



United States and China Geo-Political Tussle and Political Stability in the Gulf of Guinea

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Abstract

The demise of the Soviet Union some three decades ago, brought about a brief disproportionate power quotient in world politics - dropping as it were, the rival Left Ideology down the pyramid and weaned the rivalry for the US-led capitalist bloc. Unfortunately, the US did not savour the victory of unipolarity for too long, as it was quickly challenged in all fronts by China. In economic sphere, industrialization, technology, power, military capabilities, diplomatic outreach and alliances. China has challenged the US dominance, demystified its alliance system and threw up new rivalry in the strategic geo-political space. This new rivalry de-emphasizes the old order of social and intellectual ideology for resource empire building and more importantly, strategic league around the natural resources' rich region of the Gulf of Guinea. The current reality, is the contest between the US and China for oil resource and the struggle for geopolitical control of the entire region. These adventurous moves are creating in the region, a regime of noxious multi-faceted security challenges. While scholars have dissipated research energy on mineral resources exploration in the region by these giants, scaling them on economic exploitation, ecological, and social problems, little or no attention has been paid to the angle of disturbing political muddling of these guests in a manner that is fertilizing social disorder and enabling political instability. This work therefore, seeks to unravel, through literature, the disturbing political instability which the geo-political contestation of the two rivals is generating in the Gulf of Guinea area. The study adopted the Classical theory of Geopolitics in interrogating the incidences of political instability in the GG as a result of the exploits of the US and China, the Time Series for the research design and documentary methods for data collection. Findings show that the quest to establish political hold in this region, is generating unhealthy domestic political instability.

Key words: US, China, the Gulf of Guinea, Geopolitical tussle, Political instability.

I. Introduction:

The Gulf of Guinea like the entire Africa, has been a region in constant wave of geopolitical invasion and contest in the geostrategic equation of foreign interests. At every stage in global socio-political and economic evolution, the region has attractively aided the dialectics of economic development in terms of lubricating the difficulties in sourcing the desired needs of the industrial nations in cheap labour and raw materials. In other words, the Gulf of Guinea region has been industrial development friendly at every epoch. First, with the entire Africa, was the darling of the Europe and America in the supply of cheap labour through slave trade of the early industrial revolution, also a strategic destination for raw materials. Interestingly, the geostrategic significance of the region once again gained more visibility with the development of commercial sea navigation as the region is located within the busiest navigational route of the Atlantic Ocean. Following the discovery of large deposit of hydrocarbon in the Gulf of Guinea (GG) in the early 1960s, the dynamics of industrialisation and development once again returned the region to the centre of geostrategic contest.

Following this discovery- oil in huge commercial value, another layer of strategy and interests emerged in the contest, from the search of a political influence-colonial area, to the one of control of the burgeoning crude oil industry. Hence, the dominance of the oil multinational companies of Europe and America and the emergence of China in the scene.

As China emerged industrial giant, with quest for expansive commercial areas in crude oil sourcing, it is challenging the Western monopoly and colonial hold, with savoury for raw material. China came into the game with innovative investments in the off-shore oil exploration through



its multinational oil companies- the National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC), Chinese National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC), and Sinopec etc. This new challenge, exacerbated America's greater momentum and vigor to reevaluate and re-strategize its policies and programmes in the region. According to Chris (2007), being challenged by this scenario, and the exigencies of politics and insecurity, former President George W. Bush (Jnr) quickly announced his administration policy to reduce America's oil dependence in the Middle East by 75 percent in preference to the Gulf of Guinea region. This policy was backed up by a proposal of the US oil multinational companies to inject an annual \$10 billion investment capacity in the GG oil industry (CGES, 2006).

In the event of this, both the US and China came up with a kinetic security strategy with the US intensifying Naval control operation in the region, and established its 11th military command structure, the AFRICOM in 2007, created out from EUROCOM situated in Stuttgart Germany. China on its own part, secured Sea Lanes of Communications (SLOCs) and concretized a naval defense cooperation with Sierra-Leone, Nigeria, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea and Angola and their (Hakim, 2013; Ploch, 2007; Raphael, and Doug, 2011; Washington, DC: National Energy Policy Report, May 2001). This is in addition to over 5,000 Chinese troops in African soil most of which are in the oil rich states of the GG, increasing Chinese military presence and security forces to protect their energy assets. This excludes 14 Chinese military attaché offices created within the period under review in the African states of Algeria, Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Liberia, Libya, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Sudan, Tunisia, Zambia and Zimbabwe, who regularly conduct military exchanges and training, and supply African nations, especially Sudan, with arms in return to access to oil and natural resources Susan, M. P. (2007).

Consequently, there have been many scholastic works on the worrisome activities of the Western nations in many forms in the GG and African sub-region using their oil MNCs and other outlets of imperialism and neocolonialism. Many have as a result, argued that Africa is lost in the imbroglio of choice according to Peter (2023), between former colonial masters in the West, and new would-be colonial masters like Russia and China but, much light has not been beamed in researching the destructive political instability of the

geopolitical contest of the US and China in the region, and this is what this study is set to achieve.

We discuss the work through this approach; raising the research question, hypothesis, conceptual clarification, US and China territorial ambition, the new geostrategic war.

Research question:

Has the geo-political contestation between the US and China account for the increasing political instability in the Gulf of Guinea?

Conceptual Clarification.

Geopolitics.

Geopolitics is a concept in international relations that centres on the analysis of the effect of geography (human and physical) on international politics, it examines how geographical factors such as location, resources, climate and physical barriers influence political power, decision-making, and strategic behaviour among nations. It involves understanding the interests, conflicts, and power dynamics that shape political interactions and influence globally. Geopolitics, is a compound word of two different and yet integrated variables 'geo' and 'politics'. In most cases, scholars define this compound word in manners that is weightier on the dependent variable 'politics' though everything about it revolves around international politics yet, the aspect of 'geo' which signifies states as territorial entities, their location, environment, resource and other strategic relevance of that physical and political expression are the items of their role in the global arena. According to As Colin (1999), "all politics is geopolitics". This definition gave expansive weight to politics, its omission of 'geo' is tolerable since states territories are main actors in the international arena but it is also interesting to know that everything is not politics. US former Secretary of States Henry Kissinger defined geopolitics in a language that represents realism, he said, 'politics is a great-power competition' to denote 'approach that pays attention to the requirements of equilibrium,' understood as the balance of power. He popularized this conception during the 1970s, when the term itself had largely been forgotten in the United States (Colin, 1999; Walter, 2014; Geoffrey and Colin, 1999). This is not to attempt that realism and geopolitics are the same, even though the spirit and philosophy of the pursuit of geopolitics cannot be separated from realism. Yet, realism is a concept with a philosophical mindset that takes primacy of



power and security in the struggle among self-interested political groups Robert and Gilpin (1984). Daniel, (2006), defined geopolitics from a historical materialism standpoint, he related geopolitics as a “historical security materialist theory,” equating geography with the material environment. Specifically, he argued that geopolitics explains the creation of the world order in terms of “violence interdependence,” which is determined by geography and technology.

Conceptual and contextual understanding of the relevant place of geopolitics in international relations entails appreciating the factoring of ‘geography’ in the formulation of a nation’s foreign policy and military strategy-geostrategy. Geostrategy is how states leverage their ‘geographic’ position, resources, or proximity to other countries in order to achieve security, economic or political goal. The dimension of geostrategy theory therefore suggest what Andrew (2018), Mahan, (1999) termed ‘sea powers’ as those that exert control over key waterways, and played a decisive role in the military history of Europe, which he saw as marked by clashes of interests among nations. This view interrelates in context and practical terminology, the sea power or maritime environment- geography, to the defense and security capacity in the overall statecraft. Mahan further maintain that strong sea power has three components: commerce, shipping, and colonies. While maritime trade is dependent on commercial shipping, the wealth generated should be protected by a capable navy. Also, the government should secure overseas stations and markets — what Mahan referred to as “colonies” — to fuel and maintain commercial and naval vessels, and to sell industrial products. Mahan argued that whether a country could become a sea power depended on six elements: “geographical position” (insular vs. continental), “physical conformation” (access to the sea and harbors), “extent of territory” (populated coastlines), “population” (seaworthy population), “national character” (commercial aptitude), and “character of the government” (regime type and policy). The first three are “natural conditions,” whereas the latter three pertain to human conditions Alfred (1999). This position is axiomatic as one considers the situation with some coastal states and their experience in being explored and exploited by the foreign nations like; Djibouti, a country in strategic location on the Red Sea and access to the Mediterranean Sea via the Suez Canal, and within striking distance of both North Africa and the Middle East, has experienced varying contradictory foreign dividends in the form of infrastructure

projects where the US pay \$63 million a year to lease space for military base (Antony, 2022).

In a lecture delivered at the Royal Geographical Society in 1904, Mackinder observed that the wealth and power of nations is historically intrinsic to the elements of ‘geopolitics and its mobility. From the theoretical standpoint, classical geopolitics was a structural-materialist approach that derived the explanation for foreign policy from the geographic structure of the world. The explanation provided by these scholars, points to the exigencies of geostrategic power of states to both survive in the world of vary conflicting interests and active player in furthering is foreign policy goals. While the power game of the classical realist school is a fundamental frame of international politics, it does not in any way suggest, that geopolitics is all about factional realism of power. There will always be window for cooperation for the big powers in geopolitical contestation especially, where there is/are common value to pursue a challenge, whose fight would result to mutual benefit.

Political instability

Political instability can be defined as the extent to which the distribution of power within a political system is challenged by internal or external political actors (Maximilian, and Torsten, 2024). According to Richard, (2009), there are four different indicators of political instability as; politically motivated aggression, mass civil protests, instability within the political regime, and instability of the political regime. According to Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary (2015), Political instability, is a political situation in which things are likely to change or fall suddenly in a society. It refers to a condition in which a government, political system, or society is subject to frequent, unpredictable, or dramatic changes in its leadership, policies, or institutional framework. This can result from various factors such as: Rapid turnover of government leaders, a situation in which a country’s leadership is changed either through elections, coups, resignations, or assassinations as the government has lost its legitimacy to govern and command compliance of its citizens. Political instability may start from the malfunctioning of key institutions of the state especially, the executive, legislature and the judiciary arms of government through widespread corruption, lack of justice and equity, political persecution, marginalization of a section of the country, unfriendly policies and programmes, lack of development etc. The ineffective functioning of these institutions



incubates mass protest, riots, strikes, or other forms of civil disobedience.

Political instability of a region arises when the architecture of the respective governments or a collectivity of their policies fails to address common challenges especially ones coming from external influence. When the region fails to enhance their mutual gain through sound policies in a resource they have in collective advantage, either by external influence, or failure of domestic policies, such region will be at the risk of instability. Contextually, political instability in the Gulf of Guinea, is a collective failure of governance: policies and actions to bring about order in the management of the resources-oil, of the region that is resulting to maritime crimes and resource agitations.

The Gulf of Guinea in Global Strategic Relevance.

The Gulf of Guinea, is a geographic region lying in the eastern tropical Atlantic Ocean Southwest Africa. It extends westward from Cap López, near the Equator, to Cape Palmas at longitude 7° west, and cojoined by two major tributaries- the Volta and Niger rivers (Damian Mañe, 2005). The region is a coastal belt which occupies a coverage of about 6000 square kilometers with a political stretch-size reaching from the West Central and southern Africa namely: Angola, Benin, Cameroon, the Central African Republic (CAR), Chad, Cote d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Nigeria, the Republic of Congo, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Sierra-Leone

According to Onuoha (2010), the Gulf of Guinea region is best described and aptly identified in world political reckoning by its rich hydrocarbon endowment. The region has tremendous production capacity of crude oil approximating 5.2 million barrels per day and an estimated value of 50.4 billion barrels in proven reserves. In natural gas production, the region has vast quantities projected to produce one-fifth of global production by 2010 and to add another two to three million barrels per day into the global oil supply. Crude oil revenue accounts for the largest share of states earning of \$200 billion and \$349 billion by 2019.



Above is a graphic Theoretical Framework:

To understand theoretical construct of geopolitical contestation between the US and China in the Gulf of Guinea, this work adopts the Classical theory of geopolitics. This theory emerged during the late 19th century emphasizing the place of 'geography' in shaping states power politics in the international system. Classical theory of geopolitics is an exploratory work of Swedish writer Rudolf Kjellén who coined in the late 1890s, the conviction that location and resources are pivotal to the exercise of political power over territory, the term used to describe the earliest writings, was for Kjellén an intellectual field that recognised that it was "a science which conceives of the state as a geographical organism or as a phenomenon in space." This theory was later garnished by intellectual inputs of three scholars: Halford Mackinder- Heartland theory; Nicholas Spykman- Rimland Theory and Alfred Thayer Mahan- Sea Power Theory. The input of these scholars beamed a scholastic light of elements of realism- power contest of states in extended region-geography from the earlier theoretical frame of Rudolf Kjellén. Halford Mackinder's Heartland Theory, core idea,



explores "Heartland" (the central landmass of Eurasia) leads to dominance over the "World Island" (Eurasia and Africa) and, by extension, global power. In his popular quote, Mackinder wrote, "Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland; who rules the Heartland commands the World Island; who rules the World Island commands the world." He implies in this quote, that land power-extended geographical territory, whoever controls- 'central Eurasia', is crucial for global dominance. Nicholas Spykman (Rimland Theory), gives a wider conception of geography away from Mackinder's Heartland to incorporate into the geostrategy of territorial control, the inclusion of the coastal areas surrounding 'Eurasia' as key to controlling the world. This holds that maritime, coastal powers and resources (Green economy), not only landlocked ones, hold strategic importance in geopolitics Stephen, (1996; Michael, (1991; Robert D. Kaplan, (2019). George, (2015). Alfred Thayer Mahan (Sea Power Theory), holds elements of lethal power supremacy- Naval power determinant of global power. It states that the control of sea routes and maintenance of strong navies dominate trade and geopolitics.

In applying this theory, the lure of the US and China in the GGR, is a geopolitical contest of expansion of political control, territorial leadership and the control of the resources in land, air and sea as well as, favourable policies of the home government.

US-China Gulf of Guinea oil policy and security/military engagement

There is no gain saying the fact that China is posing a huge geostrategic rivalry in the Gulf of Guinea region against the backdrop of the hitherto US and European dominance. Since it is in the national interest of nations to factor access to strategic resources in their foreign policy agenda, the world leading industrial nations- the United States and China rely almost entirely on Africa's Gulf of Guinea where an estimated two third of the continent's crude reserve comes from (Marc, 2015). Besides mere possession of these mineral resources, Africa is a major strength in supplying the US and China such other strategic mineral resources as; Platinum, Iridium, Tantalum and Tourmaline for national defense purposes and production of critical military hardware such as; automotive and aerospace applications; electronics, aircraft engines and satellites; jet engines, missile and global positioning systems.

US and China presence in Africa is more of geopolitical and strategic interest than the erstwhile European colonial and imperial mission. While Europe see political colony in Africa, the US and China see a region of significant opportunities. Being the sole survivor of the Cold War, and determined to explore that privilege in geopolitical sphere, the US established a State Department Bureau of African Affairs under President Eisenhower in 1958. (Traub-Merz et al. 2004). As a strategic region within the dynamism of US energy policy, the Gulf of Guinea became the beneficiary of the deteriorating security challenges and coordinated antagonism against the United States (Krueger 2002).

Found within the US foreign energy security equation, it becomes imperative for the US to tie its national security and the elements of its pursuit like, its military might to the protection of its strategic interest in the region with the ultimate military power against opposing competitors (Klare et al. 2004).

This situation suggests that, the US and China run parallel international relations approach in Africa and the Gulf of Guinea Sub-region. While the US is basking on its 'victory' in displacing the colonial forces of Europe in encircling Africa economically and politically, China's late coming in Africa's international relation on a dynamic step has threatened not only America's status as the leading power, but has also the privileges and economic advantages that has made the American status a mere exaggeration. Chinese energy policy in the Gulf of Guinea is encapsulated in its new diplomatic investment policy in Africa and Asia through the launching of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), to strengthen its state-owned enterprises (SOE), create new export markets and augment its geopolitical power. Through this policy, and despite being committed to Sudan energy industry, extended the tentacle to the GG oil and gas sector especially in burgeoning offshore exploration with infrastructural growth in different facilities of commodity-backed loans. China's phenomenal investment in the Gulf of Guinea oil and gas sector, has elevated the country to a development partner status that is instigating a new debate of a development partner that presents favorable policies than the perception among pro-America African scholars that China's economic policy in Africa is another colonial mission.



The United States

The United States despite its engagement in Africa being channeled in strategic, economic and commercial interest, it has over the years genuinely pursued entrenchment of democratic values, good governance and development in the region. Africa's years of political struggle and independence, coincided with the Cold War between her and the former Soviet Union, a period in modern political history when the ideological rivalry gained geopolitical traction. Africa and other developing regions, became a theatre and battle ground for superiority contest and territorial gain. This scenario, colored every internal conflict in Africa in divisive platform and grounds for marketing of the ideologies; making of foes and building new friendships that would foster intractable enmity. First of its kind that came at the peak of the rivalry, was the Angola independent conflict which came with a vesta for a fresh balkanization and scramble for the soul of the young nation. In Angola crisis, the US took stand with the rebellious militant opposition- the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola- UNITA Led by Jonas Savimbi led by Augusto Neto. America buying into this internal conflict did not only prolong the resolution of the conflict, but lengthened the road to peace, national unity, political and economic development made room for mutual distrust which consequently led to Africa's post-independent era longest civil war.

Since the event of post-9/11, the U.S. has prioritized counterterrorism in Africa, especially in regions like the Sahel, the Horn of Africa, and the Lake Chad Basin. In its fight against terror, the US has continued to engage these terror groups balancing soft counter-terrorism strategy with hard military operations coughed in geopolitical and territorial ambition. The backlash of US engagement is the perception among scholars that America is cut in the foreign policy goal debacle of open support to counter-terrorism aids that has strengthened authoritarian governments that use U.S. counterterrorism aid to suppress dissent, as seen in Uganda and Chad, Ethiopia and Egypt. The United States, interventions over conflicts in resource-rich regions, either directly or by proxy support of allies, most times had always resulted to misguided therapy and contribute to the rise of armed groups and broader regional conflict as was the case in Libya 2011, in Somalia in the 1990s. Yet, the US has injected aids and assistance to the security needs of the region to bolster peacekeeping capacity, enhance maritime and border security, combat transnational crime, support civilian law enforcement, and

strengthen counterterrorism. Some countries in the region have individually participated in the State Department's Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP, an interagency effort to build regional counterterrorism capabilities and coordination), and the training and equipment to the Multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF) coalition in the Lake Chad Basin (Tomas, 2020).

On maritime security, the US has engaged combating, illegal fishing, human trafficking, and smuggling in the Gulf of Guinea, with such initiatives and mechanisms such; Africa Partnership Station (APS) which provides training, resources, and joint exercises to enhance the maritime capability, it organizes and participates in regional maritime drill exercise- the Obangame Express, an annual event aimed at improving interoperability and coordinated response among Gulf of Guinea countries navies and coast guards, to enhance collaborated response to all forms of maritime threats. Neighbouring none Gulf of Guinea states

China:

China on its own part, has taken up anti-piracy capacity Naval escort task forces in Cameroon, Gabon, Ghana and Nigeria, and conducted joint military exercises with these countries in 2018. It is also planning a joint counterterrorism drills with African countries by emulating joint exercises under the China-initiated Shanghai Cooperation. These efforts have come in a manner that converges to serve the better interest of the US and China in a manner that protect their energy supply and other investments.

The Gulf of Guinea region, stands in the inner circle of China's strategic interest in the entire Africa, but has unwavering in its pursuit of an expanded geopolitical reach in Africa. With its ravenous commercial and energy security foreign policy in the wake of her industrial breakthrough, China has continued to drive energy resource gluttony in the region with involvement in forms of militarization that is heightening instability. The Gulf of Guinea by its strategic location in the ever-busy Atlantic Sea route, has gained notoriety as the world deadliest piracy corridor and other maritime crimes after the Gulf of Arden (Bueger, 2020). Consequent on this, China in its capacity as key player in the 'blue economy' of the GGR, has equally supported regional arrangements in capacity building both at the regional and national levels in strengthening of military ties through arms supply, military equipment, and training programs (Denton, and Harris 2022). Although China does not have a



permanent Naval Base in the GG like the US AFRICOM, it has increased surveillance, naval deployments, including anti-piracy operations and port visits.

Further Engagement of the US and China the destabilization of the Gulf of Guinea region

The privilege of being primary commodity exports (oil wealth) in states or regions, has been found to be associated with contiguous contention causing a vertical and horizontal debacle of triangular conflict for the control of resources resulting into intractable conflict, social struggles, rebellions, insurgencies and in some cases, civil wars (Collier and Hoeffler 1998; Mwanasali, 2000). In most instances like Angola, Sudan, DR Congo, Liberia and Sierra Leone and in the Niger Delta of Nigeria, the conflicts arise from patrimonial claims of the natural resources which increases vulnerability. This state of disorder creates a complex web of diverse interests united in a cause of gains and opportunities for individual fighters/agitators, opportunistic elite groups and ethnic militias. It also opens up some intractable conflicts between the establishment of state authorities and foreign firms and governments who in most cases, finance the domestic insurgencies.

This section centers its argument that the economy of mineral resources in the GG region generates a debacle of struggle, conflicts, arm proliferation, rebellion and sponsorship that escalates social disorder, insecurity, and domestic instability. Conflicts born out of resource exhibits a micro concentration in the particular region where the resource is located, but engulfs the entire country at the failure of the system as efforts by the state authorities fail to mitigate its escalation within that region. Initially in Liberia, Sierra Leonean war, GRC, and Nigeria, the struggle has been a rivalry of personal militias, armed networks to control the main diamond and gold production and external commercial network by the indigenous population of the oil producing area (Ellis 1998, Keen, 2003; Nafziger & Auvinen 2002).

Another veracity of conflict, in oil rich areas in the region is the racketeering theory of agents of government, ethnic militias and collaboration with foreign traders, as in the Niger Delta, and Liberia where the government security agents, armed forces, officials of the ministry, criminal elements and militants have turned the struggle to a form of business than an instrument of ensuring justice and fairness in appropriating the

gains of the mineral deposit. It may be unfair to state that the U.S. security responses in the GG has not met the immediate needs of securing the region to advantage, but the aids coming in form of security assistances have sought to bolster peacekeeping capacity, enhance maritime and border security, combat transnational crime, support civilian law enforcement, and strengthen counterterrorism. Some countries in the region have individually participated in the State Department's Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP, an interagency effort to build regional counterterrorism capabilities and coordination), and the training and equipment to the Multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF) coalition in the Lake Chad Basin (Tomas, 2020). China on its own part, has taken up anti-piracy capacity Naval escort task forces in Cameroon, Gabon, Ghana and Nigeria, and conducted joint military exercises with these countries in 2018. It is also planning a joint counterterrorism drills with African countries by emulating joint exercises under the China-initiated Shanghai Cooperation. These efforts have come in a manner that converges to serve the better interest of the US and China in a manner that protect their energy supply and other investments and for the US, strengthens the values the country pursues in Africa and elsewhere in the world. In some cases, countries in the region have sought the military and security intervention of America and even China for fear of being subjugated by stronger sister nations in matters of securing their mineral resources. A high-ranking government official in Sao Tome told IPS: "Our President Fradique de Menezes actually approached the Americans for some sort of military help, in the event that oil exploration and drilling commences". Acknowledging his country's vulnerability and preferring an agreement with the US than a sub-regional strength- Nigeria extension of defense and security pact with the Island would involve the deployment of troops. "We are a bit worried about this plan and would rather not have Nigerian troops here," (Fofana 2003). In the course of protecting its national interest and citizen diplomacy while engaging in military aid with any country, the US would require under the provision of American Service Members Protection Act (ASPA) of 2002, a host nation to sign a waiver "exempting US nationals on their soil from prosecution by the ICC" with regards to Article 98 of the Rome Statute. This was implicated in the suspended South Africa, Kenya, Benin, Namibia, Mali, Lesotho, Niger, and the Central African Republic US military aid over the unquestioned prioritization of US nationals and interests over a



long-term security strategy and assistance to support their peace operation (Bah and Aning 2008).

More compelling is the conspiracy of private persons or groups connivance with foreign mercantilists, mining companies, and military support of states who aid rebel groups in escalating violence in exchange for concessionary opportunities and favourable commercial deals. For instance, the French and Lebanese in exchange for vital credits and equipment with the rebel, won concessions of minerals and forest products is indicative of foreign support to destabilize the regions in exchange of favorable deals in the mineral fortunes of the region. (Ellis 1998).

Visible in the activities of the oil MNCs are attempts to support or even intervene directly and indirectly in the domestic crisis or maintenance of security, since that will aid their fortune for oil concession either on the side of the government or the rebel groups, anyone that will pay them better receives their patronages. The media spaces both in the international and domestic, have published allegations of AFRICOM agenda in the deployment of American marines to mount security surveillance, protect oil installations and shipment, and engaging a self-serving American policy focused on fighting terrorism, security Africa's burgeoning energy stocks, and countering Chinese influence" (Berschinski, 2007; Ighodaro, 2003). The legacy of the US post-Cold War military interaction in Africa, can be best explained in unwillingness to tackle the crisis on ground headlong with the experiences of Somalia and the Black Hawk down incident, and the complete failure of the Clinton administration to act on the reports of genocide in Rwanda (Day 1997). Rather than acting on early warnings and intelligent signals to halt the killing in Rwanda, White House chose to manage refugee and displacement problems expending ten times that amount over the following two years (Dallaire 2003). While the Rwandan genocide was perpetuated, the US pioneered the launching of a program of African self-help initiative for its crisis- the African Crisis Response Force (ACRF). This initiative forerun the African Crisis Response Initiative (ACRI) that did not give traction to the crisis in Rwanda targeted to aid basic military capabilities, strengthen combat formations and boost headquarters organisation" (Abramovici 2004). Moreover, was not coughed to really tackle Africa's intrastate conflicts, but rather crafted around cold war peacekeeping doctrine designed for interstate conflicts. (Bah and Aning 2008), stated that 'ACRI had more to do with what the U.S. felt it could provide than what African countries necessarily needed', since the countries themselves

were not consulted about the contents of the programme. This was followed by the African Contingency Operations Training Assistance (ACOTA) programme, initiated in 2004 by the Bush administration. Targeted to train and equip new battalions, training for offensive military operations and weaponry such as machine guns and mortars and specialty units in partner countries," (Volman, 2006; Carmody 2005).

The US and political instability in the Gulf of Guinea: 2015 Presidential election in Nigeria

The US has continued to anchored its foreign policy objectives in Africa and indeed the Gulf of Guinea on the key points of enthronement of democratic values, rule of law and good governance. Due mainly to prolong military rule in many African countries, weak laws and sit-tight character of most political leaders, the US has had difficulty pushing to successful end, this foreign policy objectives in the entire Africa. In recent times, it has made bold its approach more forceful and engaging getting countries in the region comply to the standard democratic values using such measures as: economic sanctions, denial of visa for the government officials who participated in extra-constitutional activity and electoral fraud, at the same time canvass for stiffer measures on such countries and leaders from international bodies, friendly countries etc. In pushing its foreign policy objective especially where the country's strategic national interest is pronounced like in the Gulf of Guinea, it has employed strategies of diverse stroke one of which, indirect interventions in elections: a political measure to influence victory for a political party or candidate of choice whose manifesto and program promises a better deal for the US. Recent research on election intervention of foreign government since 2011 shows that the US had intervened in 81 foreign elections to change government and ensure the victory of one favourable to their national interest (Tharoor, 2016).

In the wake of the Nigeria's 2015 presidential election, following fears and apprehension raised by western media of possible Nigeria breaking up, the US government through its embassy in Nigeria, and statement credited to President Barack Obama in the White House Press Conference, advised Nigerians to open the 'Next Chapter', a statement of support for the candidacy of General Muhammadu Buhari of the then opposition All Progressive Congress (APC), against the incumbent administration basing its position on claims of brazen corruption in the government and



fearing the apprehension of political violence and a possible military coup as the northern claim to the presidential seat heightened unprecedented political tension. The United States in pursuant of a political intervention diplomacy rallied support from the United Kingdom, the European Union, Japan, Canada, and Australia. as well as China, India and South Korea in this agenda (Levin, 2016).

The US also initiated a collaboration and funding of extra diplomatic conferences supervised by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) personnel in establishing unprecedented cordiality with new political parties and some civil society groups and exploring the religious divide existing to carry out coordinated electoral propaganda against the seating president and his party (Samuel, 2018). It equally moved for Congress approval for the establishment of a consulate in the North, through which the Obama administration found useful as a platform for greater engagement with Northern leaders and outreach to the wider northern public, not only to balance the perceive U.S. favoritism toward the Christian South, but seen to have balanced the new consulate with the one in the southern city of Lagos. President Obama, did not hide his government covert intervention in creating serious political turmoil within the Nigerian state by directly raising campaign structure in the US and using international media platform telling Nigerians to “turn to the next page” for the opposition party in a sharply divided election during the 2015 presidential election. The bias became too pronounced that a sentiment was raised by the US Secretary of States, Mr. John Kerry that America would review its diplomatic relation with Nigeria should the election is found to be manipulated in favour of the incumbent, raised fear among Nigerians of a possible economic and diplomatic hurdle the nation would face should President Jonathan be retained in office. In March 23, 2015, President Obama himself took the unusual step of releasing a video message directly to Nigerians, all but telling them how to vote Shulman (2012).

II. Conclusion.

This work has been centred on the meddlesomeness in the sovereign control within the states in the Gulf of Guinea region by the world leading industrial nations- the United States of America and China. The quest to control oil exploration of the region, these two powers have extended their ambitious goal of geopolitical control of the region especially, the states with huge commercial value of crude oil deposits. This contest

is found to has robbed unhealthily on the region some noxious political development that has not only denied the region the gain of their oil deposit, but has also caused underdevelopment, security challenges, unnecessary militarization of the region and generally, intractable political instability.

This paper therefore recommends that, the governments of the region should individually and collectively streamline policies that would limit the activities of these countries to business of oil exploration without further meddling in the domestic politics and creating tension in the region.

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