

GEOSTRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES - CHINA COOL WAR ON SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

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Abstract

The cooperation that characterized United States - China relations towards the fall of the 20th century gradually slurred into competition and eventually rivalry. While the United States seeks to maintain its hegemony, China on the other hand desires to upend the status quo. The resultant cool war pervades Latin America, the Asia Pacific and Africa. Being the least developed of the continents with the highest number of sovereign states as well as its endowment in raw materials and mineral deposits, Africa holds the promise of the present and that of the future for both powers therefore becoming of strategic interests to both Beijing and Washington. In spite of the long-held stronghold of the United States in Africa, China's penetration into the economy, infrastructural landscape, diplomatic and military domain in the sub-Saharan Africa tends to upset the balance setting the pace for a cool war in the region. The strategic implication this has and ways to mitigate against negative impact on African states is the very focus which this thesis seeks to explore.

Introduction

The rivalry between the United States and China is not without consequences for the rest of the world (Conteh-Morgan, 2018). Significantly affected is Africa which is at the precipice, being the least developed of the continents. Although home to the

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world's largest reservoir of mineral resources, highest number of independent states, second largest in population, and strategically located at the center of the world (Mawdsley, 2007), the continent is one of the most inundated by the effect of the contestation for influence between the great powers across the globe as a result of the present challenges posed by the war and its future threats if not contained. Having undergone slave trade, slavery, wave of colonialism and neocolonialism, and having been impacted by the Cold War and the hegemonic lead of the United States, the current powerplay which sees the rising China contesting this space with U.S foretells the geostrategic importance of the sub-region and how the emergence of China deflects the United States' linear course on the continent (Klare, & Volman, 2006). The bipolar realities and the binary appeal put forward by these Great Powers to sub-Saharan Africa typifies the dragnet from which each seeks to project her influence and advance their interests. With the confrontations in the economic and military spheres, technological and diplomatic contestations, the strategic importance of sub-Sahara Africa in redefining the present, shaping the trajectories of the future, and how these affect the region is the bedrock upon which this study situates.

The dawn of the 21st century marked a dramatic shift from the aftermath of the first and second World War that characterized the first half of the 20th century and the Cold War of its second half. The Cold War was defined by threats of military confrontations, theatres of war in Asia and Africa, and overt ideological clashes between the United States and the Soviet Union. The Cool War however takes a new dimension. It is a war between the United States and China playing out in the economic, diplomatic, technological, military and geopolitical spheres but shot of military confrontation. China is regarded by the United States as a revisionist power whose long-term aim is global supremacy and to whom the United States seeks not to voluntarily cede significant international influence (Lippert & Perthes, 2020). The long-drawn battle between the two global powers has multidimensional impact

on sub-Saharan Africa and analytical clarity is an absolute prerequisite if the sub-region is to pursue its own autonomous strategic approach to the Sino-American rivalry, as only if the multi-dimensionality of the conflict constellation is understood will appropriate political answers and necessary instruments be developed to mitigate against its harrowing implications.

Conceptual Clarification

Cool War

The term Cool War was postulated by Noah Feldman when in his speech in 2013 noted that “we are entering an era of renewed global struggle: the era of ‘Cool War’”. He further stated that just as the Cold War matched the planet’s reigning superpowers in a contest for geopolitical supremacy, so this new age will pit the United States against a rising China in a contest for dominance, alliances, and resources. Already visible in Asia, the conflict will extend to the Middle East, Africa and beyond” (Feldman, 2013). No part of the world can stay immune to the spillover effects of the growing United States – China rivalry, not in the least the sub-Saharan Africa (Lei, 2020). The Cool War between Washington and Beijing is a quest for superiority and dominance that exist between the two superpowers. It is a covert and subtle war that ensues in the areas of economy, geopolitics, arms race, currency supremacy and technological control. It is a soft war, driven not by ideology but also by the desire to influence global politics. It is the competition between the United States and China to shape security architectures, trade and financial regimes, infrastructural development, marketization, regulation of technology, global norms and practices, and the values that underlie them, across the globe (Panák, 2013). The Cool War is strategically fought in every part of the world, particularly in the sub-Sahara Africa, a region endowed with huge natural resources, highest number of independent states, a robust and growing young population. The contest for influence and dominance between the United States and China in this region hinges on the recognition of the immense potential of Africa not only of its importance for global

market but also as a source of raw materials, ally in international institutions and strategic location for military influence (Waweru, 2019).

Geostrategy

Although the concept of geostrategy was initially limited to military geography (Gyorgy, 1943), it nonetheless has evolved beyond the traditional conceptualization. Geostrategy is a key component of geopolitics. It emphasizes the actionable policies and plans a state chooses to advance its interests, defend its borders, secure alliances, and manage potential threats. It refers to the strategic planning and positioning of the state to achieve specific economic, military, technological and political goals on the global stage. It combines strategic foresight with geography, focusing on how a country's geographic location, its population, infrastructure and natural resources impact its ability to project power and influence internationally (Blouet & Hagan, 2005). To both the United States and China, the sub-Saharan Africa is strategic to the actualization of their hegemonic quest for global dominance. While the United States had enjoyed this unilaterally and seeks to maintain its hold, China seeks to shift the pendulum to create a bipolar or multipolar world in which power is diffused from the United States (Arase, 2022).

Sub-Saharan Africa

Africa occupies a central location in the world and it's endowed with mineral resources alongside other attributes which positions her in enviably to be courted by the great powers. The region referred to as sub-Saharan Africa is all of Africa except the North African states. It is composed of 49 countries. It is divided into four subgroups. Central, Eastern, Western and Southern Africa. Central Africa comprises of Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon, Western Africa states include Benin Republic, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger,

Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo. East African states include Burundi, Comoros, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mauritius, Rwanda, South Sudan, Seychelles, Sao Tome and Principe, Tanzania, Uganda and Somalia. Southern Africa comprises of Botswana, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The SSA region is widely varied in characteristics such as demography, economy, political administration, colonial legacies, history, culture, and resource endowment. While some are oil exporters such as Nigeria and Angola, some others like Congo Brazzaville, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana and South Africa are resource-intensive while many others such as Eritrea, Lesotho and Burundi are not. While some countries like Kenya, Botswana and Senegal qualify as middle-income states, some others like Chad, Niger and Uganda are low income while Sudan, Chad and Eritrea are termed fragile states (Regional Economic Outlook, Sub-Saharan Africa, 2022). The contestation for influence between the United States and China has great implications on the forty-nine sovereign states.

Statement of the Problem

The study on the contestation for power and influence between the United States and China across the world has gained traction in the Middle East, the Pacific and Latin America, considering the economic, technological, military and political dynamics of this rivalry. However, the continent of Africa whose strategic geographical location at the centre of the globe, home to the world's largest reserve of mineral deposits, has the highest percentage of young population, largest number of sovereign states, among others, positions it to play a pivotal role in the global power dynamics is yet to be explored and uncovered. As both superpowers engage in the soft power contest, this study thus becomes significant in understanding how the Cool War pans out in Africa, what strategy either power utilizes, how the competition has engendered both opportunities and risks in the sub-Saharan African and how the understanding

of this subject matter will further position each African state bilaterally and multilaterally, to minimize its risks while maximizing the benefits.

The understanding of the Cool War dynamics in sub-Sahara Africa and its underlying driving notions, ideals and principles would further inform the decision makers and leaders in making strategic choices to prevent being caught in the web of a new wave of neo-colonialism which could exacerbate existing vulnerabilities such as debt burden, economic dependency, political instability and fragmented regional landscape. This study becomes more important given recent unconstitutional control of the reins of power by military governments from erstwhile democracies in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger Republic as well as the ongoing war in Sudan. Understanding the implications of the power struggle between China and the United States will help safeguard Africa's democracy, promote peace, foster sustainable development, help navigate complex dynamics and further preserve Africa's sovereignty.

Objectives of the Study

This paper seeks to study the context and nature of the United States - China geostrategic competition in sub-Saharan Africa and its and impact on the region's political stability, diplomatic relations, economic development, technological advancement and military engagements, as well as the capacity of African states to navigate the risks and opportunities from this rivalry. It specifically seeks to:

- examine the economic relations, and financial aid policies from both countries and their long-term impacts on African economies.
- analyze the political and diplomatic strategies of the U.S. and China in Sub-Saharan Africa
- investigate the security and military engagements of the United States and China in Sub-Saharan Africa
- identify how Sub-Saharan African states can maintain strategic autonomy by balancing relations with both China

and the U.S, and avoiding over-reliance on either power, while navigating their conflicting interests.

- study how African countries can leverage the cool war for national development without compromising sovereignty, through the initiatives of regional cooperation and collective bargaining.

The understanding of the geostrategic implications of the China - United States Cool War on Sub-Saharan Africa, with a focus on how the competition between these two global powers affects the region's political, economic, and security dynamics, will help to identify strategies for African nations to navigate this evolving geopolitical landscape while preserving sovereignty and promoting sustainable development.

Research Methodology

Qualitative research methodology using a mix of primary and secondary data is employed to gain insight in the analysis of the subject matter. The comparative approach of the great powers in terms of the patterns, trends and variations help in the understanding of how the region was intended to serve both immediate and future strategic interests of both powers Africa and the resultant effect that has on the region. The content-based analysis using news articles, journals, texts, think-tank reports et cetera, draw home the implications of the United States - China Cool War in the sub-Sahara Africa.

Research Questions

This study seeks to provide answers to the following questions:

- How does the geostrategic rivalry between China and the United States shape the economic, military and political development of the sub-Saharan Africa?
- How do African states navigate the balance between China state-led infrastructure investments and the private-sector driven development programs of the United States?

- What political shifts have occurred in sub-Saharan Africa due to the influence of China and the United States during the Cool War?
- What are the security implications of China and the United States military engagements in Sub-Saharan Africa?
- How does the competition between China and the United States in telecommunications and technology infrastructure affect Sub-Saharan Africa's digital development?
- What strategies can sub-Saharan African countries employ to maintain strategic autonomy amid the geopolitical rivalry between China and the U.S.?
- What are the long-term implications of the China-U.S. rivalry for Sub-Saharan Africa's governance, economic stability, and regional integration?

Offensive Realism: A Theoretical Framework

The rise of China as a global power has significantly altered the geopolitical landscape, leading to a complex and multifaceted competition with the United States, often termed the "cool war." (Steinsson, 2014). This essay utilizes the framework of Offensive Realism, a theoretical perspective in international relations that emphasizes power maximization and the inherent anarchy of the international system, to analyze the geostrategic implications of this rivalry in Sub-Saharan Africa. By examining the motivations and actions of both powers in the region, the essay reveals how their competitive strategies influence local dynamics, regional stability, and the broader global order. Ultimately, it argues that the cool war is reshaping the geopolitical landscape of Sub-Saharan Africa, with profound implications for its development and sovereignty.

The United States-China rivalry represents one of the most significant geopolitical challenges of the 21st century, characterized by economic competition, military posturing, and ideological clashes (Mearsheimer, 2010). As both nations vie for global supremacy, their focus on Sub-Saharan Africa has intensified, revealing the strategic importance of the region. Utilizing Offensive Realism as a theoretical lens, this study

explores how the anarchic structure of the international system drives both powers to maximize their influence in Africa. By analyzing their respective strategies, it highlights the implications of this competition for African nations and the broader geopolitical order.

Professor John Mearsheimer in his book “The tragedy of Great Power Politics” (Mearsheimer, 2003) posits that the anarchic nature of the international system compels states to seek power and security aggressively. This theory rests on some core assumptions:

- that states operate in an anarchic environment where their survival is paramount. This condition drives states to prioritize their security and interests above all else.
- that states are rational actors who seek to maximize their power relative to others, viewing the international arena as a competitive space where strength and influence are essential for survival.
- that the pursuit of power by one state can lead to insecurity among others, prompting an escalation of tensions and competition. This dilemma is particularly relevant in regions where multiple powers contend for influence.
- that states will strategically position themselves in regions of geopolitical importance, seeking to secure resources, allies, and economic opportunities.

United States’ Interests in Africa

During the decades of the Cold War, many African states fought for and gained independence in an era polarized by war of ideology (Farias, 2007). The United States and the Soviet Union contested for the heart and soul of the independent states through the instrumentality of capitalism and communism, democracy and socialism, economic resources – loans, aids, grants etc, and military hardware. The United States’ promotion of democratic governance, human rights, freedom of speech won over the government controlled-economy of the Soviet Union (Oberdorfer, 1998). By the turn of the century the United

States was perceived by many observers as undoubtedly the single power in world politics and in the world economy. The US bestrode the globe like a colossus. It dominated business, commerce and communication; its economy is the world's most successful, its military might second to none. Kagan and Kristol argued that "Today's international system is built not around a balance of power but around American hegemony" (Pan, 2004).

United States engagement with Africa in the post-Cold War era remained unchanged, using military cooperation and foreign aid as means of fostering stability in the region (Crockatt, 2002). US foreign policy in Africa, however, has been unsteady and reactive, allowing events and crises to drive policy. US administrations struggle with Africa policy because of the inconsistent attention paid to the continent by senior policymakers and their reluctance to consult regularly with a broad range of African leaders. This results in a failure to clarify regional interests and establish a broad national consensus on the ways and means to secure them. This failure, in turn, compromises the focus, sophistication, and potential for success of efforts to secure US regional interests in Africa. US policymakers have not been able to articulate a coherent national security strategy for the region that clearly identifies regional interests and then specifies appropriate ways and means to secure them. As a result, regional use of the instruments of US power—such as diplomacy, military assistance, and economic aid has not been well coordinated. Nevertheless, continuing US activities in the region suggest that Americans agree that there are interests worth pursuing in Africa, whether or not the interests are articulated in any official medium, and even if commitment to these interests is sometimes transient and media-driven (Hentz, 2004).

The United States commits significant public-sector resources to advance or protect its foreign policy end in sub-Saharan Africa. These foreign policy objectives include regional stability, access to key institutions, facilities, and economic opportunity, a region free of weapons of mass destruction, transnational

threats, and a sustained economic development. US relations with Africa has almost always been defined by exogenous factors, it has been so within competing master narratives of US foreign policy. These are realpolitik or geopolitics and humanitarianism. And to further deepen its ties however, economic and diplomatic relations between the U.S and sub-Saharan Africa was strengthened in the early 21st century through economic initiatives such as the Agricultural Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) which was introduced at the beginning of the 21st century by President Bill Clinton. Power Africa by President Barack Obama and Prosper Africa by President Donald Trump. American economic involvement in the region expanded. Africa emerged as strategic following the vast array of its mineral deposits, population growth and numeric strength in the United Nations General Assembly. There were also concerns that stemmed from rising terrorism, regional conflicts, and piracy at the sea coast around Africa. This necessitated the establishment of military base at the Horn of Africa that eventually became the United States African Command (AFRICOM) headquartered in Djibouti from where the U.S spread its military operations to other parts of Africa. Africa became more viewed through strategic lens dominated by security concerns, regional conflict. AFRICOM has been involved in counterterrorism efforts across the Sahel, East Africa, the Gulf of Guinea and other volatile regions, making American engagement heavily security-focused. But of vital importance to American relations with African states were the basic foundations such as democracy, rule of law, fundamental human rights, transparency and accountability.

China's Initiatives and Investments in Africa

China had established its presence in Africa since the Cold War era (Gu, Humphrey, & Messner, 2008), but it was not until the end of the century that it began having a surging foothold in Africa through the establishment of its multinational Forum on Africa and China in the year 2000. By 2004 Chinese investors had established businesses in 49 African countries and had

invested a total of \$1.2 billion mainly in joint venture enterprises in these countries in activities particularly in mining, petroleum, telecommunications, manufacturing, trade, electronic industries, textiles, transportation, construction and other infrastructural development projects. The main destinations of Chinese investments in Africa are South Africa, Algeria, Sudan, Nigeria, Zambia, and Angola. By 2008 the number of sizeable Chinese enterprises in Africa had reached about 800 (Berndsen and Pennington 2008). It improved on its bilateral and multilateral trade relations with sub-Saharan Africa, coordinated diplomatic relations, began massive investment in infrastructure drive, particularly on the Belt and Road Initiative spanning three continents. The BRI connects ports, roads and railway lines in sub-Saharan Africa enabling China to gain access to mineral resources, rare metals, mines and agricultural farmlands. China thus establishes itself as a strategic partner changing the narrative that was once unilaterally dominated by the United States. China's aid, investment and loans to African states, with the sole political preconditions for these relations being the recognition of One-China policy (Rotberg, 2009), became a veritable alternative to Western aid and loans. China's interest rates on loans are lower unlike the Western counterparts whose conditions are tied to the advancement of democracy, human right and transparency.

China's Africa interest is an international strategy based on multipolarity and consequently shifting the global balance of power in its favor (Tull, 2006). Beijing's motives are clear: China's growing industries demand new energy and raw material supplies; its exports want market expansion; it requires support in international organizations, seeks support from allies to advance Chinese interests and, when necessary, to counter the United States. Africa thus became central to these strategies. The search for resources takes Chinese officials to commodity-rich Africa home to major oil producers, including Nigeria, Sudan, Angola, and Gabon, as well as some of the richest deposits of Minerals (Eisenman & Kurlantzick, 2006). Dwindling domestic Chinese petroleum and mineral deposits

coupled with rapid Chinese economic growth encouraged Beijing to look abroad for resources. According to data from Bindman (2023), Chinese companies own critical mineral mines dotted across Africa, whereas US companies, by contrast, are a lot less present.

Interest Divergence between China and the United States in Sub-Sahara Africa

Sub-Sahara Africa became a hotbed for convergence and contestation of powers with the geopolitical rivalry having profound implications on the region. Leading the economic front is China with its increasing robust investment and infrastructural development against the backdrop of United States initiatives for growth in the private sector and the consolidation of good governance. The competing efforts to establish strategic presence, provide military aids and trainings, build alliances, and establish bases with military contingents are also the manifestation of the Cool War between the United States and China. In the same vein, the competition for influence on the African states comes with the policy of non-interference by China, strengthening its ties with all African states irrespective of the system of government in practice while the United States underpins its relation with African states on the rule of law and accountability.

The complexity of this intricate geopolitical environment provides African states with opportunities as well as challenges. The competition between the United States and China for influence offers African states the leverage of choice in decision making. This is no more profound in the decision for economic support - loan procurement, establishment of manufacturing firms, fostering trade relations, the funding of capital projects and infrastructural investments. Africa has had to make choices, mainly between China and the United States, with its favorable disposition to either of them often precluding the other. This is also true of the quest for military assistance from the two superpowers. There are also growing concerns of sub-Sahara Africa over its reliance on U.S for security assistance to deter

aggression, combat insurgency and secure the borders. While the United States has the edge in military assistance and support over China in Africa, the reverse is the case in the economy (Qobo, M., & Qobo, M2022).

The question of whether African states can navigate the murky waters of United States - China strategic contestation for power without a devastating effect on the autonomy and economy of African states becomes central in the face of the seemingly unending rivalry. The continent once embroiled in superpower conflicts during the Cold War era has strived to avoid being drawn into a renewed superpower conflict. During the Cold War, the United States and the Soviet Union fought proxy battles in Africa as the region became a theatre for contestations of ideological and military experimentation. The effect of the power contest was the gloomy past marked by political destabilization and loss of lives of many African leaders. Although African leaders today seek the economic and infrastructural developments accruals from relations with China, they also seek not to jeopardize their relations with the United States thereby maintaining a delicate balance between the two competing interests.

Needless stating, the United States - China Cool War carries broader implications for the trajectory of Africa's development. And as such, there has been the question of whether the promotion of private-sector driven growth by the United States can provide an alternative to China's state-backed trade and infrastructure investments. There also is a pertinent concern that African states will be strategic in deciding the management of Chinese capital inflow without being entangled in debt burdens that could jeopardize their long-term economic development. Of importance also is the technological dimension of the rivalry as the tech industry once dominated by American companies are now overtaken by China owned companies, building the continent's telecommunications infrastructure and playing leading roles. The United States failure to prevent African governments to reject Chinese technology on the grounds of national security, thus, presents a new layer of

complexity. African states have however been shrewd in meeting their technological needs by adopting cutting-edge technologies and navigating the competing supplies while managing geopolitical risk involved.

The intersection of Chinese and American interests in East and Central Africa has brought about the militarization of the region. This is largely due to the massive Chinese infrastructural projects as well as the need by the United States for the securitization of the territorial waters in the Horn from endemic piracy. The resultant military presence of both powers in the region demands that relationships between African governments in the sub-region and the two superpowers are carefully managed (Conteh-Morgan, 2018). This would prevent African states from being caught in a web of security dilemma that could have destabilizing effect on the region. It is also pertinent for African states to employ necessary mechanisms to internally address the souring scourge of terrorism and other forms of conflicts which fan the ember of foreign intervention which ultimately may further polarize the region. Balancing external engagements with local solutions in addressing internal security problems is a major challenge that need be addressed by African leaders.

Dynamics of the US-China Rivalry in Sub-Saharan Africa

The competition between the United States and China in Sub-Saharan Africa is multifaceted, encompassing economic, political, and security dimensions. Both powers recognize the region's strategic significance, characterized by its vast natural resources, growing markets, and geopolitical importance in global supply chains (Benabdallah, 2023). On one hand is China which has significantly increased its presence in Sub-Saharan Africa through extensive investments, infrastructure projects, and trade partnerships. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) exemplifies China's approach, focusing on developing infrastructure and facilitating trade links to enhance its global influence. From an Offensive Realism perspective, China's economic engagement in Africa is a strategy to secure vital

resources such as oil, minerals, and agricultural products. By establishing economic footholds, China enhances its global position and reduces dependency on traditional trade routes controlled by Western powers. China's engagement also aims to cultivate political alliances with African nations, promoting a model of governance that emphasizes non-interference and economic development. This approach contrasts sharply with the U.S. emphasis on democracy and human rights, allowing China to appeal to a diverse array of African governments, including authoritarian regimes (Wang, 2020).

In response to China's growing influence, the United States has sought to reassert its presence in Sub-Saharan Africa, employing a mix of diplomatic, economic, and military strategies. The US has intensified efforts to strengthen alliances with African nations by promoting trade agreements, investment initiatives, and development assistance. Programs like Power Africa and Prosper Africa were launched by Presidents Barack Obama and Donald Trump respectively in addition to the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) of President Bill Clinton in 2000. President Biden held the second United States - Africa Leaders' Summit in December 2022, eight years after the one held by President Obama in 2014. These reflect a strategy to foster economic ties that counterbalance the growing Chinese influence in Africa.

In addition, the U.S. has increased its military presence in the region, conducting joint exercises, providing training to local forces, and countering terrorist threats. This military engagement serves to reassure allies and deter potential Chinese military expansionism, aligning with the notion of Offensive Realism that power projection is essential for maintaining influence. As such, actions taken by one power to enhance its security lead to increased tensions and insecurity for the other. This typifies the security dilemma in the United States - China rivalry in Sub-Saharan Africa and the competitive dynamics it engenders. While the United States has maintained a strong military presence in the region through the multiplicity of military bases since 2007, China was able to have its military

presence ten years after in 2017 at Bab-el-Mandeb, Djibouti. It is the only China military base in Africa compared to the United States' in six sub-Sahara Africa located in Djibouti, Kenya, Chad, Cameroon, Seychelles and Somalia (Lohalo, et al, 2022).

However, just like the United States is unmatched by China in military spread and capacity in the sub-region, China also edges out the United States in economic and infrastructural deepened relations. Aside China's grand swell in the two sectors, it also commands a grasp in technology, telecommunications, mineral exploration and exploitation, and diplomacy in Africa which may take many years of United States aggressive intervention to undo or out-perform. China's efforts to bridge the gap and override each other's influence results in the competition for resources and diplomatic engagements which may lead to economic dependencies that undermine the sovereignty of African nations. African states may find themselves caught in a web of debt and obligations to either power, limiting their ability to navigate a balanced foreign policy.

Geostrategic Implications of U.S - China Cool War for Sub-Saharan Africa

The U.S.-China cool war has significant geostrategic implications for Sub-Saharan Africa, with attendant effect on the economy, political landscape, infrastructural development, military capacity building and regional stability. Unarguably, the involvement of the United States in post-Cold War era has significantly contributed to political stability in the sub-Saharan African region. During the Cold War era, political instability orchestrated by incessant military putsch left the region with the most precarious political system characterized by destabilization, government failures, policy inconsistency, wanton killings, terrorism, transnational crimes and lots more. These were partly due to the rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union. In the aftermath of the Cold War, the United States invested in the establishment of democratic governance leading to more government stability, respect for

rule of law, improved living standard and stemming of terrorism. In its fight against terrorism especially after the 9/11 attack. The United States established military bases across sub-Saharan Africa states as a push-back mechanism to guard against the spread of terrorism in the region.

While the United States was intent on a secure political system and military establishment devoid of the many crisis of the previous years, China on the other hand was bent on harvesting the economic promises of the sub-continent leveraging on the low economic presence of the United States in the region. China's interest in Africa is driven mainly by its quest for oil and other natural resources to feed its fast-growing industries (Taylor, 2007). This is evidenced in the nature and destination of Chinese investments and trade in Africa. The oil-rich Sudan, for instance, attracts disproportionately high Chinese investments despite the international community's concerns over Darfur. The China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) secured exploration rights in Sudan through its 40 percent stake in the Greater Nile Petroleum Operating Company. China invested over \$8 billion in oil exploration contracts in the Sudan. Same is true of Chinese investments in petroleum industries in Nigeria, Gabon and Angola. China's investments spurred economic growth and infrastructure development in sub-Saharan Africa. The rivalry and quest to outdo each other in influence, diplomatic and economic relations have been a push factor that brought sub-Saharan Africa out of obscurity into the status of strategic partner to both the United States and China. Chinese investments in sectors where the United States had been reluctant have largely boosted African economies. These sectors include infrastructural development, manufacturing, both oil and non-oil mineral exploration and exploitation, agriculture, road and rail construction projects and lots more. Chinese investments in Africa are dominated by the use of large numbers of Chinese workers. This is a great concern to Africans because for most Africans the only visible benefit of foreign investments, particularly investments directed towards the exploitation of

Africa's natural resources, is the employment of locals in their respective communities. This is largely so because these natural resources are usually exported in their raw state and processed outside Africa with no added value. Having a huge presence of Chinese nationals in African states as their immediate employment workforce preclude Africans from participating in employment opportunities. With no direct economic impact of Chinese establishments, little could be said to be the advantage of Africans in Chinese owned establishments in Africa.

Sub-Sahara Africa in the Eye of the Storm

The rivalry between the two great powers influences political alignments within African states, as governments usually feel pressured to choose between economic presence and viability of China and political and military sophistication and might of the United States. Both powers are significant to the economic, infrastructural, military and political development of Africa. Africa remains the poorest continent. Greater trade and investment are critical in curtailing its rising unemployment which has stoked more social and political tensions, leading to violent unrest. Africa remains marginalized from the global economy, representing just three percent of world trade. African leaders, in both government and business, recognize the importance of the U.S. market, the sectoral leadership of many U.S. companies, and the high standards of U.S. businesses. They also recognize the volume, diversity and spread of Chinese companies in Africa especially as it relates to taking the bull run where most American businesses are bearish. This include not just the infrastructure but also the telecommunications, mining, agriculture, heavy duty machineries etc.

Most African countries desire good relations with both the United States and China, wanting to avoid fallout from major power rivalry. While the relations with the United States is desirable for its military and political ideals, economic relation with China is near necessity for its spread, diversity and dynamics. This requires skills in the management of the relations

between the two great powers, to maximize the gains while mitigating against the shortfall of the Cool War effect on African states. To this end, political and economic sovereignty is primary among considerations of African states in its relations with both powers. The long walk towards political freedom and independence through struggles, demonstrations, and even wars were priceless treasured moments that African states dread to recur. Protecting the political sovereignty of African states to prevent degeneration into similar colonial experiences thus become compass through which African states conduct their relations with these superpowers.

Political Sovereignty

With both powers seeking to court the sub-Saharan Africa for its strategic importance and possibly influence its political, economic and diplomatic stance, it is therefore expedient that African states are equally strategic in their relations first in the preservation of their autonomy and sovereignty in the present and in future. This requires that African states only sign agreements and engage in trade deals, critical minerals, telecommunications, military operations, trainings etc., without compromising its political and economic sovereignty. This also means that African states must not enter into any agreements that tend to jeopardize their future independent status or cede any part of their territory to any of their partners. Thus, all documents, treaties, agreements, memoranda of understandings must be carefully vetted and critically examined and interpreted before they are signed. This will safeguard African states from being encumbered in baits that could jeopardize their future sovereign status. Political sovereignty is of great concern given the deep ties that exist between African states and both powers. While the United States has been on the vanguard of promoting democracy and the rule of law, it is often accused of its political meddling in Africa especially in the choice of African leaders (Herbst, 2014). Although China states unequivocally of its non-interference stance in the political activities of sovereign states, it nonetheless has projected

inclinations considering its recent land disputes with Philippines, India, and the seizure of Zambia assets in the face of her failure to meet her financial obligations to her Chinese creditor (Carmody, 2020). Should that continue unchecked, African states which are unable to cope with their financial obligations may be forced to lose their assets and by extension, sovereignty. In 2008, significant moment in the Sino-Ethiopian economic relations occurred when both countries signed an important agreement aimed at creating an industrial zone, known as Special Economic Zone (SEZ) (Giannecchini & Taylor, 2018). The SEZ is located in Dukem, 37kilometres southeast of Addis Ababa, an initiative that encompasses an area of about 5km², featuring the building of twenty factories specializing in the making of a wide range of products like textiles, shoes, and electric equipment, creating roughly 20,000 new jobs in the process. Ethiopian government handed over the entire SEZ to Chinese zone developers (Rohne, 2013). As a result, the Ethiopian government does not assert any ownership in this special economic zone. Chinese stakeholders namely, Jiangsu Quiyuan Group, a private Chinese investor, owns 100% of the SEZ (Tyson, 2018; Rohne, 2013). This is indicative of red flag alert in the China – Africa relations in which future considerations must be factored in present relations.

Economic Considerations

Foremost in any international relations is the pursuit of their foreign policy which is in no way altruistic. Both United States and China have their primary interest to protect which is the maximization of their economic as well as political interests. To this end, the investments, trade, aids, cultural relations are aimed towards these objectives. It is therefore important that African states conducts its diplomatic and economic relations in the light of goals maximization which should be aimed towards economic and infrastructural development to the intent that it improves the wellbeing of the citizens. Creation of employment opportunities, improved living conditions, mitigating against health hazards and diseases, facilitating

enhanced security must be central to African relations with the great powers. While the United States has championed the cause of human rights and improved living condition as well as generously donating aids to combat disease such as malaria, HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and providing relief to those who suffer humanitarian crisis due to natural and man-made occurrences (Lynch, 2022), China has on the other hand been pivotal to infrastructural development in the construction of roads, rail lines, especially the Belt and Road Initiative which connects many African states to Europe and Asia (Yi-Chong, 2008). While these partnerships are in themselves gratifying and developmental in nature, African states must ensure they are tied to the development of the states and not only designed for the benefit of the great powers.

Strategic Balance of Power

The engagement of great powers in Africa is not limited to immediate pursuit of their foreign policy objectives but also to strategically upend the balance of power in their interest. While the United States held the sway since the end of the Cold War, China has sought to shift this narrative in its favor. This accounts for its robust economic engagement in that it surpassed both the United States and Europe in term of its engagement in Africa. Its investment drive, in manufacturing, trade and infrastructure are a testament as well as sale of military hardware to African states restates its unflinching focus in the actualization of this strategic goal. As noted earlier, Africa has 30% of world reserves and its young population among others, are strategic to future global considerations. Having huge control over these deposits spread all over Africa and maintaining unfavorable balance of trade with the sub-Saharan region would no doubt confer on China the African hegemon which may have unsolicited consequences on the region. Among others, it must be noted that China's political orientation is communist while that of all African states is democratic. With China making gains in its pushed advised alternative model, African states may ultimately be falling into anti-democratic

governance just as it is being witnessed in Burkina Faso, Mali, Chad and Niger Republic. It is therefore expedient that African states maintain a balance in their relations with both powers and avoid lopsidedness in their relations which may come with unexpected consequences.

Conclusion

The emergence of the United States as the unipolar power at the fall of the 20th century cast a shadow on global politics as there began the rise of China at the early 21st century. The sporadic rise in China to challenge United States hegemony as did the Soviet Union threw the world in another contest akin to the Cold War era. The Cool War as it is so defined by Noah Feldman is a rivalry between Beijing and Washington for influence, control, supremacy and counter-supremacy between the two global powers across continents of Latin America, Asia Pacific and Africa. The United States – China cool war has an array of geostrategic implications in sub-Saharan Africa which requires that the states take precautionary and preemptive measures to mitigate against undesired future consequences on the sub-region. While the United States had extensive relations with the sub-Saharan Africa by instituting democratic ideals in post-colonial Africa and preserving human rights, providing aids and humanitarian assistance to African states, China on the other hand massively began and consolidated investment drive at the dawn of the 21st century with the launch of the Forum on China – African Cooperation. This initiative led to the political recognition of One China policy among nearly all the fifty-four members African states. China's economic, political and military inroads into African states led to it becoming the foremost trade partner with Africa, displacing the orthodox holds of the United States and Europe. Beijing's investment in risk laden sectors where the United States hesitated soon made China a dominant partner in Africa. China maintains asymmetric trade relations with sub-Saharan Africa with its investment in mineral exploitation, infrastructural development, rail, road, that constitute the Belt and Road

Initiative. However, China's strategic positioning is not without adverse implications for both the United States and Africa. This thus requires that preemptive measures be taken to mitigate unwanted dislocation in the balance of power and its attendant effect in the region.

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