

AFRICAN AGENCY AND DEVELOPMENT: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF EMERGING PARTNERS

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Abstract. African nations have been grappling with a series of developmental challenges that have kept them at the periphery of international affairs for a very long time. However, over the past few decades, the continent is beginning to re-emerge as a dominant actor in the international arena, exerting growing levels of influence as a now dominant actor in global affairs. Adopting a qualitative method, this paper utilized data from secondary sources to analyze Africa's growing agency and the impact it's had on trade and partnerships with the wider world. This comparative study showcases the new approach used by African nations as a bloc which now transcends past traditional leanings to the United States and her western allies towards new partnerships with the global south. The scope of the comparison revolves around the emerging economies of China, Russia and Turkey. As Africa continues to leverage on the renewed interests in African markets and resources, this paper suggests the need to continue to mainstream the multilateral partnerships that harnesses and deploys the merits of the diversity of inter-group, cross-cultural and leadership relations within the AU and other sub-regional groupings such as ECOWAS. Africa's growing agency^{*†} should be utilized by governments and other stakeholders to inform social policy creation and implementation that fosters collective development and growth in the region.

Keywords: Partnerships, Africa, agency, development, African Union, ECOWAS, multipolar, emerging economies.

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1. Introduction

The continent of Africa has had to grapple with a multiplex of challenges in their efforts to break free from the cycle of underdevelopment and conflict that has pervaded the countries in the West African sub-region since they gained their independence. Despite high optimism for the socio-economic growth of these countries after gaining independence, socio-economic and political instability has perpetuated activities in the region contributing largely to underdevelopment and conflict. This has led to their "inability to foster good governance, accountability and inclusive politics" ultimately resulting in the emergence of other groups (either ethnic rebel or religious extremist groups) rising to challenge the legitimacy of the state (Mlambo, 2023). Alluding to this,

^{*} Agency in international relations is the capacity of states (which today also includes non-state actors) to "generate and deploy a range of capabilities (hard and soft) in the pursuit of their national interests (Andreasson as cited in Lala, 2018, p. 8)."

[†] African Agency in international relations debate refers to the potential of African nations to "negotiate and bargain" with international actors in the best interest of these African nations (Chipaike & Knowledge, 2018, p. 1).

Mlambo et al. (2024) succinctly assert that the demise of colonialism provided hope for “socioeconomic emancipation after decades of segregation, discrimination and denial of local values and traditions”. They state that what has replaced this hope and optimism is “corruption, never ending conflict, the rise of violent non-state actors, elitism, poverty and inequality”.

Many plans and strategies have been devised, implemented (or under implementation) and in some cases abandoned. Some of the gains from these plans and strategies are easily reversed by conflict, political instability and unconstitutional changes in government - a vicious cycle that has and continues to be a bane to development in the region. Regardless of these challenges however, African leaders and nations continue to strive to find avenues to foster development in the region and have incorporated the aid of several organizations, nations and financial institutions to finance, provide technical support, capacity and enhance the positive effects of these efforts to reposition the fortunes of the region. Poverty, underdevelopment, state fragility are intricately linked as preconditions for conflict and the emergence of a myriad of new security threats (Newman, 2009).

The nations of Africa have been blessed with enormous human and natural resources which if harnessed properly (in tandem with other political, structural and economic reforms aimed at curtailing corruption to the barest minimum) can transform the economic landscape of the region. The ripple benefits that lie therein can cascade into every other sector of these societies to greatly improve the standard of living of the inhabitants in these countries. But far from these lofty ideals are very cogent realities of the afore mentioned multiplex challenges that has to be dealt with using every possible help internally and externally to make developmental gains.

The dimensions of “power and partnerships in a multipolar world” (Naab, 2024) have been shaped and reshaped since the end of the cold war. From a unipolar international system where the United States heralded, to a bipolar system after 9/11 where it was America and allies against terrorist forces around the world, to the contemporary multi-polar international order where various power players are emerging into the scene like with China and Russia paving the way. Somewhere in the horizon, Africa is also rising into the fray as a dominant player that cannot be ignored in the grand scheme of things. Other scholars such as Degterev et al. (2018) argue that in the contemporary global system, the “new bipolarity” (United States and China) is emerging.

This is not to say that Africa hasn’t been an actor in the international system, but rather - as we will elucidate in this paper - Africa is beginning to re-emerge under a different narrative where it is no longer sidelined to the periphery but also a dominant actor exerting great (and growing) influence in international affairs. Many scholars have averred that Africa is no longer that continent that passively takes instructions handed down from Western allies and implement them but have become very active in also shaping their own destiny.

This new role for Africa has also seen the continent at the center of global attraction for partnerships, collaborations and trade. It has seen Africa’s trade and partnership portfolio expanding outside its traditional partners which were advanced Western countries (especially with their former colonizers) and shifting towards rising and emerging economies such as China, Russia, India, Turkey, UAE etc. Naab (2024) elucidates this as a “willingness to break with the West and embrace non-traditional relationships”. The bigger engagement of new players in Africa is retooling and “recasting” Africa’s approach, reintegration, partnership and collaboration with the

multiplex international system (Alden & Large, 2019). These new partnerships portend varying degrees of prospects and also challenges. Viz a viz these opportunities, collaborations and partnerships, this paper hopes to look at how Africa is leveraging on its newfound agency to exert the necessary influence to foster the kind of partnerships that is profitable to its development and varied national and region wide interests. Carvalho (2024) states that “Africa’s strategic importance has long attracted the interest of global powers and is regaining momentum in recent years”. He also avers that this interest from both traditional and non-traditional players in Africa can have both opportunities and challenges.

Despite varying degrees of international partnerships in the region, this paper is going to focus the roles (both Negatively and Positively) that several Nations have played in impeding or fostering development in the region. As several domestic and international interests intersperse in the region, the effects and impact are being experienced by the inhabitants in divergent ways. This is clearly seen in the positions that three ECOWAS member nations took in the year 2024 first kickstarted by unconstitutional changes in government when the military forcibly took power away from civilian democratic governments. This was swiftly followed by the expulsion of foreign interests in the country for perceived negative impacts and collaboration with the government against the interests of the country (neocolonialism) and more recently their withdrawal from ECOWAS which officially takes effect from the 29th of January 2025.

Many of the foreign actors in the Africa have an interest in the raw materials they can obtain from these countries but however, the manner of exploitation of these resources with no consequent impact on development (due largely in part to corruption and conflict) has pitted many of the inhabitants against the interests of these foreign actors. Many attempts at offering aid or help are often looked at with mute (and sometimes open confrontation) suspicion where it is said they “give with one hand and take with the other”. This however does not portend that all foreign interests harbor negative connotations for African states as this research is going to showcase. The scope of this study will be limited to a few emerging state actors actively participating in Africa showcasing the positive and negative impacts that some of these actors have had on the continent. This paper thus presents a comparative study of a long term African ally, a World power with fresh interests and the highest stakes in Africa right now and a new comer looking to also spread its international influence into the region.

2. Methodology, Scope and Structure

This study adopted a qualitative research method which harnessed secondary data from academic documents in books and peer reviewed journals. Their assertions and arguments will be juxtaposed with data from other sources such as reports, essays, thesis and online newspaper repositories. The scope was limited to the role of emerging donor nations - Turkey, China and Russia. These emerging nations were chosen because most of the discourse about the subject matter has concentrated mostly on the traditional Western powers and the neocolonial role they’ve played in Africa albeit mostly on the negative side. This study looks to create a balance to showcase the entry of emerging nations and to mainstream how it has impacted on development in Africa.

3. Theoretical Framework

The theory used by this study to anchor this research is the Liberal Theory (specifically the neo-liberal strand) of international relations in conjunction with “Colonial Legacy” so as to underpin the assumptions of this paper. For better context, this paper adopts a definition of colonial legacy put forward by Alemazung (2010) which is the “sum total of the political structure, culture and general polity” bequeathed to African political elites by the colonialists after the independence of their varied nations. These new neo-colonial elites have been either wittingly or unwittingly used to serve the purposes of perpetuation neo-colonialism in Africa which continues even in contemporary African politics, development and economy. Mlambo (2023) refers to these new neocolonial elites as propagating “black imperialism” which is Africans exploiting Africans perpetuated by top government officials and businessmen/women.

This theory will underpin the assumption put forward by this paper for pertinent international collaborations to foster development in Africa nations and showcase the default nature of an international system where nations and actor foster and advance their own national interests and are willing to partner and walk with other actors and nations with shared interests, goals and aspirations. This is because this study furthers the assumption that acting in their own self-interests, African nations under the aegis of the African Union and other subregional groupings can put forth a stronger united front as they advance their interests in the international space. This is in consonance with Lala’s (2018) assertion that emerging African Nations have “organized themselves in order to build a continental order” which is able to present and “articulate a continental outlook” which can rival and also demand equal partnership with world powers.

This is against the backdrop of many other options to engage with emerging donor nations that they can collaborate with in the interests of all concerned and with more favorable terms and conditions. This is in view of the greater interest shown by countries such as Turkey, China, Russia and others causing a radical shift from the traditional donor nations which many pundits aver have so far stifled development in Africa due to their colonial legacies of neo-colonialism still serving their interests to the detriment of the development and politics of African nations.

Toprak (2022) associates the philosophical roots of liberalism to various scholarly underpinnings of “John Locke, Immanuel Kant, Adam Smith, David Hume, Jeremy Bentham, Herbert Spencer, J. Stuart Mill, Alexis de Tockqueville and Benjamin Constant” amongst many other scholars spanning over many centuries. Moravcsik (n.d.) states that these liberal thinkers root their political philosophies on “the theoretical understanding of individual interests”. Toprak (2022) breaks down the understanding of liberalism first of all from its etymological perspective starting from the word “liber” which is Latin for “free”. From his viewpoint, peace and prosperity are achieved through an international system derived from the collaboration of liberal states. The liberal theory underpins “economic, social and political doctrines” which centralizes its focus first on the individual who is the “smallest structural unit of the society” and staunchly upholds human rights and the rule of law (Toprak, 2022).

Rathbun (2010) explained one of the definitions of liberalism to be that which concerns itself “greater cooperation and progress in international affairs, generally described in terms of increased peace and prosperity” in a world that is characterized by interdependence today. Such interdependence breeds shared responsibility over the global commons in what Rifkin calls the “collaborative commons” (Barder, 2015).

This has made the world increasingly interdependent and as such nations have to seek international collaborations (Danfulani & Gülseven, 2024) to pursue their interests which may be at odds or at par with others in the international system. To Danfulani and Gülseven (2024) these shared interests can thus be pursued collaboratively to foster greater benefits around sustainable development, peace, trade, investments etc. This however does not whittle down the ideas of other scholars and pundits who bemoan the somewhat tilted nature of how some of these cooperative/collaborative ventures international actors have encountered. They especially mainstream that underdeveloped/developing countries get the “shorter end of the stick” in the sense that the interests of the more developed countries usually deride the interests of the underdeveloped/developing countries who sometimes continue with the deal because they would rather have some benefit than nothing at all.

This is why Danfulani and Gülseven (2024) have called for even greater collaboration between countries who find themselves at the developing end of the spectrum such as ECOWAS to have greater bargaining power when they come to the negotiating table with developed countries to pursue shared interests. Oloruntoba (2016) shared similar concerns when he mainstreamed the neoliberal approach as pertinent to regional integration in the ECOWAS sub-region. Their population, markets, resources and the like presents them with enormous potential on every negotiating table to advance their interests even as the world looks to collaborate, do business or exploit their natural and human resources.

This paper has thus extrapolated the notions of this theory to interpret the context and the nature of the activities of several international actors in West Africa viz their relations with individual states and their dealing as a whole through the ECOWAS body. It has also been utilized to mainstream how several collaborations with these international actors have impacted the region both positively and negatively.

4. Literature Review

Mlambo et al. (2024) debated about African entering the fray of inclusive development post-independence as they advanced to overcome the detrimental effects of colonization. This process of inclusivity is hinged on human right practices that aims to leave no one behind, protect the vulnerable and ensure dignity for all. However, post-independence Africa seemingly maintained the status quo with socioeconomic and political frameworks that still reflected the colonial era. The expected inclusive development has thus been hampered and what has been the reality on ground for the past decades are socioeconomic and political challenges. This has in turn impeded good governance, rule of law and respect for human rights.

Di John (2010) locates the development and underdevelopment milieu in his analysis of failed states in sub-Saharan Africa to colonial legacies of clientelism; gatekeeper state; resource curse; winner takes all politics; neo-patrimonial politics and shadow states. The American foreign policy especially since the September 11 attacks have cognizance of the potential that failed states could portend to its security and as such try to intervene in the development of states in their self-interest/national security interest (Di John, 2010). According to Di John (2010), the 2002 national security strategy of the United States highlights that they face a lesser threat from conquering states compared to the huge threats now faced by failing states which have the potential to harbor terrorist organizations and international criminal networks.

Newman (2009) argues that the portrayal by Western more developed nations of some countries as “failed” is bias on what they think a modern nation should look like - conforming to the Western ideals and institutions of statehood. This he says stems from the threat these so-called failed states pose to the security of Western nations. These insinuations thus present an international system threatened by the so-called failure of some states calling thus for interventions in the interest of order and security. Newman cites the United Kingdom’s Department for International Development who have now factored the role underdevelopment, weak states and conflicts pose to the national security and other interests of the UK into their development assistance to other nations. He avers that most of the states in this category (failed states) are highly dependent on international aid and assistance. He also points to the interests attached to some of the foreign intervention in failed state which includes access to political influence and resources.

Buba (2018) queries the idea of using foreign aid to remedy the development deficit citing how African countries have been the recipients of international aid since their independence but still find themselves in a position that is constantly requiring foreign assistance and remain the “poorest countries on the planet”. He argues that what was supposed to be a solution has become a facilitator of “political weakness, stifling enterprise and making African states less accountable to their citizens”. Adding to this, he states how foreign aid and intervention have propagated “unnecessary bureaucracies and unpopular policies” which have buttressed widening inequalities, authoritarianism and underdevelopment.

Fentahun (2023) argues that African countries despite gaining independence have depended on the West and its former colonial masters for aid and assistance for development and democracy. He buttresses the persistence of neocolonial influence and exploitation in the global political economy in post-colonial Africa because these nations he said, secured a “flag independence without economic autonomy”. This according to him has resulted in a “lack of finance, capital and technical know-how” to stand on its own hence the continued reliance on the West and her former colonial masters. In a similar argument to Buba above, Fentahun highlights how the receipt of aid packages for “industrialization, poverty reduction, good governance and democracy, MDGs” though sizable has not delivered sustainable economic development nor consolidated democracy on the continent. Fentahun (2023) asserts that these supposed free gifts that come in the form of aids are in fact not aids but rather “deliberate instruments of donors to advance their vested interests”.

Other than the traditional donors comprising nations from North America, Western Europe, Scandinavian and the Middle East, there has been an emergence of other donor countries such as “South Africa, Brazil, Korea, India, China, Turkey and Thailand” since the 1970s (Fentahun, 2023). He avers that the beneficiaries of these aid are predominantly countries in Latin America, Asia and Africa. This study initially planned to focus on some of the more recently emerged donor countries (Russia, Turkey and China) that have impacted development in West African countries that comprise ECOWAS.

Alemazung (2010) proffers an analysis of the connection and relationship between Africa and the West as asymmetrical “which cost the continent positive and sustainable development in the political, economic and social” sectors. She also acutely expands the negative impacts also to the “irresponsible and greedy leadership” which has meddled itself in corruption and mismanagement akin to the continent’s downturn. She asserts that the cornerstone of failure on the continent is strongly hinged on colonialism and the

legacies through African political elites since independence. This has been facilitated through post-colonial development aid which she states has been counterproductive and caused more harm than good. She does draw the conclusion that exogenous factors are responsible for the development of underdevelopment in Africa.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2012) whilst providing an analysis of development studies expressed the Western-centric neoliberal world systems which is still entrenched in epistemic decolonial ideologies which is still very much reflecting a civilizing mission in Africa. These ideas by the West are without recourse to how it “impinges on African political and economic discourses”. According to him, “postcolonial states and their African national projects have remained hostage to the immanent logic of colonialism and coloniality” and as such, discourses on development have become enmeshed in “coloniality of power” which thus impedes democratic, inclusive and sustainable development in Africa.

A lot of the publications reviewed have provided a somewhat tilted narrative about the place of Africa in global affairs. This narrative often paints a picture of a marginalized Africa who is just an onlooker and a receiver in global relations. Even though there is an element of truth in such analysis, it doesn't paint the complete picture of Africa regardless of the era (pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial) it is situated in. Africa has and always been a part of international affairs and as will be seen in the next segment of this paper, have become more assertive about their role in the world ecosystem. This paper thus aligns with Beswick and Hammerstad's (2013) postulations to “challenge narratives of Africa that present the entire continent as perpetual victim and lacking political initiative” in the sense that their “actions are solely shaped by outside actors over which they have little or no control”.

5. The Growth of Africa in Global Affairs (African Agency)

Agency in international relations is the capacity of states (which today also includes non-state actors) to “generate and deploy a range of capabilities (hard and soft) in the pursuit of their national interests (Andreasson as cited in Lala, 2018, p. 8).” This capacity Lala continues, must be implemented through deliberate policies that externally exerting political influence. African Agency in international relations debate refers to the potential of African nations to “negotiate and bargain” with international actors in the best interest of these African nations (Chipaike & Knowledge, 2018, p. 1). Lala (2018, p. 8) broke down African Agency into four spheres consisting of intergovernmental organizations where regional and regional organizations subsist; national states; state-based actors acting on behalf of the state; and non-state actors.

Agency as mentioned above is not just limited to the purview of state actors but is also multifaceted and all-encompassing to include non-state actors within the African area in the interest of Africa. However, broaching the topical debate of African Agency in the context of this paper is not in the generalized term encompassing all the actors (state and non-state) on the African continent. Rather the paper limits its scope to a collection of African state actors with both collective and individual interests - ECOWAS. This is because state actors “generally possess a larger repertoire of agency that other African actors (Beswick & Hammerstad, 2013)”. Such regional collaborations in African politics and socio-economic cycles have received a boost through the “renewed attempt to make African numbers count in international forums (Brown, 2012)”. The African Union (AU) has been the umbrella organization leading and paving the way for collective action,

negotiation and planning. This has allowed smaller regional groups to key into such strategies and also uphold a collective voice in advancing sub-regional interests. The AU and sub-regional bodies have endangered collaborations to allow for smoother action for the collective good. Shaw (2016) these interstate relationships that have fostered integration has further buttressed the “expansion of African agency” which has allowed the continent to traverse the path of self-sustainability and even as they are “becoming a policy maker rather than a perpetual policy-taker”.

Brown (2012) argues that in more recently, African nations have emerged as prominent actors in the international political scene. This is a radical shift from the notion of Africa as being “acted upon...history’s recipient” to a now dominant actor and an historical agent. He points to examples in the role African nations have been called to play in high level international topical issues such as climate change, the G8 and G20 meetings. These according to him are resulting to emerging areas of interdependence between African nations and the international community especially around the new security issues such as migration, environment and health. More importantly, he points to the more contemporary “scramble for Africa” which has garnered a lot of international attention and interests by several state and non-state actors on scales which he argues has surpassed the original scramble for Africa decades ago. Mlambo et al. (2024) alluded to the postulations about the post-independence scramble for Africa which continues till date stating that it stems from the desire by major powers who are competing for influence and deeper relations in/with the region.

Brown (2012) further states that contemporary African elites have shown that contrary to popular belief, Africans are no longer bystanders in the international system but are also able to manipulate international systems to suit their own interests also. He states that the power of donor conditionalities are being tested through African assertiveness where recipients have shown they can exert agency based on sovereignty as they steer donors towards their priorities. Africa is no longer a peripheral agent of the international system but is rather stepping into its place in the global order (Coffie & Tiky, 2021). They argue that Africa is no longer a just a test tube but also organically developing ideas.

Chipaike and Knowledge (2018) averred to the denominating of “Africa as a supplicant actor...peripheral...passive”, marginalized and lacks agency in the international system. They opine that “African actors are able to exert assertive agency in their various encounters with external partners”. The level of assertiveness however is impacted by other existential factors like the regime (type of governance or leader) in place and the willingness of said regime to collaborate with other key actors in their engagements with foreign actors. They point to the neoliberal roles that international financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank have played in restraining the sovereign power of most African nations to act locally with even less room to maneuver in the international system. This has led to the championing by Africans of very harsh criticisms on these Bretton Woods institutions for being more pro-West against African interests and their structural adjustment programs which is believed to have negatively impacted the developing countries of Africa (Lala, 2018).

This exploitation by the international institutions was also supported by other bilateral state donors who also exerted influence on local operations in these African states politically and socio-economically. Citing scholars such as Dunn (2001), Chipaike and Knowledge (2018) refer to this as the re-colonization of Africa. They argue that African agency is being advanced by African elites to establish and manipulate

international collaborations in the interest of their nations showing significant capability to ensure state survival. Their collective agency has enabled them to stand united in several international fora and also to act collectively against domestic issues on the continent. Their research also points out the economic gains African agency is able to elicit with their collective dealings with international financial institutions for fairer and more equitable world trading systems. This they say has been advanced through more assertiveness in “global negotiation and have utilized justice and fairness rhetoric to exert blocking power (Chipaike & Knowledge, 2018)”.

To Beswick and Hammerstad (2013) the international relations theorists provide an analysis of activities in the international system as an “arena of limited agency” where the vast majority of state actors are excluded by the domination of great powers. In referencing Africa, they highlighted that regardless of constraints that simmer around limiting relevant actors exercising their agency, these actors have been able to engage processes, make active decisions regardless of limited options in the interests of those they represent. These processes they say, accumulates experience and builds up resources and repositories for future decision making. They state that African agency is both relational and dynamic as they engage with other actors, structures and processes locally and internationally. Thus, regardless of prevailing challenges and limitations, “African actors... are far from passive subjects or voiceless victims” but rather are able to maximize their agency.

6. Emerging Donors in Africa (Turkey, Russia and China)

Emerging donors are comprised mostly of countries who used to be donor recipients themselves who have transformed into donor nations that contribute a growing percentage of global aid today, a portion of which is expected to keep rising as these nations continue their “silent revolution” (Kavakli, 2018). The reversal of Western dominance in Africa is said to have been impacted by “fractured relationships and policy missteps” by the United States and her ally France amongst other allies resulting in “security and economic gaps” which were quickly filled by Russia and China (Carvalho, 2024). Carvalho (2024) states that Africa is no longer content with Western development assistant strategies and are now seeking greater investments on the continent and equal partnerships. African nations are therefore seeking to “diversify their international relations” in a manner that reduces their dependency on certain global powers and enables them to desist from being pawns in geopolitical conflicts which most often does not align with African interests.

“The multi-polarization of the international system and the rise of nations from the global South opened new avenues for Africa and increased its role in global politics (Lala, 2018)”. He asserts that Africa over the past 20 years have been able to emerge from a once hopeless continent to the rising star and cited a clarion call by former British Prime Minister Tony Blair for the international system to support “a partnership for Africa” through various forms of collaborations and strategies. Lala (2018) highlights that Africa today has emerged in a “multiplex world” which is very interconnected and interdependent. He continues that Africa is gaining much from this multilateralism and is “gradually taking its seat at the table and re-negotiating its place in the global system by successfully contributing in international negotiations.”

Mlambo et al. (2024) cited a caution from the former Ghanaian President Kwame Nkrumah stating that even though imperialism is no longer manifesting on the shores of Africa, the colonialists “would still find ways of exerting control over Africa”. They

elucidated some of the ways to include financial contributions, elevation of civil servants and control over foreign exchange as examples of hegemonic neocolonial impositions. This, they argue constitutes the new scramble for Africa which was heralded by the United States and China jostling for power and influence on the continent. This has been closely followed by Russia, Turkey, the European Union, India, Japan, Brazil and Israel. Drawing from data in 2021, they provided examples of China-Africa trade valued at USD 254.3 billion which they state was a 35.3% increase from the previous year; Russia-Africa, they summed up the value to USD 15.6 billion; India-Africa, USD 89.5 billion and United States-Africa, USD 83.6 billion. They disclaimed however that these seemingly high numbers do not portend uhuru as most of African exports are predominantly dominated by raw materials crude, oil, gold, coal and other minerals.

Lala (2018) argues that stemming from Africa's past with imperialism, many African leaders sought to find an end to Western hegemony by seeking equal partnerships. This he says emerging powers of the global South have been able to utilize to improve and solidify their relationship with Africa by presenting a South-South solidarity of shared identity based on historical pasts, inequality and the "inherently incommensurate structures of the international order".

Varied foreign state actors have had both negative and positive impacts on the development of ECOWAS states. Some of these impacts have been sourced through foreign aid, grants and loans for the facilitation of infrastructure development, strengthening of public and private institutions, social welfare programs, tackling refugee and other displacement crisis and many more. Africa is experiencing a greater resurgence of interests from both traditional and emerging international actors to foster collaborations and partnerships. This has "created an enabling environment for investment and general economic development" in Africa (Chipaike & Knowledge, 2018)".

Africa provides a tripartite atmosphere for markets, natural resources and human capital making it very attractive to diverse international actors comprising both dominant and emerging powers alike. Africa's population (which directly impacts markets and human capital) is rising fast from 17% of global population in 2017 to a projected 20% by 2030 (Barabanov *et al.*, 2019). They also forecasted an estimated jump to 26% and 40% for the year 2050 and 2100 respectively for Africa's share of global population. Fedorchenko *et al.* (2022) highlights that Africa is rich in mineral deposits, capacity for highly productive agriculture, forests with valuable species of trees, a rapidly growing economy, a vast population and the potential to be one of the world's largest markets for goods and services. This positively aligns Africa to a position where it can leverage on its current status and attraction to advance her own interests and agendas. Chipaike and Knowledge (2018) state that they can use their current agency to also attract "favorable credit lines...international agreements", aid and also enhancing the capacity of their security and law enforcement agencies in cases where they are collaborating on peace, counter terrorism and counter piracy operations.

6.1. China

Taylor (2010) situates the shift of China's attention to Africa to their deteriorating relations with the West which necessitated a foreign policy shift toward courting the developing world for resources, trade and geopolitical realignments. According to Hinga *et al.* (2013), as China has emerged "as a global superpower, it views Africa as a strategic partner in the race for natural resources and a ground for newer markets".

The nature of Africa-China collaborations over the years has engendered many African nations to seek greater collaborations with China. The Chinese are said to “perceive Africa as a mutually equitable collaborator” and are investing heavily in providing infrastructure in the region (Mlambo *et al.*, 2024)”. Hence many African nations view China as a dependable ally which Mlambo *et al.* (2024) posit demonstrates “respect for African interests and refraining from imposing its own agenda” resulting to some African nations holding China in “high esteem”. According to them, China has furthermore endeared African nations by waiving “23 interest-free loans for 17 African nations”, cancellation of USD “3.4 billion” and furthermore the restructuring of an USD “15 billion” debt incurred by African nations between 2000-2019.

China’s trade with Africa has grown from USD 11.67 billion in the year 2000 to USD 257.67 billion in 2022 as their interest in Africa has grown from marginal to substantive (Carvalho, 2024). This is also evident in their investment in the belt and road initiative which has manifested in several infrastructural projects and strategic investments as they increase their presence on the continent. This initiative at inception was targeted investment and development from Asia to Europe before its later extension to include Africa (Osman Elnor, 2022). China has also been keen in dialoging with African leaders and creating opportunities through the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC). The establishment of FOCAC has “provided an effective platform and multilateral mechanism for China and African countries to conduct collective consultations and carry out pragmatic cooperation (Taylor, 2010; Aiping & Zhan, 2018)”. The establishment of FOCAC as a culmination of over 50 years of China-Africa relations to allow for institutionalization and increased linkages (Taylor, 2010; Siméon *et al.*, 2022). The event (now tagged a Summit) takes place every three years and is interchangeably hosted in Chinese and African cities. The summit provides a forum where the Chinese President and African Heads of States discuss and agree on major policy and financing collaborations (Eom *et al.*, 2018). Dankwah (2023) buttresses the important of African agency in shaping the discourse that will enable Africa benefit from this partnership.

Grimm (2017) argues that the China-Africa relationship poses both opportunities and challenges as Chinese rhetoric, their perception in Africa intersects with the African expectations of what a collaboration with China should breed. He contends that in a continent with 54 independent states, the activities of China on the continent cannot all be viewed with the same lens and such will also be the interpretations of their impact positively or negatively. This rhetoric, Alden and Large (2017) state, is reinforced through the mainstreaming of “political equality, mutual benefit, sovereignty, non-interference and win-win cooperation” which is a radical shift from what the traditional power brokers used in approaching their relations and collaborations with Africa. This is what they call the China policy of “exceptionalism” which has contributed to making China an allure to many African nations. They reinforce that even though this relationship isn’t symmetrical in terms of economic content (because China seems to shoulder the bulk of it), China is doing a lot to ensure that there is equality in economic gains and political standing which is big show of mutual respect and benefit for all parties involved.

Chinese engagements in Africa have expanded to education and cultural exchanges, financial services, agriculture, infrastructure and many others (Alden & Large, 2017). According to them, China has also set aside a development fund for Africa domiciled in the Chinese Development Bank which is currently being used to facilitate several projects on the continent; delaminated several special economic zones starting in

Zambia, Mauritius and Angola; backed the establishment of free trade and export processing zones three of which are in Nigeria; high profile energy security and investments in small and medium scale businesses Chinese and African businesses.

Harping on the agricultural sector, Siméon et al. (2022) point out that China's support to agricultural development and sustainability in Africa "has aroused both hope and mistrust" amongst Africans. Even though some buttress the mutual benefit to China's agricultural assistance, others (both domestically and internationally) have accused China of ulterior motives. China according to Siméon et al. (2022) however, have invested in agriculture in Africa for over five decades to ensure food security in Africa and through FOCAC they have made commitments to improve the continents food security. This they say has led to the establishment of the Agricultural Technology Demonstration Centers programs to boost the African agricultural sector. At inception, Buckley (2013) states that China used the tool of Agriculture in Africa as a "soft power" tactic to gain "recognition on the global stage". This was given based on a bilateral agreement or as a donation-based aid. This according to Buckley was a successful attempt based on the "One China" policy to gain recognition for Taiwan as a part of China and to gain a successful bid for a seat at the UN. All these helped in increasing the power of China on the global stage and to have good bargaining power on negotiating tables.

Eom et al. (2018) while forecasting the 2018 FOCAC summit highlighted that there will be new areas of cooperation in renewable energy and the belt and road initiative. They also stated that China-Africa relations is beginning to slow in terms of trade but increase in other areas such as peace and security; infrastructure loans as well as investment loans for manufacturing and capacity building. They also pointed out the distinctive nature of Chinese loans not adding to the debt distress of Africa even though future loans from FOCAC may take the debt burden of the continent into account. Shelton and Paruk (2008) point out that FOCAC provides Africa with a more holistic agenda for a more socio-political and socio-economic interfacing with China. They state that Africa has to be proactive about its response to these opportunities so as to optimize profitable impacts it can produce in the interest of all parties involved.

Lala (2018) also gave credence to the growth of the global south especially China and the increased avenues it has opened up for African nations. This, he says has increased "Africa's position as a global player. Osman Elnor (2022) opines that the past two decades of China-Africa collaboration has produced significant results in the "political, economic, technical, scientific and socio-cultural" sectors impacting "investment, trade, health, agriculture, energy, education, culture and people-to-people exchanges". This he says has sustainable development and the elevation of the standard of living for many Africans. He also highlights that the China-Africa partnership is also juxtaposing the belt and road initiative with the United Nations Sustainable Development 2030 agenda and the African Unions 2063 agenda which are both pivotal to sustainable development in Africa.

The exceptionalist win-win policy put forward by China has been questioned however by scholars such as Dankwah (2023) who argue that the exploitative and hegemonic relationship that Africa used to have with the West has a potential of repeating itself in Africa's relationship with China. Despite an appreciation for the contribution of China to economic and infrastructural development in Africa, he avers that there remains a concern of the exploitative tendencies that the relationship with China could unfold. He points out that there are unpopular non-state centric narratives which showcases African concerns through the lens of non-state actors about the conduct of variegated nefarious Chinese entities. Hinga et al. (2013) also point to the comments about China's "diplomatic

and trade maneuvers...with rogue states and despotic African leaders” at the expense of the people they rule. They also highlighted comments about “poor labor conditions and appalling environmental records...fanning conflicts...supporting oppressive governments against opposition parties or in clamping down on their citizens”.

6.2. Russia

Russia is considered to be a longtime ally of the African continent. They were not part of the slave trade but even provided naval assistance to prevent the exportation of African slaves to the Americas through the Atlantic; they had not participated in the partitioning of Africa; did not hold any colonies on the continent but rather even encouraged the independence of many African countries by pushing for the United Nations General Assembly “Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples” (Abramova & Fituni, 2020). Haruna and Salam (2021) agreed with this assertion stating that diplomatic ties between Russia and Africa dates back to its “dark decades of collective struggle for continental decolonization”. This they say gives credence through historical evidence of Russia’s contributions to the continent in retort to counter the claims of critics of Russia’s intensions in the region. The same assertion is further buttressed by Duursma and Masuhr (2022) acknowledging that “Russia deploys normative justifications like anti-colonialism to justify its involvement in Africa”.

According to Abramova and Fituni (2020), the Russia-Africa collaboration in the 1960s and 70s fostered over 200 agreements on trade, air/sea traffic and the opening of Soviet cultural centers. Through the 1980s, more agreements were reached sectors covering energy, steel, industries, education and agriculture to foster development in Africa whilst also obtaining raw materials such as bauxite for their industries in Russia as a way of subsidizing payment for loans given by Russia. Africa was also an important market for industrial products from Russia during this period. Over the last three decades, Russia has written off most of the debts incurred by African countries to the tune of over USD “20 billion” (Abramova & Fituni, 2020).

However, Russia had been a passive player in Africa since the end of the cold war. This is what Kozhemiakin and Kanet (1995) refer to as “a decade of retreat” from which they have re-emerged and over the past two decades their activities in the region have begun to pick up steam. Ibatullin (2016) argues that Africa heralds an economic rivalry between former metropolitan countries and the new political factors like the United States and China, Russia is hoping to leverage on its past contributions to Africa which has created a positive image during the Soviet era to renew and deepen new partnerships and collaboration with the continent. The Russian government have been involved in dialoguing with African leaders and created a forum to diversify their interests in Africa through multiple collaborations and partnerships through the Russia-Africa Summit. Fedorchenko et al. (2022) calls this “summit diplomacy” in what they consider to be “an integral part of a multi-vector network diplomacy...which they see as an alternative to traditional diplomacy”.

Bakalova and Spanger (2013) traced the passivity mentioned above to the demise of the Soviet Union hampering their development assistance efforts. They averred that Russia has joined the fray of new donors even if it is considered modest compared to the record of other international players in Africa. Their involvement, they continued, in the South-South collaboration with Africa has voided the hither to conditionality that traditional donors had imposed on Africa such as democracy, transparency and the generality of using aid as an instrument of pursuing their foreign policy interests in Africa.

According to them, ever since the re-emergence of Russia to the foray of international relations and partnerships, they have sought increasing collaborations with Africa with visits by Vladimir Putin (former and present Russian President) to South Africa in 2006 and also trips by Dmitry Medvedev (Russia's president 2008-2012) in 2009 to Nigeria, Namibia, Angola and Egypt. Such collaborations have led to a lot of Russian investors and businesses setting up shop in Africa through a Russian Coordinating Committee for Economic Cooperation with the Countries of sub-Saharan Africa (Vasilev as cited in Bakalova & Spanger, 2013).

Abramova (2021) sheds light on Russia's current approaches to the window of opportunities presented by Africa in their effort to penetrate these highly competitive and transition economies. He states that their strategy is for the purposes of "recovery and diversification of domestic manufacturing, the construction industry, the infrastructure and the services sector". He buttresses that Russia considers Africa as an avenue to "restore and boost industries...as well as sharpen and upgrade skills.

Most pundits highlight the year 2019 as the turnaround in Russia-Africa relations as Moscow put forward its new strategies to promote "major initiatives to facilitated development" in Africa (Barabanov *et al.*, 2019). This strategy, they say, is not to work against or in competition with other players international players on the African continent but rather to add value to the development of Africa through the projects they will be implementing. Abramova and Fituni (2020) emphasized this turnaround when they stated that the year 2019 witnessed several events that enshrined Russia-Africa relations. These events they stated where the "Russia-Africa Business Forum organized by the Russian Ministry of Economic Development; the Eurasian Economic Union-Africa" partnership; the establishment of an "African section at the St Petersburg Economic Forum; the annual meeting of Afreximbank, which included the Russia-Africa economic conference" and a Russia-Africa parliamentary conference "organized by the state Duma of the Russian Federation" amongst many other events. As at 2018, the Russia-Africa trade has risen to USD "20.4" billion (p. 693). The latest of the Russia-Africa summit which took place in 2023 where the African agency was at work explicitly showcasing African discontent over how the Ukraine war has impacted food security on the African continent. African representatives implied that regardless of the shared anti-colonial resentment, it does not automatically "translate into unconditional support for Russia (Bartosiewicz, 2023)". The attendance at this summit fell far short of the prior summit with only "17 heads of states" in attendance sending a clear signal to Moscow about African agency concerning how the Ukraine war has affected them (Vines & Amare, 2023).

Russia is currently involved in developing the energy sector on the continent. One of such projects is a nuclear power plant in Egypt amongst other power projects on the continent (Abramova & Fituni, 2020). They have also located a "Russia industrial zone" in Egypt (p. 694). They are also the largest arms supplier on the African continent with about 40% between 2018-2022, higher than the United States, France and China combined (Droin & Dolbaia, 2024). Droin and Dolbaia (2024) state that Russia organizes military forums and exercises with African states and have also supported United Nations peacekeeping operations on the continent. They estimate the operation of over seven Russian private military companies in Africa who have been involved in over 34 missions in 16 countries on the continent dating since 2005. Some examples of countries where these private military practices are operating include Central African Republic, Sudan, South Sudan, "Congo, Gabon, Libya, Mali and Madagascar (Droin & Dolbaia, 2024)".

They are also involved in the training and equipping of the army and other security forces in a lot of countries in Africa.

When looking at some of the criticisms of the Russia-Africa relationship, Duursma and Masuhr (2022) point out the bureaucratic, patron-client relationship termed Putin's "Solar System" where the Russian president's cronies and loyalists (essentially the inner cycle of Vladimir Putin) are used within government official circles occupying strategic positions and also in some of its foreign dealings. Some of these foreign solar dealings are exemplified through the Wagner Forces and other Oligarchs linked to the inner cycle.

Duursma and Masuhr (2022) said this solar system which is "patronage-based politics and business" could serve to be a major weakness of Russia's interaction with Africa. They point to increased Russian involvement in unstable democracies in Africa which patronage politics is thriving. This has placed them in a bad light where some Africans' see them as supporting and protecting unpopular governments just so that business can continue as usual (access to natural resources). They not only supply them with arms and ammunition and in some cases mercenaries but also funding candidates during elections. Duursma and Masuhr cited examples of Russian patronage in countries such as Central African Republic, Madagascar, Zimbabwe and Libya.

Droin and Dolbaia (2024) attached some of the benefits to Russia being gold, diamond, uranium, oil and gas in official government deals with companies closely linked to Putin's Solar system associates. Ferragamo (2023) states that "Moscow is bolstering authoritarianism, driving conflict over resources and threatening human rights". He links Russia to the backing of a string of unconstitutional changes in governments.

There have also been accusations of Russia's involvement in unconstitutional changes in government in Niger where the Russian flag was waved during the Niger coup (Droin & Dolbaia, 2024). This claim is further accentuated by the ties Russia is trying to build with Burkina Faso. Its military leader Captain Ibrahim Traore during the 2023 Russia-Africa summit held a meeting at the sidelines to deepen their relationship after the ouster of France and the government from the country (Vines & Amare, 2023). They continue, that there was also a show of support to the Russian government by the Malian military junta leader Assimi Goita and the president of the Central African Republic Faustin-Archange Touadera all of whose countries are dependent on the Wagner Group for security. Droin and Dolbaia (2024) claim a strategy akin to predatory opportunism with regard to Russia looking to fill in the void in sectors where Western powers are absent in Africa.

A further criticism is that of primarily focusing on extracting raw materials without much corporate social responsibility, economic, social and other benefits to the communities themselves such as training, jobs and social upward mobility (Barabanov *et al.*, 2019). They state that Russia could face accusations of neocolonialism since it is beginning to look like their sole objective is resources. They advised that Russian commercial projects through their companies should be working in tandem with development assistance programs. Snigyr (2024) on the other hand accuses Russia of being malleable and opportunistic as they use their information operation to expand their presence in Africa by turning African countries into allies to bolster their power and influence in their confrontation with the West. She states that Russia's strategy is to use to façade of jointly fighting together with African countries against the neocolonial tendencies of the West while advancing the Russian interest geared at uprooting the western led systems of international law and institutions on its path to creating a multipolar international system.

6.3. Turkey

Kulaklikaya and Nurdun (2010) highlighted how Turkey has transformed itself within the past six decades from a country that used to benefit from aid to an emerging donor providing aid to countries around the world. They also aver that aid is also being used by Turkey to advance their foreign policy interests around the world. Turkey's first aid project in 1985 was implemented in Africa with USD 10 million funding targeting capacity building in Gambia, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Mauritania, Senegal, Somali and Sudan (Kulaklikaya & Nurdun, 2010). They argue that this was motivated by a foreign policy projection to improve the global image of Turkey even as they integrated into the global economy seeing the aid to Africa as a very positive first step towards improved trade with developing countries. Němečková and Varkočková (2024) state that the partnership between Turkey and Africa is multilayered with an aim to establish close political relations, build trade, investments, security and humanitarian assistance.

Özkan and Akgün (2010) situate their another revival of Turkey-Africa relations to 1998. They stated that this relationship still remained passive and resurged again in 2005 with a massive effort to create partnerships within the entire continent. This they say, has led to the creation of the Turkish-Africa Cooperation Summit with an aim to fast-track, deepen and stabilize this partnership for the long-term.

Bayram (2020) considers Turkey to be in sync with "African priorities" in their new "cooperation paradigm". He however traces Turkey's partnership with Africa to several centuries back dating from before and during the Ottoman empire with significant relations with many countries from the north of Africa to the central, eastern and southern parts of the continent. These relationships were however mostly military and political. These thoughts were also buttressed by Němečková and Varkočková (2024) particularly highlighting the relationship during the Ottoman period from the 16th century also emphasizing political, military and cultural influences.

A lot of Turkish partnership in Africa has been linked by several authors to the politics within Turkey itself. More significantly, Bayram (2020) and Němečková and Varkočková (2024) highlights that the emergence of the Justice and Development Party to power heralded a strategic focus on Africa as "Turkey declared 2005 as the year of Africa". It kickstarted several visits by top political office holders to Africa including the president, the prime minister and foreign minister to African nations. The current Turkish president, Recep Tayyip Erdogan within the period 2014-2019 visited over 23 African nations (Bayram, 2020).

The Turkish-Africa relationship seem to be bearing fruits as Turkey was made an observer nation in the African Union, declared a strategic partner by the African Union, received 50 votes from African nations to be made a non-permanent member of the United Nations security council in 2009, African diplomatic missions in Turkey has increased from 10 to 33, Turkey diplomatic presence in Africa aims to reach 54 embassies and the Turkish National carrier, Turkish Airlines now connects 55 destinations in 37 African countries (Bayram, 2020; Němečková & Varkočková, 2024). Bayram states that during the first Turkey-Africa Cooperation Summit in 2008, 49 African countries were present. It culminated in the adoption of the Framework of Cooperation for Turkey-Africa Partnership which curated cooperation in sectors such as "agriculture, health, education, energy, infrastructure and security". In a bid to strengthen Turkish foreign direct investment into Africa, the 2014 summit centralized African economic development under the theme "a new model of partnership for the strengthening of economic development and integration".

According to Bayram (2020), these summits were also followed by Economic and Business Forums with an aim to promote public-private partnership models to facilitate development in sectors such as infrastructure, energy and transport. More importantly, Bayram highlighted Turkey's willingness to share their development journey with countries in Africa to learn from their experience. He also noted the Program for Infrastructure Development in Africa and the Presidential Infrastructure Champion Initiative for designing, financing and managing projects in Africa.

In the past two decades, the volume of trade between Turkey and Africa has seen significant increase from USD 5 billion to over USD 20 billion (Bayram, 2020). He states that Turkish investments in Africa is over USD 6.2 billion generating close to 20 million jobs and Turkish contractors have executed projects worth over USD 55 billion. Němečková and Varkočková (2024) state that since Turkey's re-emergence to global power, they have strategically utilized and integrated "soft power elements" into their foreign policy as they partner with Africa. According to them, this "involves building diplomatic networks, providing development aid and enhancing education, business, religious and cultural cooperation. Aras and Mohammed (2018) also alluded to the use of soft power in Turkish foreign policy projections with Africa with emphasis to the use of "state-sponsored educational scholarship programs". Turhan's (2023) analysis of Turkey's soft power relations with Africa focused on Turkey's humanitarian aid to Africa particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. Africa on the other hand have been able to mainstream and juxtapose their African Union Agenda 2063 development framework in their discussions with Turkey (Bayram, 2020).

7. Conclusion

Africa's "economic renaissance" spanning over three decades has made the continent to become one of the "second fastest growing regions after Asia (Němečková & Varkočková, 2024, p. 491)." Regardless, African agency is definitely still a work in progress and a reason why this paper is moving to mainstream how subregional groupings like ECOWAS and regional groups like the African Union, and also state and non-state actors can harness the power of partnership and collaboration to advance their collective interest in the international space. These multilateral partnerships should harness and deploy the merits of the diversity of inter-group, cross-cultural and leadership relations within the AU and other sub-regional groupings such as ECOWAS.

Brown (2012) calls this 'making numbers count' as national interests are able to conflate under a common broader interest. Lala (2018, p. 3) highlighted that African agency has emerged in "multilateral fora in the domains of peace, security, climate change, and in shaping the global normative framework." He echo's the assertions of Africa beginning to "assert its voice at different levels" in the multiplex global system. Africa's growing agency should thus be utilized by governments and other stakeholders to inform social policy creation and implementation that fosters collective/inclusive development and growth in the region.

It is highly important that every actor (especially state actors) leading the charge for African agency has a thorough grasp of the motives and interests of potential and current partners (either emerging or traditional). Kavakli (2018) argues that the "how and why emerging donors give aid" is very important because some partnerships are propelled by self-interests which in the case of Africa is an interest in its natural resources which these donors will want to access without adding any value in terms of capacity building. This

he calls a new colonialism. He also expresses that on the other hand, some partnerships are based on the mutual desire to help each other to foster development and growth.

Owing to several old and new partnerships and interests on the continent, “Africa’s geopolitical significance” has propelled to new levels in the “first quarter of the 21st century” (Bayram, 2020). Africa is thus today playing a significant role in “molding the agenda of international institutions” and are also greatly influencing “the trajectory of major international debates” concerning “aid, development, trade, climate change and migration (Fisher, 2018)”. The future of African agency as Shaw (2016) elucidates it envisions Africa’s greater role in world affairs not just as a continent acted upon but also as a dynamic and formidable actor able to exert influence. He also foresees Africa being “a historical agent and not just history’s recipient”.

Africa’s rapidly growing economy has also played a dominant role to its agency, global impact and attraction. Shaw (2015) avers that since the beginning of the millennium, the GDP of the African continent has risen more than the global average on a yearly basis. He states that within the time spanning 2005-2010, “only the bloc of developing Asian economies, led by China, has grown faster than Africa”. The world is growing to see the potential Africa has which is very different from its former position of provider of raw materials to industrialized nations. How Africa utilizes this potential capacity and the competition to collaborate with Africa will determine the extent to which African agency can be further strengthened and exert more influence in the multiplex, multipolar international system.

African agency is also tilting towards non-alignment with one country or region giving them the flexibility to hold opinions and make a stance on geo-political matters that may not bode in their interest. In what Carvalho (2024) calls a “fragmented global order”, African neutrality allows it to align with any country or region that will align to its strategic short- and long-term interests. It also allows for unmitigated interaction with different sides and they can leverage on this strategic power to have a dominant voice in international affairs. Africa must continue to “navigate complex geopolitical dynamics” as they foster and advance their interests in seeking partnerships, collaborations and investments by leveraging on “competing interests to their advantage” to “maximize benefits and minimize risks (Carvalho, 2024)”. China is heralded as the external actor with the most influence in Africa today. Alden and Large (2017) state that they are the most important rising force on the continent and its entanglement with African affairs has become significantly enhanced and will continue to impact the continent on the long term.

Regional and sub-regional capacities must be strengthened to harness the power of one voice, natural resources, human resources, markets etc. to advance Africa’s strategic interests and magnify its bargaining power on the negotiating table. It is important for African and global leaders alike to take into account the rapidly growing African population which expected to make up 40% of the world population in the next 75 years. If development is not properly managed, it may portend disaster for the continent and the world at large if the teeming youth population between now and then is not meaningfully engaged through by building the human capacity through (but not limited to) education, sports, entertainment, entrepreneurship and jobs. It is already evident the number of Africans who through any means necessary try to migrate to other regions of the world in search of a better life.

As Osman Elnor (2022) puts it, “Africa is undoubtedly the continent of the future” and this forecast will continually make it central to both geopolitical and economic global affairs. With a rapidly growing economy, a booming youthful human resource and a

bourgeoning market, investing in Africa will prove to be a tangible and profitable resource for both now and the future. African leaders and elites must therefore do their best to maximize this advantage in the interest of Africa and Africans. They must ensure strategic planning and execution to remain at the center of global affairs, exerting real power and influence through all spheres of African agency. Failure to do so will again push the continent to the brinks of the periphery where the world will tacitly continue to use it as a means to an end. This paper also joins in clarion call for international relations theories, concept and methods scholars to mainstream African agency in its newfound sphere of influence in the international order based on the contemporary multipolar world order.

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