the year 2010 approximately 84% of Mongolian exports were absorbed by China. As a result, Mongolia halted exports of coal to China over a price dispute and threatened to break the agreement (Chuin-Wei, 2013). Given this circumstance, Mongolia started exploring joint bids between Chinese companies and those from other countries to reduce reliance on China. The country targeted trade routes to other neighbouring states to diversify its export portfolio (Higgins, 2011). This aggravated the new administration which took office to campaign on a nationalist platform, opposing Mongolia's economic dependence on China in support of the new law that require foreign companies to funnel revenue through Mongolian banks (Sambuu, 2017).

Although Mongolia continued to seek assistance from China through trade, it has been fiercely defending its sovereignty against Chinese manipulation (Mazarr *et al.*, 2021). In this regard, the Mongolian government began exploring other avenues in seeking financial assistance which included the International Monetary Fund, the Asian Development Bank as well as South Korea (Chen, 2018); which also included alliance forged with United States in expanding security cooperation (Green, 2019). Based on the above statement, this can therefore be deduced that for Mongolia to avoid being continuously and immensely embedded with China's financial assistance which comes with unfair demands and threats. It is paramount to partner with other countries to establish a fair partnership in order to stabilise the Mongolian economy.

4.1.3 The Philippines and South Korea

According to Buzynski (2014), the conflict at the South China Sea over the territorial control, oil and gas reserves, fishing resources, and the region's strategic location, have been at the centre of many historical disputes between China and the Philippines. The conflict escalated rapidly in April 2012, when the Philippine warship encountered eight Chinese fishing vessels near the disputed Scarborough Shoal (Mazarr *et al.*, 2021). Boarding the ships, the Philippine Navy found illegal fish and coral and attempted to arrest the fishermen. However, two Chinese surveillance ships arrived and prevented the arrests. Negotiations between the two states provided no diplomatic solution, and vessels on both sides remained in the nearby waters for several months before the Philippine vessels ultimately retreated.

China also attempted to influence the Philippine position through two primary mechanisms, China ceased imports of Philippine fruit mostly bananas, as well as papayas, mangoes, coconuts, and pineapples (Asia Sentinel, dated June 2012). With that said, roughly one-fourth of all bananas produce harvested from the Philippines had been exported to China (Higgins, 2012). China began to impose strict quarantine procedures on bananas from the Philippines, inciting health concerns as the contributory factor to divert its mean intention which targeted imports solely from a single Japanese conglomerate operating in the island of Mindanao (Higgins, 2012). In addition, China began restricting tourism to the Philippines on grounds that its citizens were not safe in the Philippines due to strong anti-China sentiment (Gutierrez, 2012). Thus it is for this reason Chinese travel agencies suspended all Philippine tours and Chinese air carriers to cut their daily flights to Manila in half, leading to a series of cancellations of flights.

However, although the Philippines had suffered economic hardships infiltrated by China it did not back down as it brought the matter forward which involved the United States. The Philippines did not hesitate to challenge China fair and square on the South China Sea disputes at the Hague Tribunal Under the United Nation Convention on the law of the sea in 2013. With the permanent Court of Arbitration ruling in favour of the Philippines stating that China had no legal basis to claim historical rights on South China Sea. Indicating that neither China's historical claims nor the sea features that China identified were sufficient enough to generate an exclusive economic zone and subsequent maritime rights (Hunt 2016). In this regard, China refused to participate in the process and rejected the tribunal's decision and lost its economic strategic influence towards the Philippines.

Furthermore, in the year 2016 the United States and South Korea announced that they had approved the deployment of the United States made THAAD (Terminal High Altitude Area Defence) anti-ballistic missile system in South Korea (Ryan, 2016). In the announcement, the United States and South Korea identified the deployment as a defensive measure against North Korea's ballistic missiles and its pursuit of weapons of mass destruction and stated that South Korea's THAAD system would not be deployed against any third-party nations (United States Department of Defence, 2016). As a result China was against the agreement with the fear of military build-up on its doorstep citing that the radio waves on the tracking system which is designed to detect the position of hidden objects could be used to track Chinese missile systems (Taylor, 2017); which will provide the United States with an advantage in a potential military conflict.

Thus despite of the differing perspective on the Terminal High Altitude Area Defence deployment in the South Korea's territory, China responded by imposing unauthenticated sanctions to South Korea. With that said, in 2017 the China National Tourism Administration ordered domestic travel agencies to stop selling packages to South Korea, cutting tourism of approximately 8 million visitors per year to 4 million (Stiles, 2018); which contributed to a loss of \$15 billion. Moreover, China cancelled other entertainment events featuring South Korean music and television stars, which negatively affected the stock prices of South Korea's top entertainment companies.

According to Taylor (2017), a boycott of South Korean products, food exports from South Korea to China contributed to a drop of 5.6 percent in 2017, thus \$92.5 million to \$87.3 million. This was exacerbated by the closing down of 75 retail markets that is owned by Lotte group on the ground that the group offered a land for Terminal High Altitude Area Defence operations. Given these circumstances, the trade war between China and South Korea led to \$227.3 billion trade with China in 2015 dropped to \$211.4 billion in 2016 (Mazarr, *et al.*, 2021). However, despite the trade war between South Korea and China fuelled by the deployment of Terminal High Altitude Area defence operations in the area did not coerce South Korea to submit to China's influences. Under the South Korean President Park Geun-hye, the deployment persisted and became operational (Herb and Browne, 2017).

4.1.4 Taiwan

In the year 2016 Tsai Ing-wen of the Democratic Progressive Party (a party which is traditionally in favour of Taiwan's independence) was elected the president of Taiwan (Mazarr *et al.*, 2021). Tsai Ing-wen during her inaugural address factored in on the initiative of finding the mutual understanding between China and Taiwan (Stout and Hunt, 2016); and a political attitude of seeking common ground while setting aside their differences (Shattuck, 2020). However, given the circumstances with the relationship between China and Taiwan long been embedded with territorial feuds, China pointed to the grave challenges posed by Tsai's election and disagreed with any of the activities supporting the Taiwan's independence. In this regard China began to blackmail and threatens to end official communication between Taiwan Affairs Office and Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council on grounds that if only the president acknowledges the One China status quo which support the unification of the two countries as

one (Weymouth 2016). Given the refusal of the president Tsai to recognise Taiwan as part of China in which she called on Beijing to respect the democratic will of Taiwan citizens. China ceased the issuing of individual travel permits to Taiwan which constituted approximately of 82 000 tourists monthly (Jennings, 2019).

Furthermore, China began poaching other diplomatic partners of Taiwan to shift their allegiances to Beijing as a strategy to influence and constraining Taiwan. Such being the case, since 2016, seven countries which included the Republic of Kiribati, Solomon Islands, Dominican Republic, Burkina Faso, Republic of El Salvador, Republic of Panama, and Democratic Republic of São Tomé and Príncipe have shifted their allegiances from Taipei to Beijing (Shattuck, 2020). This was done under the conditions of offering direct investments benefits in the exchange of switching allegiances to cripple the Taiwan's economy.

In 2018, China pressured several international airlines into recognising Taiwan as part of China and fined a Japanese retailer due to some of the merchandises in the stores labelled as Made in Taiwan and instructing the Gap clothing company to tender in an apology for selling a T-shirt that is portraying a map of China without including Taiwan (Lee Myers and Horton, 2018). All in all China is waging a war to hurt its own kind under the pretext of the so called reunification of the People's Republic of China and Taiwan officially known as the Republic of China under the rule of Chinese Communist Party.

Despite many of the attempts posed by China with the endeavour of cornering Taiwan to succumb to its terms of preference, compelled Taiwan to be closer to the United States instead of China. With the President Tsai visiting the United States wherein the visit cemented the agreement to an arms package of US\$8 billion for 66 F-16 fighter jets (Wong, 2019). In this regard, United States vowed to block any further deterioration of diplomatic ties with the remaining countries that recognise Taiwan as a country (Stutte, 2019). At the end this may proof what Jacques deLisles said that Beijing should recognise that squeezing Taiwan too hard, reducing its diplomatic partners to zero could be detrimental which would be seen as a serious threat to Taiwan's security in an international order where the capacity to engage in formal international relations matter, legally and politically. And as a results Taiwan might push back in any way that would not serve Beijing's interests. Thus inflicting pain and torture is not a healthy way of reunifying with your own kind.

Conclusion

Many African countries have been exploited by developed countries as they are regarded as poor countries. China as one of those foreign countries has been engaging in diplomatic relations extensively with many of the African countries offering aids, loans, grants and investment in exchange of raw materials. In China's context, this was done as a way of offering a helping hand to stabilise African countries' economies promising non-interference with one's State of affairs and fair relations.

However, the findings of the paper proves otherwise. There have been controversies of geopolitical relations inciting China of interfering or attempting to control its diplomatic partners. Chinese government invested into Australian resources sector which helped to stabilise the economy to withstand the global recession in 2008. Given this circumstance, China started to take advantage of the geopolitical friendship by demanding a lower price of iron ore despite having its share. Australia disagreed with the price negotiations stating unlawful behaviour, as a result China detained one of the Australian executives as a way of forcing Australian government to succumb to its demands.

The United States and South Korea identified the deployment THAAD operation as a defensive measure against North Korea's ballistic missiles and its pursuit of weapons of mass destruction. China did not agree with the initiative, stating that the operation will track Chinese Military system which will

provide the US with an advantages potential military conflict. Under this avenue, China went against the initiative by halting all South Korea's trade activities which affected Lotte Group's retail stores in China to force South Korea to succumb to its demands. Moreover, China has long been having reunification feud with Taiwan due to accepting one China policy. Taiwan refused which led China to blackmail and threatens Taiwan by poaching its diplomatic partners to shift their allegiances to Beijing as a strategy to influence and constraining Taiwan.

In African continent, diplomatic relations between China and other African countries have been taking place. To mention one of the few incidences, China and Gambia entered into a treaty which included China cutting a deal of upgrading the port of Gambia which its strategic location is of great importance to China to initiate its One belt, One Road plan to promote Chinese trade routes through rail and the sea. However, there have been unfair and unsatisfactory conditions that have been set which stipulates that since Gambia has taken loans from China, should Gambia fail to settle the debts, it will lose the rights of the ownership of the port of Gambia to China. This as a result indicate a strategic use of debt which will give China total control over the Gambia's economy as the port is one of the country's economic potential infrastructure in generating more revenue.

As a result, the paper recommends that countries should seek for fair diplomatic relations threshold where transparency and accountability without disregarding their rule of law is sought at both sides when forming an alliance. This recommendation concurs with what Mlambo, Kushamba and Simawu (2016) suggested that for the China-Africa relationship to be a win-win game African leaders (countries) including Gambia should each make a reform of its policy agreement with China. Whilst entirely making each other's countries clear that not any of the country have all the necessary resources within its disposal to cater for its country's needs. Which is why even China itself has been extensively engaged in Africa seeking for geopolitical alliances using aids and investments in exchange for the African countries' resources. Thus geopolitics needs to recognise the nuances arising from incomplete interrelationships between nations with the power relations, ethics and a moral order that comes with it.

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