

A person in a dark suit and patterned tie is shown from the chest down, holding a small globe of the Earth in their right hand and a pen in their left hand. The background is a soft-focus grey. The text is overlaid on a semi-transparent dark grey rectangular area.

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Review

Dialectics and social transformation in modern political thought: A comparative study of Hegel and Marx

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Whereas Hegel and Marx subscribed to the central role of the dialectics in the historical development of society, they held different standpoints on certain fundamental issues. This study identifies and examines the critical issues and how they contribute to the development of the duo's respective ideas on social transformation. In doing this, the study relies on documentary instrument of data generation and the technique of constant comparative analysis to underline the underlying uniformities and differences on the dialectics and social transformational content of Hegel and Marx. The study reaffirms that despite identifiable shortcomings, on the balance, dialectics, particularly Marxian dialectics remains an option, indeed a useful tool in philosophical analysis of not only how the world works, but a means on how to change it.

Key words: Dialectics, materialism, idealism, social transformation.

INTRODUCTION

Georg W. F. Hegel, 1770 to 1831 and Karl Marx 1818 to 1883, are among the best known beneficiaries of dialectic method and easily the most influential German political theorists. A political thinker of the first half of the nineteenth century often periodized as the metaphysical stage of the modern period (Biereenu-Nnabugwu, 2013), Hegel was thrilled by the French revolution which occurred while he was in his teens in 1789. The event did not only make impressions on him, but constitute a logical fulcrum to Hegel's contention that "the history of the world is none other than the progress of the consciousness of freedom" (McClean, 2003). Karl Marx's writings belonged to the historical-comparative stage of the modern period. Understandably, Marx was profoundly

historical, analytical and comparative; this in turn provided him with veritable platform to put forward an outstanding political theory that sought to explain the law governing the development of human society. Marx and his friend Engels devoted their attention to the scientific analysis of capitalism. His method of analysis has had profound impact not only political theorization but also on the dialectics of social transformation.

This study is a comparative analysis of the place of dialectic method in the thought content of Hegel and Marx. In political analysis, comparative method involves rigorous examination of political phenomenon so as to establish similarities and differences (Biereenu-Nnabugwu, 2008). The method enables one to identify

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what is common and uncommon to the two or more phenomena in question. By and large, this paper identifies and examines the views associated with or canvassed by both Hegelian and Marxian dialectics and interrogates their social transformation narratives.

Contextual and conceptual discourses

A wide variety of literature on what constitutes thought in politics or political thought and its character has been accumulated. As pointed out in Biereenu-Nnabugwu (2014), a major character of political thought is that it focuses on the political ideas or thinking of the articulate section of a social formation or community over a certain period. Along this part, Thomson (1969) points out that political thought is better understood by relating it to the context of time, place and personality in which it occurred. The import of this is that political thought takes place within specific environment or what Johari (1987) refers to as the confines of a 'whole community'. Furthermore, though political thought is not detachable from the specific environment or community in which it germinates, it is important to note that the ultimate value or significance of political thought lies not only on its logical interpretation of events in relation to the specific community but really on the fact that those interpretations are also found applicable at other times and places (Thorson, 1969). Having said that, it is also important to point out that the ideas of a great thinker are not necessarily or even probably 'representative' of the thought of his time. Along the line argued in Biereenu-Nnabugwu (2014), this is typically the case with Niccolo Machiavelli and Karl Marx, and of course Hegel. The use of the dialectics or the dialectical method in philosophical analysis has been a central feature of philosophy since antiquity. As a method of argument, dialectics proved to be a useful tool for resolving disagreement. It worked by juxtaposing two contradictory standpoints that continue to cancel out each other through reasoned argument until they reach a meeting point where a new point of view develops, which is the 'truth' being sought. However, Hegel, the great German philosopher, took the dialectical method a step further by trying to locate its role in the historical development of society. After Hegel came, Marx did not only revise Hegelian dialectics but also gave philosophy a new and active role (Popkin and Stroll, 1981). For Marx "philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point, however is to change it" (Marx, 1977).

Dialectic (also dialectics or the dialectical method) is 'traditionally' a method of argument for resolving disagreement.

According to Engels, dialectics has its origin in early Greek philosophy, in the ideas of Heraclitus of Ephesus (540 to 480 BC) who held that "everything is and is not, for everything is fluid, is constantly changing, coming into

being and passing away. All is flux and nothing stays still. Nothing endures but change" (Mukkerjee and Ramaswamy, 2007) In his *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), Kant, argues that the word "dialectic" to the ancient Greeks was nothing but "the logic of illusion," by which he meant that "the ancient Greeks used the word 'dialectic' to signify the logic of false appearance or semblance" ("Dialectic," 2014, "Western dialectical forms," para.1). According to him, it was "...a sophistical art for giving ignorance, nay, even intentional sophistries, the colouring of truth, in which the thoroughness of procedure which logic requires was imitated, and their topic employed to cloak the empty pretensions"(Kant, 2010).

In Western scholarship, the acclaimed originator of dialectic orientation and method is Socrates, 469 to 399 B.C. Undeniably, one of the greatest thinkers of ancient Greece, Socrates is also the intellectual father and grandfather of Plato and Aristotle respectively. As argued by Biereenu-Nnabugwu (2005, 2007), Socrates was also one of the best known beneficiaries of Ethio-Egyptian Mystery School System. Socrates' dialectics is unique in its logical system and orientation. Also known as Socratic Method, the doctrine of opposites or thesis and anti-thesis; Socrates' dialectics enabled Socrates to arrive at the basic truths of his inquiry. A major characteristic of Socrates' dialectic according to Popkin and Stroll (1981), Igwe (2005), is that it usually began by proposing a thesis in an argument, opposed by a case contrary – that is, antithetical to the thesis – with both the contrary arguments (thesis and antithesis) being reconciled in a synthesis. This, in turn reconstitutes into yet other thesis in a higher order of argument, and continues infinitely until total and perfect knowledge, truth or solution is arrived at.

The aim of Socratic dialectics is usually to elicit information from the unconscious possessor of information using his dialectic style. As an orientation in political analysis, the onus of proof or falsification lay with the other interlocutor through the contradiction which, he himself confirmed in his argument (Igwe, 2005). In this way, Socrates' method discusses and goes beyond sophistry and its deliberate application of superficial plausible and spacious arguments in disputes and reasoning generally.

The credit for popularizing the dialectics in the classical period goes to Plato who used his dialogues in bringing the idea into the sphere of logical reasoning ("Dialectic," 2014). Although Aristotle argued that it was the pre-Socratic philosopher, Zeno of Elea (490 to 430 BC) who invented it and laid the foundation thereby for its adoption by subsequent philosophers, the purpose of the dialectic method in the classical period did move a step away from its worth as a tool employed by the Sophists of ancient Greece in teaching and demonstrating oratorical skills, to becoming a method of reasoning for resolving disagreement through rational discussion, leading to the discovery of some form of truth' (*Dialectic*, 2014).

This way of looking at the dialectics lingered throughout the medieval era during which philosophers mainly sought to unite religion with classical philosophy, until Hegel and, much later, Marx, both writing in modern times, revisited the idea, but this time in relation to society as a whole. It is interesting to note that dialectic thought system and orientation of Socrates is manifest in latter works of notable political thinkers and analysts in Western scholarship ... Hegel's metaphysical dialectics and Marxian dialectical materialism constitute *ne plus ultra* or typical examples of the influence.

Over the years, attempts such as those of Sabine and Thorson (1973), Ejembi (1983) and Obasi (1999) have been made to classify them into period groups the growth of human thought. For us however, the growth or development of political thought is an evolutionary process encapsulating four broad periods, namely, classical, medieval, modern and contemporary periods. In specific terms, "the modern period span from the end of the fifteen century to about the end of the nineteen century" (Biereenu-Nnabugwu, 2013). From 1500 to 1800, termed the metaphysical stage of the modern period, political thinkers notably Machiavelli, social contract writers and Hegel, relied heavily on metaphysical, secular, deductive and abstract devices to explain the nature and need for state. The second leg and last stage in the period of modern political thought is the historical comparative stage. As the name suggests, it is essentially historical, analytical and comparative. Within this stage Marx, in company of his friend Engels devoted their attention to the scientific analysis of capitalism much as they sought to explain the law governing the development of human society.

The relevance and uniqueness of the Hegelian and Marxist dialectics when compared with other forms stem from the fact that they make the whole society their object of study, and try to interpret its historical development, albeit differently. This study takes a look at Hegel and Marx on dialectics and social transformation with view to finding out what they have in common and what they see differently.

Hegelian dialectics and social transformation

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, a German idealist philosopher, often referred as "one of the most influential thinkers of the 19th century (Baird, 2009) was schooled in Greek and Roman classics at the Stuttgart gymnasium (preparatory school). He completed a course of study in philosophy and theology at the University of Tubingen in 1788. In 1818, after having held other teaching appointments, he was invited to lecture at the University of Berlin where he remained until his demise. Among his most important works are: *The Phenomenology of Mind* (1807), *the Science of Logic* (1812 to 16), *the Philosophy of Right* (1821) and a host of others (Hampshire-Monk,

1992; Fraser in Mclean, 2003; Igwe, 2005).

Hegel's most important achievement in the realm of philosophical thought is perhaps his reviving of the concept of dialectics as a tool for cognizing the world and its historical processes. According to Mukherjee and Ramaswamy (2007) "it was Hegel who offered a systematic exposition of the concept." As a historicist, he believed that the world is a continuous unfolding of history and, therefore, in constant motion. This view drove him to further explore the nature of this 'motion' and what might be responsible for it. It is at this point that the concept of dialectics, though retaining something of the old, came in handy. It has been noted at the outset of this paper that the dialectics was originally a method of resolving disagreement through a process of rational discussion. It worked by countering a standpoint by introducing its opposite or contradictory standpoint such that in the end, the new standpoint that evolves retains something of the two opposing standpoints while at the same time resolving the disagreement. It resolves the disagreement because it does not entirely discard the initial standpoints of opposing parties, but creates something new which is superior and satisfying.

Hegel adopted, re-tooled and applied this principle in the process of explaining how social transformation or changes take place. He did this by extending the scope of consideration of the dialectical method to cover human society as a whole, while retaining its key principle of "the conflict of opposites." Hence, just like in a dialectical conversation with opposing ideas that are eventually reconciled at a higher level of 'truth', what we call history, for Hegel, is nothing but a product of the conflict of opposites in society. As Afanasyev (1980) points out.

Hegel evolved the basic laws of dialectics governing the development of ideas and thoughts. He showed that the development of ideas did not follow a closed circuit, but rose from lower to higher forms, that quantitative changes turned into qualitative ones in this process and that contradictions were the source of development.

Next, Hegel tried to establish the source of this conflict. At this point he turned to the cultures of different societies and the ideas they espoused, (as we shall see later, a major point of divergence between him and Marx who would rather substitute 'national cultures' for 'the system of productive forces' and "ideas" for "social classes"), noting that the conflict of ideas in historic cultures is the real driver of social change or transformation, hence shaping history (Sabine and Thorson, 1973). As Schumaker (2008) observes "In very general terms, Hegel proposed that historical progress occurred as societies acquired ever better understandings of such values as freedom and equality through the conflict of old ideas (called theses) with their opposites (antitheses)". Hegel supported his claims by showing how:

The ideas that supported the highly un-free and unequal

conditions of slaveholding societies were opposed by antithetical ideas of freedom and equality, and the first synthesis of these contrasting ideas occurred in feudal society where serfs remained bound to their masters (the nobility) but the domination of nobles over serfs was less complete than that of slaveholders over slaves and the inequalities among these classes were attenuated by the greater obligations that nobles owed serfs (Schumaker: 114).

It has been argued elsewhere though that Hegel never used the triadic formulation of 'thesis, antithesis and synthesis' in his exposition on the dialectics. This usage has been attributed to Heinrich Moritz Chalybaus, the 19th century German philosopher and exegetist (*Dialectic*, 2014). According to this source, "Hegel did use a three-valued logical model" that were "very similar to the antithesis model," but his "most usual terms were: Abstract-Negative-Concrete," which appear "in many of his works." (*Hegelian Dialectic*, para.2). Another triad attributed to Hegel from which he derived his dialectics is: Immediate-Mediate-Concrete (The Phenomenology of Spirit, 2014). In the foregoing triads, as in the numerous triadic arrangements that appear in his writings, Hegel was probably trying to show how an idea that immediately occur to our senses appear vague or too intangible to be comprehended, (which is 'the negative' or its own contradiction), hence, requiring some form of concretisation, which come through the mediative function of the rational processes of the mind. Thus for Hegel, "The process of development is from immediate to mediate, from what it is implicitly to what it is explicitly" (Hegel, 2001). Schumaker (2008) sums up the crux of Hegelian dialectics in relation to social transformation as follows:

In short, Hegel thought that better social and political ideas emerged when deficient understandings (theses) encountered their opposite understandings (antitheses) and were resolved by better understandings (syntheses). The dialectical process of ever improving world, according to Hegel, result in a post-historical stage- an "end of history" - where all deficient ideas would have been overcome and humans would be governed by absolutely correct ideas, by pure rationality.

This brings us to another important aspect of Hegelian dialectics in which again he differs significantly from Marx. And this has to do with how ideas which eventually grow into noticeable conflicting elements come to be in the first place. It is here that we are introduced to Hegel's idea of the Absolute or Absolute Spirit. Quite reminiscent of the ideas of Plato on 'the Good', the idea of the Absolute, or Absolute Spirit as conceived by Hegel represents "...reality, or the total developmental process of everything that is...." (Baird, 2009). In other words, Hegel perceived the Absolute as pure 'Thought' or

'Consciousness', which, however, can and does manifest itself both in nature and in human history. He averred, therefore, that "Nature is Absolute Thought or Being objectifying itself in material form. Finite minds and human history are the process of the Absolute manifesting itself in that which is most kin to itself, namely, spirit or consciousness" (*Dialectic*, para.2).

Hegel's foregoing analysis on the nature of the absolute brings us face to face with three important postulations of his which formed the basis of a counter theory enunciated by Karl Marx years later:

Firstly, that human history is a continuous evolution of conflicting ideas emanating from different cultures; secondly, that the process of history is initiated by an 'Objective Consciousness' (which presupposes God, or a superhuman or, in Hegelian terms, 'the Absolute Idea and World Spirit'), manifesting itself in the human 'spirit', or mind; and, finally that consciousness, or 'spirit' existed prior to matter, in other words, the material world is a product of the former (Mukherjee and Ramaswamy, 2007). By these postulations, Hegel has been described as a dialectician and an idealist (Afanasyev, 1980). These terms will become clearer to us as we deal with Marx.

It is important to acknowledge that even before Marx, Hegel and his ideas have received stern criticisms from many quarters. Many who admire Kant for his defence of liberal conception of the state and for championing a league of nations to maintain perpetual peace on earth are very critical of Hegel. To such admirers of Kant then, "Hegel with his metaphysical vapourings, his worship of the state, and his idealization of war, represents the arch-priest of Romanticism who presided over the decline of German philosophy" (Thomson, 1969). In a sterner critic of Hegel, Schopenhauer who knew Hegel well and who respected Kant without following him, chastised Hegel when he said:

Hegel, a certified great philosopher was a flat-headed, insipid, nauseating, illiterate charlatan who reached the pinnacle of audacity in scribbling together and dishing up the craziest mystifying nonsense. This nonsense has been noisily proclaimed as immortal wisdom by mercenary followers and readily accepted as such by all fools who thus joined into as perfect a chorus of admiration as had ever been heard before. The extensive field of spiritual influence with which Hegel was furnished by those in power has enabled him to achieve the intellectual corruption of a whole generation (Thomson, 1969).

Incidentally, it is also needful to note, albeit in passing, that Hegel has also been rubbished for being an ideologue in ahistorical "denial and suppression of the Ethio-Egyptian origin of Greek philosophy and civilization" (Biereenu-Nnabugwu, 2005: 2). In one of his theses in

Philosophy of History and Lecture on the History of Philosophy, Hegel appeared to have asserted that Africans were of no self control and to this extent they were incapable of any development and culture (Onyewuenyi, 1993). Having said this, let us now examine Marxian dialectics and social transformation.

Marxist dialectics and social transformation

Karl Heinrich Marx (1818 to 1883) was a German political philosopher of Jewish descent. He has been described as the most important of all socialist thinkers and one of the most influential thinkers of all time (Karl Marx, 2009). He was born into a comfortably middle-class family in the city of Trier, Germany and was educated at the universities of Bonn, Berlin, and Jena (Hampshire-Monk, 1992; Fraser in Mclean, 2003).

Although not a student of Hegel as the latter was already dead before Marx came to Berlin, he soon came under the influence of Hegelian philosophy which found new expression in the activities of the Young Hegelians, an intellectual group which had great fascination for Hegel's philosophy and sought to apply it in new and varied ways (McLellan, 1972). Marx became a member of this group, together with his friend and associate, Friedrich Engels (1820 to 1895), with whom he would later develop a system of thought that would captivate the world for most part of the 20th century. His ideas and theories came to be known as Marxism, or scientific socialism, and were predicated on a materialist interpretation of history.

As noted earlier at the onset of this study, the concept of dialectics originated long before Marx or even Hegel. But the duo adopted the principle and made it central to their respective philosophies. While the latter looked at it from an idealistic point of view, in other words, as involving a conflict of ideas in society which eventually result in social change or transformation, the former perceived it in a materialistic sense, substituting 'ideas' for 'social classes' and arguing that it is not ideas emanating from different cultures, but the prevailing material or economic condition of society that gives rise to contending social classes whose contentions eventually lead to social change or transformation.

Marx arrived at his own system of thought after a careful study of Hegel's. The study has already noted in this discourse, how Hegelianism - the entire gamut of Hegel's philosophy - held a great deal of fascination for young Marx and a host of other bright intellectual minds that constituted the Young Hegelians in Berlin. Such was the dominant influence of Hegel at the time that Engels acknowledged it in the following words:

...the Hegelian system covered an incomparably greater domain than any earlier system and developed in this domain a wealth of thought which is astounding even

today... One can imagine what a tremendous effect this Hegelian system must have produced in the philosophy-tinged atmosphere of Germany. It was a triumphal procession which lasted for decades and which by no means came to a standstill on the death of Hegel. On the contrary, it was precisely from 1830 to 1840 that "Hegelianism" reigned most exclusively, and to a greater or lesser extent infected even its opponents (Ramaswamy, 2007).

However, for Marx there was still something lacking and he thought it his responsibility to find out what. As McLellan (1972: xii) observes Marx felt:

An initial repugnance for the 'grotesque and rocky melodies' of Hegel's philosophy, but he found himself forced to accept Hegel's conclusion. He had read Hegel from end to end while recovering from the strain of overwork and resolved thereafter to 'seek the idea in the real itself.

Marx came to the conclusion that Hegel was wrong by attributing the source of conflict in society to the warfare between cultures and the ideas they espoused, even though he (Marx) retained the principle of dialectics as the means by which conflicts take place. For Marx, Hegel's deductions does not take cognizance of the real dynamics that force change in society since cultures and ideas are also a product of something more real and determinative like the material base or condition of society.

Of course, there are areas in which Marx agree with Hegel, such as; that human history is to be seen "...as a process, as constant motion, change, movement, transformation and development..." (Mukherjee and Ramaswamy, 2007), and that these motions are as a result of dialectical processes. But as far as what engender the transformation is concerned, Marx and Hegel are worlds apart. It is actually on this point that Marx thought Hegel had the 'dialectic' standing on its head for which he had the duty to set aright through his own materialist method (Sabine and Thorson, 1973).

At this juncture, it is important to further examine the materialist method, which forms the core of Marxist dialectics, and how it differs from Hegel's idealism. It may be useful if the study set out by giving the general idea behind the materialist method. 'Matter,' or material phenomena, according to Afanasyev (1980) explains embraces "everything that exists objectively, that is, outside of man's consciousness and independently of it" such as objects and processes on earth, the countless bodies of the universe, etc, that existed before the consciousness of man which "comprises the sphere of man's mental activity (thoughts, sensation, emotions, etc.)" and, therefore, is primary in understanding not just man, but the historical processes of the world as well. The import of the foregoing is that 'matter' gives rise to

'consciousness,' and not the other way round.

However, there are philosophers who think it should be the other way round, and these are called idealists. Hegel belonged to that school because he believed that the material world projected from the realm of (pure) thought. He imagined that there must have first been an 'Absolute Spirit,' a kind of 'Super Consciousness,' if you like, which actualized itself in the form of Nature (the physical world with all its forces and processes), and continued to develop through finite (that is, of the human) minds and human history in a dialectical fashion (Baird, 2009).

Marx, on the other hand, saw these things differently. He argued that Hegel was under an illusion to think that the 'material' (which is real) is a product of the 'imaginary' (which is ideal), whereas what we assume to be ideal, or imaginary (which form part of our consciousness), is merely a reflection of that which is real, namely; the material condition of society. Thus, for Marx, consciousness, therefore, can never be anything else than conscious existence, strictly speaking, the existence of men is their actual life-process, not what men think or imagine it to be. Marx made a case for his adoption of the materialist method, noting that:

In direct contrast to German philosophy which descends from heaven to earth, here we ascend from earth to heaven. That is to say, we do not set out from what men say, imagine, conceive, nor from what men has narrated, thought of, imagined, conceived, in order to arrive at men in the flesh. We set out from real, active men, and on the basis of their real life-process we demonstrate the development of the ideological reflexes and echoes of this life-process....Morality, religion, metaphysics, all the rest of ideology and their corresponding forms of consciousness, thus no longer retain the semblance of independence. They have no history, no development; but men, developing their material production and their material intercourse, alter, along with this their real existence, their thinking and the products of their thinking. Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life (Marx, 1977).

Another important attribute of the materialist method is that it was conceived mainly from an economic standpoint. For Marx believed that "All social life is essentially practical. All mysteries which lead theory to mysticism, find their rational solution in human practice and in the comprehension of this practice" (Marx, 1977). Hence, the nature of man and the historical periods through which he has lived and is still living is best understood by considering that which is most akin or basic to his survival, which is how he appropriates the material gifts of nature through work - the exertion of physical or mental effort. Thus, on the basis of the materialist method, which placed our material or physical existence above every other consideration, Marx proceeded to give his own interpretation of human society

and history.

Marx's construction of a materialist approach to human history has been attributed to a number of influences. The first is the legacy of German philosophy from which "...he borrowed the Hegelian method of dialectics and applied it to the material world" (Mukherjee and Ramaswamy 2007: 350). The second is said to be the French revolutionary tradition from which he recognized the lingering possibility of change in human society brought about by a sudden revolt in human nature. And the third, the writings of classical English economists which provided insight into the workings of capitalism and the forces that triggered off the Industrial Revolution. However, McLellan (1972) also adds that Marx's attention was drawn to the importance of economic influences in human activity by a reported case of theft which prompted the parliament of Rhineland, a state in western Germany, to consider passing a law to curb such offences in the future.

In addition to all this, we must include the profound influence the writings of Feuerbach left on Karl Marx. Ludwig Feuerbach (1804 to 1872) was a German philosopher and a contemporary of Marx who "...developed one of the first German materialistic philosophies. (Ludwig Feuerbach, 2009). He was a student of the renowned German philosopher, G. W. F. Hegel, "whose philosophical idealism he later rejected". In his seminal work on 'religious psychology', *The Essence of Christianity* (1843), he argued that the existence of religion is justifiable only in that it satisfies a psychological need; a person's essential preoccupation is with the self, and the worship of God is actually worship of an idealized self (Feuerbach, 2009). Therefore, for Feuerbach, the material needs of man and, not religion, deserved more attention in any analysis of human nature. The following lines capture some of his views:

"... people and their material needs should be the foundation of social and political thought. An individual and his or her mind...are products of their environment; the whole consciousness of a person is the result of the interaction of sensory organs and the external world" (Feuerbach, 2009).

For Marx and Engels, Feuerbach's emphasis on people and human needs was more or less a movement toward a materialistic interpretation of society, which they later formulated as the theory of historical materialism. Having established this background, we shall now return to the core of Marxist dialectics and social transformation. For Marx, human history began with man doing that which was most basic to his survival, namely; exploiting the material gifts of nature (land, wildlife, vegetation, water, etc.), in the bid to ensure his sustenance. In *A Critique of the German Ideology*, Marx and Engels wrote:

...we must begin by stating the first premise of all human

existence and, therefore, of all history, the premise, namely, that men must be in a position to live in order to be able to "make history". But life involves before everything else eating and drinking, a habitation, clothing and many other things. The first historical act is thus the production of the means to satisfy these needs, the production of material life itself. And indeed this is an historical act, a fundamental condition of all history, which today, as thousands of years ago, must daily and hourly be fulfilled merely in order to sustain human life (Marx and Engels, 2000).

Marx identified five epochs or stages in history to show how man progressed from one social formation to another as he struggled to provide for his sustenance. These stages are primitive communism (communalism), slavery, feudalism, capitalism and communism. Schumaker (2008) provides a narrower classification of the three stages as pre-historical (which corresponds to primitive communism), historical (which includes slavery, feudalism, capitalism and socialism) and post-historical (same as Communism). There may be other variations to this classification, but the point Marx tried to make is that in each epoch of human history, with the exception of the final one, there are forces of contradiction which make revolutions inevitable, leading to a reconstitution of society.

In primitive communism, for instance, life is relatively simple and production is at subsistence level. Individuals are mainly hunters and gatherers who work together in bands to provide for their means of sustenance and subdue the adverse conditions of their natural environment. Work has a social character and there is no private property, nor are there classes in society as things are shared in common. The only contradiction is that between the organised life of human society and the arbitrariness of nature. This simple way of living, however, cease to exist as men begin to develop new skills and ways of overcoming their environment. Innovation leads to domestication of nature's gifts. Men no longer need to go into the wild in search of food, but find nourishment by appropriating nature's goods. The advent of private property by this means inevitably gives rise to opposing social classes, as those who own property force those who have little or none to work for them as slaves. Thus begins the slave mode of production in which the discontent slave has to revolt against its owner to regain his freedom and usher in a new social system namely: feudalism. In the feudal social system, Marx identified the opposing classes as the landlords (the nobles and aristocrats who own lands) and the serfs who have to work on such lands for mere pittance. A revolt of the serfs and an emerging class of merchants and industrialists overthrows feudalism and ushers in capitalism.

In the capitalist system the opposing classes are identified as the bourgeoisie (owners of the means of production) and the proletariat who have nothing but their

labour and, have to work for the former for mere trifles. By appropriating the bulk of the profit which is commonly produced by the labour of the proletariat, the bourgeoisie triggers of a revolution which ends social system and brings about socialism. In the socialist system, the proletariat is in charge of government apparatus with which he will try to create a just society by ensuring that no individual gets more goods than is necessary for his sustenance. When this is achieved, social life gets to a point when government is no longer needed as people by then have learnt to be perfect. This state of perfection is what Marx refers to as the communist society.

Hence, just like Hegel, Marx adopted the principle of the conflict of opposites to show how a given epoch (thesis) with inherent contradictions (antithesis) results in a new social formation (synthesis). The dialectical process continues with the new synthesis becoming the thesis again until a perfect society is attained which will mark the post-historical stage or "the end of history" (Schumaker, 2008). In all, the ultimate goal of Marx's political thought is the replacement or "transformation of the existing society with his envisioned 'perfect order'" (Biereenu-Nnabugwu, 2013:204). Thus, Marx's major contribution to dialectics is that he envisioned human being in totality and went ahead to propound theories which he felt would explain and tackle all the observed problems of the organized social man once and for all.

Conclusion

Before Hegel and Marx, dialectics was employed merely as a method of enhancing rhetoric as seen in the tradition of the Sophists of ancient Greece, or as a method of investigating the nature of truth by critical analysis of concepts and hypotheses as seen in the era of classical Greek philosophy Dialectics (2009). What makes the Hegelian and Marxist dialectics exceptional is that they applied it to the process, evolution and development of history albeit differently. Dialectics in this sense remains a useful tool in philosophical analysis because it does not only tell us how the world works, but also provides us with the means of changing it. Accordingly, the method of analysis by Marx has had more profound impact not only on political thought but also on political practice, issues of social change and social sciences.

Conflicts of interest

The authors have not declared any conflicts of interest.

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Review

Election observation and its political impact in Southern Africa

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This paper is on election observation and its political impact in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region. It seeks to make a connection between election observation, the importance of political reforms and the declining levels of electoral violence. It argues that extensive election observation and the elaborate reportage that it produces has the potential in the short term, to lead to extensive electoral reforms and in the long run to lower electoral violence in countries that experience it. It also argues that electoral violence is most likely when a long time ruling party faces electoral defeat and that during such times, it is most difficult for parties to agree on and implement electoral reforms and hence extensive election observation is most needed.

Key words: Election observation, political impact, election observation, electoral reforms, electoral violence.

INTRODUCTION

This paper explores the ideal that election observation and electoral reforms have a bearing on election related violence in most SADC states. It also explores the idea that countries that resisted electoral reforms and interfered with election observation continue to experience electoral difficulties and sometimes widespread violence. The paper relied on data of various election observation reports, published and unpublished literature. The next section looks at the theoretical perspectives of election observation and electoral violence. Building on this, the authors then examined the general political impact of election observation in SADC in the section that follows. The subsequent section of the article looks at how different institutions have a bearing on electoral violence and show how they can be reformed to deepen democratisation in the SADC region.

Election observation and electoral violence

Violence in elections is often used to intimidate voters and manipulate or rig elections. Electoral violence is a very broad concept and includes activities not limited to physical assault, disruption of political rallies, issuing of threats and vote rigging. Albert (2007:133) broadly defines electoral violence as 'all forms of organized acts or threats— physical, psychological, and structural aimed at intimidating, harming, blackmailing a political stakeholder before, during and after an election with a view to determining, delaying, or otherwise influencing an electoral process'. Oftentimes, observers from membership organizations such as United Nations (UN) and SADC are often reluctant to be harsh in their criticism of a member state regarding flaws in an election and

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hence often condone electoral flaws (Carothers 1997: 25). But the point here is that observers of all sorts suggest important reforms that help to move the country forward.

For Khadiagala (2010: 16), electoral violence is the outcome of events and circumstances that emanate from broader political conflicts, particularly in societies that are beset by ethnic, communal, and sectarian fissures. Electoral violence also results from structural deficiencies, particularly the institutional rules that govern the conduct of elections. As Khadiagala observes, 'electoral violence is a consequence of imperfect electoral rules, imperfections that allow some parties to manipulate elections through electoral fraud, vote buying and rigging (2010:pg17). Our observation is that election observation helps to bring the necessary reforms that reduce the imperfections and reduce chances of manipulation that trigger protests.

The implication therefore is that electoral violence can be alleviated by putting in place electoral rules and reforms that would curtail chances of manipulation and electoral fraud. To this end, election observation has a fundamental role to ensure that electoral rules are implemented, that elections are conducted in a peaceful atmosphere, and that reforms are carried out. Our argument is that election observation supplies recommendations that could provide directions towards reforms, thus contribute to reductions in the levels of electoral violence. Election observation has risen to prominence as a democratic assistance process in the 1980s.

Carothers (1997: 2) argues that election observation is the best-established, most visible, and often best-funded type of democracy-related assistance. The importance of observation of elections in ensuring credible elections and exposing irregularities in an electoral cycle cannot be overemphasized. According to Kelley (2009), election monitoring helps to uphold electoral norms and to report on the quality of elections. In this way, observers partly ensure that laws and regulations governing elections are adhered to by all parties and candidates. The presence of observers and the international media helps to curtail election rigging, promote better understanding between the contending parties and may bring about electoral reforms, a combination that helps to quell electoral violence. The involvement of international observers may also convince skeptical opposition politicians that competing in the elections, is preferable to engaging in civil disobedience or violence (Carothers, 1997:4). Central to this argument is the idea that the presence of international observers may avert state sponsored violence on opposition candidates and supporters. Awareness of the fact that the world is watching may influence not only the potential victims of intimidation but also potential intimidators (Mair, 1997). In his assessment of the 2000 presidential elections in Zimbabwe, Laakso (2002:21) stated that the EU concluded that, 'the presence of a substantial number of international observers throughout the country was important in reducing tensions and calming conflict at a local level'. More importantly, the

argument is that reportage by election observers identify areas for reforms and helps to move the country forward in the democratization process.

It is acknowledged that election monitoring can fail to curb or reduce violence in protracted societies. As Carothers (1997) argues, "foreign observers cannot force profoundly polarized political factions to cooperate with one another. In deeply divided societies, averting electoral violence may prove a difficult undertaking where a long time ruling party has high chances of losing power. Carothers states that they cannot counter the deeply antidemocratic instincts of strongman intent on holding on to power. The case of the 2008 Zimbabwean presidential election runoff is illustrative on this regard. A highly volatile election environment may often lead to restraint on the part of observers' reports which ultimately distorts their findings. In a tension filled environment where adverse reports can lead to violence, observers often "soft-pedal their findings" (Carothers, 1997: 25). According to Kelley (2009: 765), election observation can help curtail electoral violence, it can also work to promote endorsement of less credible elections by concealing the truth. Pre-electoral violence and unstable environment may discourage observers from delegitimizing elections for fear of post-electoral violence. Thus, incumbent-dominated pre-election violence may dissuade monitors from denouncing the elections (Kelley, 2009: 9). The result is that not only would elections be fraudulent, but they may also cast some doubts and aspersions on the overall election observation process.

THE POLITICAL IMPACT OF ELECTORAL OBSERVATION IN SADC

Since the end of the Cold War in 1989 and the collapse of apartheid in 1994, the SADC region has held numerous elections and all of them were observed by diverse election observer groups. Groups that commonly observe elections in the southern Africa region include national nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), the SADC Election Observer Mission (SADC SEOM), SADC Parliamentary Forum (SADC PF), Electoral Commissioners Forum (ECF) and Electoral Institute for the Sustainability of Democracy in Africa (EISA). International bodies such as the European Union, the European Parliament and the AU also observe elections. All these election observation groups share the commonality of assessing the credibility of elections in terms of the electoral laws governing elections, demarcation of constituency boundaries, management of registration, acquisition of electoral material, and policing and security of the poll. However, SADC places more emphasis on collecting data for dispute resolution in the post-election period. To meet that objective, SADC allegedly produces two reports: one for the public which is general and friendly to the hosting country; and a second

one which is detailed, secretive, and constitutes inter-government communication meant for targeted political intervention.

Election observation has become a prominent feature of African politics and an important mechanism, to induce sustained democratisation. The African Union (AU) and the SADC have since resolved to observe all national elections within their respective mandates. Election observation gathered material critical for pronouncing on the legitimacy of governments, on political intervention options and on political reforms. Early observations linked elections with widespread electoral violence and therefore, with contested state legitimacy as there were observable human rights abuses, electoral malpractices, low level conflict, and sometimes civil war. Election observation has also helped to classify elections into credible and non-credible elections, and to legitimise or delegitimise certain players, and to guide mediation that helped to end civil wars, resolve political tensions, and aid political reforms.

Election observation plays the important role of helping to distinguish between credible elections from non-credible ones. MISA's *Outside the Ballot Box* (2004) constitutes one of the first efforts to analyse, document and publish information on election observation and its political impact. In its introduction, *outside the Ballot Box* (2004: 4) observed that 'elections represent an important dimension in the efforts towards democratic consolidation in any country, not least in African countries. Many African elections continue to fail human rights and democratic tests, and have often served as the *casus belli* for low intensity conflict or outright war'. This important early observation, linked African elections with human rights abuses, electoral malpractices of all sorts and low level conflict and war. Such an observation partly justified the need for extensive election observation. However, it must be admitted that low level conflicts and wars have largely ended in the SADC region (including in Angola, South Africa, Mozambique, Namibia and the DRC) and that credible elections are held in a number of countries. However, human rights abuses and electoral malpractices still occur in a few other countries.

Election observation has the other role of legitimising or delegitimising electoral contenders. For instance, De Brito (2009: 35) notes about Angola that, 'the September 1992 elections were declared free and fair, but this was not accepted by Savimbi. UNITA withdrew its former soldiers from the united army (FAA) and clashes began to occur between Unita's forces and those of the government'. By declaring the 1992 Angolan election free and fair, election observation helped to de-legitimise Unita and to rally the international community behind the Angolan MPLA government that was regarded as the legitimate government. Even the United States changed its posture and accepted the elected MPLA government as legitimate, effectively abandoning Unita to its own devices. Later that year, the UN Security Council imposed an arms and fuel

embargo on Unita. Thus, election observation in this case helped to provide legitimacy indicators and foreclosed further violence between the contestants.

Election observation showed that Angola, South Africa, DRC, Namibia, Tanzania and Zambia have joined Botswana in the characterisation of peaceful elections and some of these states are able to work closely with civil society. This improvement was very dramatic in South Africa and shows that even high incidence of violence can be brought down quickly through observation and political reform. Booysen and Masterson (2009: 416) write that, "according to the IEC statistics, South African elections have become increasingly peaceful. Election 2004 was the least conflictual of the three elections from 1994 to 2004". In its preliminary post-2009 election statements, the IEC suggested that the trend of increasingly peaceful elections was continued into election 2009. In the national and provincial elections of 1994, the IEC received 3,594 official complaints, and more than 1,000 people were killed in election-related violence. In the 1999 national and provincial elections, the number of official complaints was 1,114 and the number of people killed was less than 100. In 2004, the IEC received just 253 complaints and claimed no election-related deaths". Similarly, elections campaigns are peaceful in Zambia where the police were the only ones accused of favouring the ruling party, but have since adopted a neutral position. However, Ilona Tip et al. (2009: 603) noted that "most stakeholders agreed that for the 2006 and 2008 elections, the police managed the process fairly and most proposed meetings and rallies were allowed to take place". This trend continued during the 2011 tripartite election. Election observation also showed that the DRC has also managed to minimise violence in its electoral politics, and to postpone elections in areas experiencing violence and to work closely with civil society (Kadima and Tshiyoyo, 2009).

Malawi and Zanzibar also made progress in arresting electoral violence. For instance, in the latter, the ruling CCM and CUF negotiated the Muakafa 11 Accord that was signed in 2000 leading to significant reforms of electoral laws, of judiciary, management of the electoral process and installation of neutral mechanisms.

Masterson (2009: 512) noted that when the Tanzania and Zanzibar elections were de-linked in 2005 due to the death of a vice presidential candidate that necessitated postponement of elections on the mainland, an inordinately large number of international observers descended on Zanzibar where they observed insignificant scale of violence and orderly processes. As a way of addressing electoral violence, South Africa's Electoral Act of 1998 Schedule 2 (Section 99) requires participating political parties to sign to a binding code, which requires all party candidates to uphold everyone's rights by, publicly condemning any action that undermines the conduct of free and fair elections; and by accepting the results of an election or challenge the result in a South African court (quoted in Booysen and Masterson, 2009: 412-413).

Namibia and Lesotho established similar electoral codes of conduct (Blaauw and Letsholo 2009: 370). Given the significant reduction in electoral violence in countries that adopted codes of conduct, a common code of election campaigning for SADC could minimise electoral violence.

In contrast, some countries experienced regression in many fronts, and various electoral observation groups cast doubts on legitimacy of their elections. This was most evident in Zimbabwe in the presidential run-off elections in 2008, in Lesotho after the 2007 election and in Seychelles after the 2011 election. ECF (2008) questioned the legitimacy of the presidential run-off election in Zimbabwe on the basis of undue delay in releasing the 29 March 2008 presidential elections results and consequent tension and uncertainties, widespread violence against the opposition and civil society, media coverage biased in favour of ZANU PF, and arrests of opposition politicians and elections officials.

In the eyes of the national, regional and international election observers, the security situation in Zimbabwe had collapsed and the environment was not conducive to the holding of credible elections. Even SEOM, the official SADC observer group raised concerns on the Zimbabwean presidential run-off in a press brief dated 25 June 2008 by Joao Marcos Barrica, head of SEOM appealing to supporters of political parties and candidates to restrain from all forms of violence. SADC also urged the law enforcement agencies to ensure that there is law and order in the country.

This acknowledgement of widespread violence prompted SADC to propose the establishment of a coalition government in Zimbabwe in order to avert open conflict and continued suffering of people. During the 2008 elections, Zimbabwe could have benefited from a code of conduct for political parties similar to the ones of Namibia, Tanzania and South Africa. The observers of the 2013 Zimbabwe elections reported them to be free and peaceful, restraining from pronouncing on fairness due to the problems associated with the registration and the high number of assisted voters.

Similarly, Lesotho in 2007 experienced challenges that generated political instability and delegitimized the electoral process (Musanhu, 2009: 151). The central question was whether the electoral commission should have recognized 'illegal political alliances' which were aimed at subverting the electoral law itself? The Lesotho electoral commission recognized the alliances and rewarded them accordingly, plunging the country into a post-election crisis. However, the challenges facing Lesotho are bigger, including the fact that the 2005 population census was not followed by a constituency delimitation exercise. According to Musanhu (2009: 167) the country went into the 2007 snap election without new constituency boundaries even after a population census had been conducted in 2005. In addition, the voter registration period was too short, and the voters' roll was updated inadequately. Furthermore, these challenges got

spur from a tradition where Lesotho had a culture of rejecting election outcomes (Musanhu, 2009: 183). In this sense, Lesotho might benefit from a cultural re-orientation and political reform under the auspices of SADC so that election results are accepted as a norm.

Similarly, the situation in Seychelles in 2011 qualified that country for de-legitimation. For instance, local stakeholders raised concerns over disqualification of an independent candidate, media, civil service and security apparatus partiality, lack of copies of voters' roll and violence.

Interestingly, SADC (2011: 3) in Seychelles observed that "although some of the concerns raised were pertinent, they are nonetheless not of such magnitude as to affect the credibility of the overall electoral process". This conclusion from SEOM is not surprising coming from a team of short term observers, who are in the field for brief periods of time and also representing a regional organisation that downplays (in public) negative factors observed in a sister country.

Observers' reports from Seychelles indicated the need for a code of conduct for political parties similar to the ones in South Africa and Tanzania. In all the above instances where observation qualified the electoral process, a case is made for continued election observation. SADC could make it categorically clear that widespread violence creates an atmosphere that is not conducive to the holding of credible, legitimate and peaceful elections, and that the elections should either be postponed or not accepted as credible in cases of widespread violence.

Election observation and election management bodies (EMBs)

Election observation has pointed out that the general competence and independence of the election management body are major contributory factors to peaceful elections. Booyesen and Masterson (2009: 427) observed that the acceptance of the outcome of elections in democratic South Africa has been unequivocal to a considerable extent due to the credible electoral commission operations. Of course, acceptance of outcomes is relatively guaranteed in conditions where the ruling ANC has retained both widespread popular legitimacy and commanding majorities. Opposition parties in the first four democratic elections have not come anywhere close to posing electoral threats to the ANC. Thus, the competence and impartiality of the South Africa IEC and the dominance of the ANC makes the acceptance of results easier. However, South Africa also has superior election registration mechanisms which are highly welcomed by all stake holders. Booyesen and Masterson (2009: 406) observed that, the 2004 and 2009 voter registration processes remained largely similar to that of 1999, although voters who had previously registered were not required to re-register. In addition, during the

registration periods returning voters were able to verify their details on the voters' roll without having to complete the registration process again. It was possible for voters to call a toll-free telephone number or visit the IEC's website to check whether and where they registered.

Therefore, the electoral reforms leading to competence of the IEC contributed significantly to the high credibility of the South Africa electoral process that prompted the EU election observer mission to conclude that there was no need for it to observe that country's elections anymore. In contrast, Musuva (2009: 223) observed this about Malawi Electoral Commission (MEC). While the first Electoral Commission that presided over the 1994 elections was lauded for its performance, subsequent commissions have put the institution in disrepute. The handling of the 1999 and 2004 elections, particularly in the pre-election preparation and post-election phases of the electoral process, impacted negatively on the efficiency and capacity of the Malawi Electoral Commission (MEC) in discharging its responsibilities. The MEC that oversaw the 2009 elections displayed more professionalism and transparency in the management of the electoral process and won the confidence of the majority of the electoral stakeholders. The in-consistencies in the capacities of the EBMs should be addressed as they pose danger that could incite political violence. Intimacy between the governments and the electoral bodies has emerged as an issue of scholarly concern in several countries. Such high intimacy negatively affected the independence of the electoral management body. Musuva (2009: 235) on Malawi added that, the period following the announcement of the 1999 and 2004 election results was marked by violent protests, loss of life and a host of litigation. Widespread allegations of vote-buying during the campaign period in the run-up to the 2004 elections were not investigated by the MEC. Campaign violence and voter intimidation in the 2004 and 2009 elections were less prevalent than the 1999 and 1994 elections. However, the MEC was temporarily closed for four months (December 2010-April 2011) at the instruction of Head of State. Thus, Malawi appears to be failing to consistently improve the competence of its electoral management body.

Election scholars and observers agree that lack of independence of the EMB seemed to be a common feature among countries that experienced electoral difficulties. Election scholars such as Booyesen and Toulou (2009: 643) who rely extensively on election observers reports note that Zimbabwe's electoral challenges include the closeness between the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) and the ruling ZANU-PF party.

The changes in election management mentioned above left some issues unaddressed regarding ZEC's autonomy as election organizer, particularly its close relationship with ZANU-PF and the government. Thus, the ZEC's role in the electoral process appears to be more supervisory than policy-making and effective management. Evidence of this institution's shortcomings were inter alia its failure to proclaim the results of the presidential vote immediately

after the 29 March 2008 Harmonised Elections, to challenge the demand for a recount of votes expressed by ZANU-PF, and to postpone the June 2008 presidential run-off owing to the climate of violence, fear and intimidation resulting in the decision by Morgan Tsvangirai to pull out of the electoral process.

Such intimate relations between the state and Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs) worked against impartiality and objectivity. Thus, the intimacy between the ZEC and the ZANU-PF government was noted as a crucial stumbling block towards holding credible elections in Zimbabwe. The same closeness was observed in a number of SADC member states. Common SADC standards could guide operations and the independence of the Electoral Management Bodies. A country that takes these observations seriously and reforms its electoral laws is likely to suffer less electoral violence in the future. It is those countries that ignore recommendations from international election observers that continue to experience heightened electoral tensions and violence.

Election observers noted that some EMBs were poorly funded and were completely unprepared to conduct free and fair elections. Scholars have observed that the capacity of an EMB is an important element in the holding of credible elections. Such observations indicate what is wrong within the election administration machinery, and provide signals to the state concerned and to donors who support elections that more funding is required by the EMBs. Thus, election observation identifies the crucial gaps that need to be plugged to prevent future electoral violence.

Election observation and state security agencies

Election observation has noted that biased security agencies are now less common in some SADC member states. They noted that Swaziland and Zimbabwe were the exceptions in SADC, where the security agencies arrested opposition candidates, restricted the movement of civil society groups and sometimes condoned violence against opponents of the ruling elite. Election observers note that the intimacy between the ruling political elite, and the security agencies in these two countries, has sometimes compromised the security of the election. There are two points here. The first is that other countries in SADC have moved on, by making their security forces less of a threat to opposition parties and candidates. The second point is that only two countries still lagged behind in this regard. By celebrating achievements and exposing gaps, election observers and election scholars help to pinpoint where problems are and it becomes easier to plug them and prevent electoral violence in the future.

Constituency delimitation

Election observation has pointed out that constituency

delimitation and unequal representation are still serious problems facing some countries in the SADC region, exposing them to the dangers of electoral violence. Such countries include Malawi, Tanzania, Zimbabwe and Lesotho. For instance, poor funding in Malawi affected the demarcation of constituencies. Musuva (2009:246) noted that for the 1999 elections, the MEC did not invoke the principle of constituencies containing an approximately equal number of voters who are eligible to register, subject only to population, communication and geography. It failed to draw constituencies that crossed regional or district areas and merely subdivided large constituencies rather than re-demarcating all constituencies with many districts. As a consequence, constituency populations were very uneven. For example, in Nkhata Bay East there were 3,407 voters and in Machinga North there were 59,494 voters. Another obstacle in the demarcation process in Malawi was that no census had been conducted since 1987. This lack of accurate population data greatly hampered the commission in carrying out its mandate.

The phenomenon of unequal constituencies is common in several SADC states as shown below. In addition, the failure to make the demarcation of constituencies a consultative process, posed the danger of the process becoming cultural insensitive, and had the potential to incite electoral violence. In Tanzania for instance, constituency delimitation posed serious challenges. Masterson (2010: 523) noted that one of the biggest concerns as regards the delimitation of constituencies in Tanzania relates to the large discrepancies between the size of constituencies in Zanzibar and those on the mainland. Zanzibar's population of little more than 1 million persons entitles it to 50 representatives in the Union National Assembly (a ratio of 1 seat : 20 000 citizens), while the nearly 37 million citizens in Tanzania in 2005 were split into 232 constituencies, giving the mainland a representative ratio of 1 seat : 160,000 citizens. This weighting gives Zanzibar citizens a disproportionate amount of influence in Union matters in comparison with citizens on the mainland, highlighting one of the unusual accommodations of Zanzibar's status within the Union.

Thus, unequal representation and unequal delimitation of constituencies create tensions that could easily incite protests and lead to electoral violence. As long as the union was structured in manners that favour Zanzibar, sentiments of unequal representation expose Tanzania to electoral violence.

Similarly, Zimbabwe has not yet resolved issues surrounding constituency delimitation that compromised peace during the Harmonized Elections of 2008. Booysen and Toulou (2009: 645) noted concerns by Zimbabwean civil society groups that suggested the possibility of gerrymandering. "In December 2004, the Delimitation Commission recommended a reduction of the number of constituencies by one each in Harare, Bulawayo and Matebeleland South, and an increase by one each in Mashonaland East and Manicaland. These concerns were

justified by the fact that the decrease in the number of constituencies affected mostly urban areas which had been known for their support to the opposition. Harare Metropolitan was cited as an example where a decrease of constituencies occurred in spite of an increase in its voting population. On the other hand, the areas which enjoyed an increase in the number of constituencies coincided with the rural areas, which traditionally supported the ruling ZANU-PF. Further, domestic elections observers noted that the Delimitation Commission completed its report in December 2004, well before the final voters' roll had been compiled. Thus, Zimbabwe is still exposed to electoral violence.

In addition, Booysen and Toulou (2009: 645) noted that Zimbabwean opposition parties and civil society organisations made representations to the Pan African Parliament Election Observer Mission regarding the fact that the delimitation process had not been transparent enough and contrary to the legal requirement of it being a consultative process. They quoted Amendment Act No.18 which states that, the President shall cause the report to be laid before the Parliament within the next seven days after he has received it (section 13.d). "Neither of the commission's preliminary and final reports was presented in parliament after being sent to the president. Only one copy of the reports was made available and few parliamentarians, let alone the general public, were able to scrutinize it.

Thus, constituency delimitation in Zimbabwe was allegedly secretive and violated constitutional provisions which called for consultation. This added to the mistrust that creates room for electoral violence. In contrast, Angola, the DRC, Mozambique and South Africa seem to have found a working formula to make unequal representation an irrelevant electoral factor. Kadima and Tshiyoyo (2009: 108) summarized the DRC formula for allocating seats per electoral constituency within each province and the National Assembly on the basis of actual numbers of registered voters in each constituency and province. There is also a fixed electoral quotient for the National Assembly which is equivalent to the total number of registered voters in the country, divided by the total number of seats to be filled in the National Assembly. Thus, there exists a better formula out there that could help countries that face serious challenges associated with unequal representation and constituency delimitation.

In Angola, while constituency delimitation is not really a challenge, unequal representation is. De Brito (2009:40) observed that regardless of the population or number of voters in a province, all 18 provinces are allocated five seats each. For instance, Luanda, with the highest number of registered voters (1,971,963), has the same number of dedicated provincial representatives in parliament as Bengo, with only 108,758 registered voters. These seats are allocated provincially according to the population each party or coalition received in that province (in an application of the D'Hondt system).

Thus, while the principle of equal representation is not being met, the use of proportional representation eliminated the need for constituency delimitation. In contrast, Mozambique, Namibia and South Africa eliminated problems associated with constituency delimitation through the proportional representation system, making demarcation of constituencies redundant. In addition, the responsibility of delimiting the entire geography of South Africa into voting districts is the responsibility of the Delimitation Directorate (DD), using a satellite mapping system and census information available to do so. The DD, which is part of the IEC, reviews the districts prior to each election. Since 2001, GPS technology has been deployed to accurately record the positions of voting stations. The 14,650 voting districts of 1999 increased to 16,966 in 2004, and 19,726 in 2009. South Africa may be required to share its technological advances with the other SADC states that are willing to do so, to help map and locate voting districts. In addition, proportional representation appears to have elements that help to depoliticise issues surrounding constituency demarcation and eases tension within the political society. Thus, the PR system partly eliminates problems associated with constituency delimitation and unequal representation.

Election observation and the media

Exposing state journalists to electoral violence were widespread complaints about unbalanced reporting of state-owned media, cutting across many SADC states—from Angola to Botswana, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Several authors in *Outside the Ballot Box* (2004) observed that governments control the public media that are explicitly biased in favour of the ruling party in Botswana, Mozambique, Lesotho, Namibia, Malawi, Tanzania and Zimbabwe. The same concerns were raised in the 2009, 2010 and 2011 elections across the region. This implies that freeing the media (particularly state media) remains a serious challenge that limits the full realization of democracy in the SADC region. In Zambia, Ilona Tip et al. (2009) noted a general improvement in the environment in which the media conducts its duties in the run-up to elections. However, incidents of harassment of journalists were reported during the 2008 presidential elections in Zambia.

Ironically, SADC states were attempting to strengthen their controls on the private media, an emerging situation observed in Botswana with the passing of the Media Act of 2009 that has largely been abandoned. Similarly, Musanhu (2009: 162) observed about Lesotho that reports were received from the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) that a number of journalists had received death threats from members of the ruling party over coverage of issues which tainted the image of the ruling party. These threats or perceptions are reported to have led to a certain

amount of self-censorship on the part of the media. These SADC states (Botswana, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, Zambia and Zimbabwe) are being challenged to loosen their grip over the state media and to lessen threats against journalists. In contrast, only South Africa and the DRC in SADC seem to have overcome complaints about state media and therefore reduced threats against state journalists. According to Booysen and Masterson (2009: 414), all public media communications in South Africa are regulated by the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA). ICASA is responsible for publishing a code of conduct for public broadcasts during an election period, and is also responsible for arbitrating and resolving disputes that occur regarding infringements of regulations governing the public media and electoral matters. ICASA is managed by a board of seven councillors, who are appointed by the president, in consultation with the National Assembly. According to ICASA regulations, paid political campaign advertising and announcements during an election period must be submitted to ICASA 96 h prior to airing or publication, and must conform to standards that do not contravene the constitution, Section 9 of the Electoral Code or Broadcasting Act.

Setting up an independent functional regulatory authority over media reporting on elections seems to be the way to go for the rest of the SADC countries. This is expected to instil a spirit of professionalism and lessen threats against journalists who cover elections.

CONCLUSION

This paper sought to establish links between election observation, electoral violence and political reforms. This paper has shown that as election observation became widespread and generated extensive reports, electoral reforms followed and election related violence declined in most SADC states. Through recommendations from election observer missions, several countries within SADC (including Namibia, South Africa, and Tanzania) have negotiated and signed binding codes meant to reform the electoral space and this contributed to the prevention of electoral violence. As a result of implementing the codes of reforms in the presence of subsequent election observers, these countries witnessed a dramatic decline in electoral violence. In contrast, a few countries that resisted electoral reforms and interfered with election observation (such as, Lesotho, Seychelles, and Zimbabwe) continue to experience electoral difficulties and sometimes widespread violence. In this regard, SADC could provide leadership through appropriate and timely political intervention that is critical for these countries to move forward in consolidating democracy. SADC is not yet ready to enforce common electoral standards.

The paper has also shown that election observation helped to categorise elections, to legitimise some electoral players and de-legitimise others, to point out areas

needing reforms and to expose hotspots that exposed countries to electoral violence. The authors have also shown that while most countries in the region have positively reformed in many areas, liberalising the media has been the common problem area facing all SADC states. The question is on the media, that almost all states (except South Africa) in the region have regressed. Thus, SADC states, particularly those whose ruling parties face defeat at the polls, are still exposed to the dangers of electoral violence and therefore need continued election observation.

Conflict of Interests

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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Review

The rise of China and conflicts in Africa: The case of Sudan

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As China's economy rise in the world order, there is a higher demand for more resources in Africa. China has relative scarcity of crucial resources notably oil, gas, and minerals. The growing China-Africa relation is seen by some international relation scholars as part of the "foundation" on which their broader strategic ambitions are built. It is from this perspective that the growing relation seems to suggest that Africa is somehow "critical" for Chinese economy. Africa's rich natural resources and underdeveloped market create abundant business potential for Chinese products. China's interests in Africa not only include economic interests but also political, security and ideological interests. This rapidly evolving relationship presents opportunities and challenges for Africa. Chinese trade, investment and infrastructure aid are fundamentally re-shaping Africa's economies. Nevertheless, the rise of China is also posing a 'security dilemma' in the global balance of power. U.S being a super power is not happy with the rise of China. US sees Africa continent hungry for their investment, expertise, and rule of law. However, there are contentious issues affecting this relationship: African continent was a victim of 'western colonization' and 'strings attached' approaches. 'Strings attached' approach is brought about by quasi- state actors and is often being criticized by most Africa leaders for meddling with internal affairs of some Africa states and also making the continent dependent on western foreign aid. This paper offers a critical analysis of the China's-Africa relations and conflicts in Africa, using Sudan as case study. This paper examines how china's activities in Africa are contributing to conflicts by looking at the transfer of Chinese-made arms to Sudan in the name of acquiring oil to protect her national interests.

Key words: 'Balance of power, quasi-state actors, resources, conflict, colonialism.

INTRODUCTION

In 1950s to 1970s, China's foreign policy to Africa started to grow mainly because China wanted to break international isolation, displace Taiwan as the internationally recognized government of China and replace it with Beijing policy. In addition, China also wanted to battle the former Soviet Union for supremacy in

the world communist movement (Fantu and Cyril, 2010). The end of cold war brought the end of superpower proxy wars fought on Africa soil. US becoming a hegemon in the international system.

Before Mao Zedong's death in 1976, China was a communist state, with the Chinese Communist Party

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exerting enough political control to prevent Western political ideologies values of democracy, freedom of speech and information being fully absorbed into Chinese Society. This was a challenge to the country's economic growth. After his death in 1976, China embarked on a gradual economic restructuring which resulted in positive impact on economic growth and more interaction with the outside world. To that end, China started cooperating with Africa countries by assisting independent African governments economically.

As China economy rise in the international system, most scholars predict that by 2025, it may China may be the most dominant diplomatic and political players on the world stage. Intrinsicly, it has all the attributes to make a country great and powerful country: An immense population skilled and disciplined and brimming with national pride and dedication, vast land and a home grown civilization and identity. Its interest is centered on building ideological solidarity with African countries to advance Chinese-style communism and on repelling Western "imperialism" (Scobell, 2007). Nevertheless Chinese interests in Africa have evolved into more pragmatic pursuits such as trade, investment, and energy. According to realists, every state is sovereign and pursues her national interests in the pursuit of preserving her survival. It is from this regard that China's aims to satisfy her political, ideological, and economical interests in order to preserve her survival in the international system.

Politically, Africa is seen to be part of the "foundation" on which China's broader strategic ambitions are built. Africa is the second largest continent after Asia and China seeks Africa's support in multilateral forums such as the United Nations given the size of her voting bloc. All African states account for more than one-quarter of U.N. member states and votes hence China has continually relied on African countries support at the U.N. for its political agenda. China makes every effort to cultivate the maximum number of African countries on all issues of interest to Beijing that arise in international forums. For example, in 1972 China saw Africa's very real political importance and value when 26 African countries voted for the People's Republic of China to resume its seat at the United Nations. African votes represented more than one-third of the countries who supported the resolution. Both China and Africa have also been advocating for reforms within the United Nations. For instance, Africa Union have proposed programmes for the UN reforms in which it is demanding increasing the seats in the United Nation Security Council from five. This serves as an opportunity for China to gain support from Africa continent. Ideologically, China and Africa share the same underlying historical victimization by Western colonial powers and a common affinity as developing countries.

Economically, China primarily engages in Africa in matters of investment and trade. Apart from supplying raw materials to Africa, Chinese products find their way easily into ready African market. According to the Africa Center

for Strategic Studies, 2007, trade between Africa and China has been growing at 40% per year, with over 480% increase in clothing imports from China between 2003 and 2014. China, as an emerging industrial state has also surplus labour that it exports to Africa to promote and increase capital returns, maximize profitability and to lessen the burden of dependency on its domestic economy (Rotberg, 2007). China has also been assisting independent Africa governments economically providing loans as a principal instrument of development. It has also developed an operational infrastructure to support growing network of relations in Africa. For example China gave Tanzania \$500 million towards the construction of Tanzania-Zambia railways (Soares de Oliveira, 2008)

Although China has always regarded herself as the center of the world economy, her escalating influence in Africa is challenging the Western vision of democracy, human rights, rule of law and free markets in Africa. On many occasions, China is being criticized for abusing human rights and promoting poor democracy as well as not making any effort to transfer skills and knowledge to Africa (Fantu and Cyril, 2010). Across Africa, Chinese has been accused of meddling with internal affairs of African states such as in Sudan where Chinese has shown support for the ruling government and undermined the efforts of the opposition to bring change (Christian Aid, 2011). This is an indication that with China's heavily economic and military support in some African countries undermines good democracy.

China has depicted herself as the World's largest country which is developing with Africa (Rotberg, 2007). This representation has proved very useful to her when dealing with Africa continent and this has allowed her to gain several advantages compared to the Western states. China and Africa share a natural common ground as a result of their shared historical experiences: They were both victims of "colonization by the capitalists and imperialists" and faced the same task of national independence and liberation after World War II (Xinwen, 2013).

Unlike the US, the relationships between China and Africa have also been witnessing a remarkable intensification. Since the end of Cold War, and the emergence of a unipolar world dominated by the western powers, most Africa intellectuals and political leaders have viewed it as the source of discomfort for their countries' development. It is in light of this that the rise of China is welcomed among some African leaders (Tull, (2006). China is often cited in some circles in Africa as broadly comparable to Western colonialism and neo-colonialism in Africa. Some African leaders also see the west as "the paradox of development and China is the partner of development."

Some of the contentious issues affecting Africa's relations with western countries include the western models of capitalism and liberal democracy which are seem by most Africans as unsuitable to Africa's material

conditions and to its history and cultures. Bretton Woods-inspired economic reforms have failed to alleviate poverty (Fantu and Cyril, 2010). The Western countries have been coercing Africa governments to embrace democracy to justify continuing aid flows to their countries (Melville, 2005). Most African leaders argue that democracy is irrelevant to Africa's development needs citing China as an exemplar of development.

Another contentious issue affecting Africa's relations with West is the doctrine of privatization which has been imposed in some government institutions in Africa. According to some African leaders, China has a genuine home-driven policy agenda as opposed to the western policy of privatization. China does not pursue doctrine of privatization policy but encourages state enterprise side by side with private enterprise with the eye on value-adding activities, employment creation and inclusive development Shirk, (2007).

China's foreign policy to Africa has been criticized by many scholars who say it is not built on initiative and entrepreneurship but it is built on exploiting the opportunities offered by African continent (Holsti, 1995). China has also been criticized by some African leaders such as the former president of South Africa Thabo Mbeki and the former Nigerian president Olesegun Obasanjo who accused China for neo-colonization. In addition, a meeting of experts and diplomats by Africa Union in Addis Ababa in September 2006, warned about China Africa relationships repeating the "historical trajectory of African's relations with the west.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Hegemonic stability

Realists have always viewed international system as a field for contest for power. Power can be defined as the ability to influence the behavior of other actors and the ability to prevail in conflict. Mearsheimer, 2006 urges that there are two types of power: Latent power and Military power. Latent power refers to the socio-economic ingredients that go into building military power and is largely based on a state's wealth and overall size of its population. Military power refers to the ability of a state to possess well trained military soldiers and good military equipment. In this case, China is using the latent power to gain access to Africa resources so as to build its economic growth as well as exacerbating conflicts.

For realists, international system is anarchic hence the need for hegemonic stability in which states are distinguished by their degree of power and degree of satisfaction. Degree of satisfaction refers to whether a state is satisfied or dissatisfied with the current World order. Satisfied states are interested in preserving their status quo, whereas dissatisfied states are revisionist states that want change in the existing world order. At

the top of power hierarchy is the dominant power or hegemon. A hegemon is a status quo power interested in preserving the existing order. In the 21st Century, U.S. has been hegemon since the end of Cold War. Below this hegemon are great powers, middle powers, small powers, and dependencies. China is not a hegemon but it is a great power.

Although the collapse of the Soviet Union left U.S. as a dominant nation in the world with strong military and economic power, there are a lot of speculations that China is rising in order to prevent this domination. Hegemonic stability theory predicts that a counter-America coalition will not emerge because of other major powers (Japan, Britain and France) are all essentially satisfied powers interested in preserving the existing world order (Ray, 1990)

John Mearsheimer argues that the rise of China in the international system creates a potential for intense security competition with the U.S. that might result in considerable potential for war. He views international system as the field of contest for power in order to be the only great power in the system. Mearshiner argument is invalid because in the author's view, the rise of China in the international system will not lead to war because major powers like Britain, Japan and France are satisfied in preserving the US hegemony.

The role of China in managing conflicts in Africa

China's policy towards Africa was insignificant before 1950s. From 1950s to 1990s, the China's Africa policy has tremendously grown. This policy aims at breaking international isolation, battling the former Soviet Union for primacy in the world communist movement and also displacing Taiwan as the internationally recognized government of China. In 1964, China announced the "Eight Principles on Economic and Technical Aid" to Africa which many African leaders see as a genuine African-driven policy agenda as opposed to the branded neo-liberal IMF and World Bank Policies. The Chinese Government has never ask for any privileges or attached any conditions and this has made Africa to remained part of the China's broader global engagement.

The problem of conflicts in Africa and how they are managed effectively and efficiently is still one of the biggest challenges in the 21st Century. With the growing presence and influence of China in the continent, many scholars have been left speculating about the future of African continent as far as conflict management is concerned. China may be Africa's biggest trade partner, but it has generally taken arm's length approach to the continent's conflicts.

Despite been a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, and possessing the veto power to actively address the responsibility of all states to abide by their international commitments such as promoting international peace and security, China has been accused

of irresponsible arms transfers to Africa in exchange of minerals. For instance in Sudan, Chinese military arms has been used to intimidate the poor and the marginalized in hence resulting to conflicts and human rights abuses.

From Darfur to Zimbabwe, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) to Guinea, China has been criticized for its role in causing conflicts in Africa. Nevertheless China has also played both a critical role in conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction (Saferworld, 2011). For example, in 2005, the Chinese played a role in supporting Sudan's Peace agreements which led to the signing of Collective Peace Agreement (CPA) and consequently a political transition to a new independent republic of South Sudan. In dealing with conflicts in Africa, China has participated in four key areas. These are: Participation in United Nations Missions, Sponsoring humanitarian and development, Economic co-operation and finally participating in multilateral forums pursuing a negotiated resolution to conflicts, de-mining assistance and finally in anti-piracy operations.

Participation in United Nations Missions

China has been providing financial support for UN peacekeeping in Africa by providing logistical support services to the United Nations and the local areas. It also has participated in the United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) which objective was to support the Collective Peace Agreement that led to the birth of South Sudan (UNDC, 1996).

Sponsoring humanitarian and development

China has sponsored humanitarian and development assistance on programmes. For example, during the Darfur conflict, China donated food, clothing and medicine to the thousands of people who were displaced as a result of war. Darfur region in Sudan is characterized by chronic underdevelopment and this is one of the factors behind war in the region. In order to counteract this, China has been engaging in the construction of infrastructural projects. Chinese contractors have implemented the construction of major roads within the Darfur region and when the Chinese Consulate was created in Sudan in September 2008, China has increased her aid programme to South Sudan (Kevin, 1996).

Participating in multilateral forums pursuing a negotiated resolution to conflicts

China has partly played a role in resolving conflicts in Africa. For example, Chinese pressure is partly responsible for bringing Bashir to the table and to the eventual Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) with the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement (SPLM).

This agreement culminated in the independence of South Sudan in 2011.

De-mining assistance

China's de-mining assistance has contributed positively to peace in Africa. China engaged in mine clearance in Eritrea where it trained 120 Eritrean mine clearance specialists (Hilsum, 2005). Since 1998, China has worked with the UN to provide training in land mine disposal and donated equipment to Chad, Burundi, Guinea-Bissau, Sudan, Mozambique, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Angola and Eritrea. This has reduced conflicts.

Anti-piracy operations

China has contributed in fighting maritime piracy in the Gulf of Aden and Indian Ocean. Some 20 percent of the 1,265 Chinese ships passing through the Gulf of Aden in 2008 came under threat from Somali pirates, who captured a Hong Kong registered tanker (Taylor, 2008). China deployed early in 2009 two destroyers and a supply ship to help combat piracy in the Gulf of Aden. The ships have about 800 crew and seventy special operations troops. This naval experience gives the PLA Navy valuable experience far from its shores and permits China to project power in an area that is important to its trade (Kevin, 1996). By all accounts, the Chinese naval contingent has performed well and coordinated effectively with other navies in the region.

China contributing to conflicts in Africa: A case of Sudan

China- Sudan relations was insignificant before Sudan's independence in 1956. From 1956 to early 1990s, the bilateral relations between the two countries started to grow tremendously. This relationship is predominately economic as it is largely motivated to a great extent by China's attempt to safeguard its national interests. China aims at controlling and exploiting Sudan's resources particularly oil. This demand is propelled by China's growing demand for oil as a result of her rapid economic expansion. In addition, China is supporting development projects in various regions of the country. It has invested billions of dollars, particularly in the oil production. Since the ratification of the CPA in January 2005, Beijing has been a new frontier for economic entrepreneur in Sudan. It has been supporting development projects such as construction of schools, hospitals, and transport and energy infrastructure in the North Sudan which is the source of oil as well as providing finance to support Juba. On trade, Sudan exported sesame, cotton and metal scraps to China in exchange of small arms, fabrics and some textile.

As China pays more attention to soft power in Sudan, the rapid growing relation presents immense opportunities as well as challenges to the developing country. (Scobell, 2007). Although China has mediated talks between warring factions in Southern Sudan, her role is rather unusual. The flipside is that China is on the side of Salva Kiir government and as such she has played part of the Sudan problems. During referendum in Sudan in late 2000s, China engaged on the referendum in Khartoum, while in the South Sudan, by contrast, China had to square the CPA'S referendum clause with the geography of Chinese oil and this is fuelled further conflicts in the region. Even as China participated in multilateral forums pursuing negotiated resolution to conflicts in South Sudan, there has been criticism over her role in violating human rights. Sudan has security forces in brutal civil wars regions.

Being one of the leading oil producing countries in Africa, the presence of China in country presents a strategy to control and exploit Sudanese oil. Chinese economic assistance is not only encouraging neo-colonialism but also encouraging dictatorship and tyranny in Sudan. Ironically, China claims that she does not interfere in the internal affairs of the countries it deals with. This is misleading and provocative not only to Africa but also to other states aspiring to further democratic values (Large, 2008). For example, when the relationship between Sudan and international financial institutions became problematic due to poor democratic values, Sudan turned to China.

A recent meeting between the Sudan President Omar Al Bashir and the Chinese government revealed the extent of China's interference in domestic Sudanese affairs in favour of the ruling Junta while undermining all the support of the opposition to effect change in the government. Based on the realist perspective, it is clear that Junta would be unable to rule the country without heavy Chinese economic and military support (Soares de Oliveira, 2008). Most political analysts posit that Chinese economic aid to the Sudanese Junta has come to an extremely high human cost in Sudan and Darfur where thousands have been killed and communities displaced. Sudan is internationally recognized as one of the African countries where displacement and human rights abuses have taken place at a higher magnitude.

As China develops large scale projects in Sudan, it also condones human rights (Christian Aid, 2001). China's activities in Sudan are often characterized as "evil" when they are seen as representing China's selfish quest for natural resources and damaging Sudan's fragile efforts to improve peace and build a sustainable future. According to the Christian Aid, 2001, the construction of the pipeline from western upper Nile to the Red Sea in 1998 has displaced thousands of people; hence resulting in heavy fighting between the locals, government and investors. There has been strategic arms delivery from government garrisons. Hundreds of cases of ammunition were delivered to one of the Sudan factions fighting for the

control of western upper Nile and its vast oil reserves which sometimes the government and the oils companies call 'Warlordism' (Richard, 2005).

Since the construction of the pipeline to the Red Sea in 1998 by the Chinese company, hundreds of thousands of villagers have been displaced and were terrorized by government security system.

Chinese involvement in Sudan goes beyond oil. For instance, the Darfur conflict was characterized by gross violations of human rights involving a range of military, security and police equipment (Amnesty International Report, 2011). China is one of several states including France, Iran and Saudi Arabia that have exported large amounts of small arms and light weapons and ammunition to Sudan. The Darfur Region was deeply affected by the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. Due to these, violence accelerated at a high level. The scale of the human rights disaster and the killing of people and destruction of major parts of Darfur were massive: an estimated 1.6 million people were displaced within Darfur and 200,000 Sudanese refugees have fled across the border into Chad and thousands were killed (UN News Service, 2006).

Western countries have always criticized China for continuing to allow military equipment to be sent to Sudan despite well-documented and widespread killings, rapes and abductions by government armed forces and allied military groups in conflict zones. Currently, China is also a major supplier of arms to Sudan since the Chinese firms have the largest foreign stake in Sudanese oilfields. The Sudanese government has used increases in oil revenues – oil which China is heavily dependent on, but also heavily invests in - to fund a military capacity that has in turn been used to conduct war in Darfur, including carrying out violations of international human rights and humanitarian law (Amnesty International Report, 2003).

China does not only respect human rights and but also relies on armed forces and security personnel to enable them continue their appropriation of natural resources at the expense of the people as in the case of Merowe dam construction project. This dam was implemented by the Chinese Joint Venture between the China National Water Resources and China Hydropower Engineering and China Water Engineering (Amnesty International Annual Report, 2000). The project displaced small farmers and conflict ensued between them and the police. They were finally resettled in a desert by the dam authorities. Nevertheless there is also a strong tendency of China exacerbating conflicts in Sudan. For example, in 2005 the Chinese contractors building the power tower occupied water wells in Bayuda deserts and prevented the Manasir nomads from accessing water. Many of these nomads were shot by the heavily military units (Andersson, 2008).

As Chinese investors in Sudan carry out their work in close coordination with the security organs and armed forces, it is now clear that their foreign policy towards Sudan and most of the African countries is not build

on initiative and entrepreneurship but on exploitation of opportunities available in Africa.

China's operations in Africa have affected peace and stability negatively through the transfer of Chinese made arms to Africa. Since Cold War, China has remained an important and large arms exporter in Africa. Currently, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) has ranked China as one of the largest supplier of major conventional weapons in the World (SIPRI Yearbook, 2013). Ironically, China believes that arms exports are conducive to the self-defense of the recipient country, do not harm the peace, security and stability of the region concerned and the world as a whole, and do not interfere in the internal affairs of the recipient country.

Despite possessing the Veto power in the United Nations Security Council, China has been also accused of selling arms to Sudan government especially during Darfur conflict. Moreover, China has also been accused of providing helicopter gunship to Khartoum governments to suppress opposition in Southern Sudan and Darfur (Schearf, 2007). Outside Sudan, China is accused of selling millions in weapons and ammunitions to Robert Mugabe's repressive regime in Zimbabwe. In 2011, China also offered the Gadhafi regime in Libya arms worth \$200 million to fight NATO and rebel forces (Shinn, 2008).

As China rewards its African friends with diplomatic attention, financial and military assistance, there is need for a deeper research to be done to establish the effects of China's long term relationship in Africa. China is encouraging Africa's most repressive regimes, thereby increasing the likelihood of conflicts. It is therefore imperative for African countries to remember that as China provide loans, develop operational infrastructure and provide limited military equipment and training to African countries, they need to exercise more caution as they conduct bilateral relationships.

Conclusion

The rise of China in Africa has impacted both positively and negatively on peace and stability in the continent. In some countries undergoing democratic transitions such as Ghana, Tanzania, and Zambia, China has offered significant aid such as investing in infrastructure, making technical grants and supporting joint ventures. On the other hand, in countries that have strategic resources such as Angola, Sudan and Nigeria, China exacerbates the 'resource curse' and strengthens neo-patrimonial structures which are hardly democratic hence leading to human right abuses (Richard, 2008). For instance since 1990, China has helped Sudan develop domestic arms industry that has no doubt fuelled violence all over the region. In addition, China has been supplying small arms to these countries. These arms are now infamous instruments for staff repression and brutality. Finally, China has contributed to peacekeeping interventions to Africa states emerging from conflicts such as in Liberia.

However, realists argue that international system is characterized by anarchy and indeed China's influence in Africa has demonstrated that. Despite being a permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, and possessing the veto power to actively address the responsibility of all states to abide by their international commitments such as promoting international peace and security, China is fueling conflicts across Africa. She has been accused of irresponsible arms transfers to Africa which has led conflicts and human rights abuses (Richard, 2005).

Being a permanent member of the United Nations, China has the primary responsibility for controlling the flow of arms and ensuring that its arms transfers do not contribute to persistent violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. It is in light of this that African leaders and Africa international relations scholars must carefully evaluate the tactics that China is employing in the continent and the impact it has on the future of Africa. There is more research to be done to determine whether China can bring durable peace to Africa, what are the underlying motives for China's involvement in Africa and can China work in hand with African countries to achieve Millennium Development Goals (MDG) in Africa?

RECOMMENDATIONS

- i. There is need for Africa leaders to enhance investments and transfer of skills into the continent. China investment is giving Africa new leverage but is not making any effort to transfer skills and knowledge to Africa. There is need for African leaders to demand from Chinese leaders' transfer of skills and knowledge to Africa.
- ii. There is need for China leaders to embrace democracy alongside development in Africa. Liberalists urge that democratic states are more peaceful than undemocratic states. It is because of this that there is need for China to promote democracy and human rights alongside development in Africa. It conceivable that China will be compelled by instability and conflict in Africa to realize that its long term economic interest are best served by promoting democracy in Africa through encouraging representative governments not dictators.
- iii. Chinese investor should mount pressure on their governments and Africa governments to avoid policies likely to exacerbate conflict in Africa. For instance Chinese government should discourage exporting military weapons to conflicts hotspots in Africa.
- iv. Africa civil society needs to examine how best to react to the challenges presented by China's engagement in Africa by deriving lessons from experiences of other countries engaging with China.
- v. Strengthen transparency over arms transfers by reporting annually and publicly on all military, security and police transfers that have been authorized for export and delivered – data should include how many articles have been licensed to which country and to which end-user.

Conflict of interests

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

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The background of the entire page is a photograph of a person in a dark suit and tie, holding a globe of the Earth. The person's hands are visible, and the globe is positioned in the lower right quadrant. The image is slightly blurred, giving it a professional and academic feel.

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