Practice of African Diplomacy and Foreign Policy Initiatives in the Face of Neo-colonialism Contentious Trends

By

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Abstract

This study centers on the landscape of African diplomacy and foreign policy initiatives amid the challenges posed by neocolonialism. In the face of historical legacies and contemporary neocolonial dynamics, African nations navigate a complex terrain, striving to assert their sovereignty and pursue development goals. This detailed examination leads into certain initiatives employed by African countries, including Pan-Africanism, economic diversification, and South-South cooperation, as strategic responses to counter neocolonial influences. Real-life examples, ranging from the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) to diplomatic leadership on the global stage, illustrate the achievements of African diplomacy. These successes underscore the continent's agency and effectiveness in shaping its narrative and fostering regional and international collaborations. Despite these achievements, challenges persist, encompassing economic dependencies, political instability, and cultural complexities. The study highlights emphasizes on the dynamic nature of African diplomacy, showcasing resilience and adaptability in the pursuit of a self-determined future. The continent's proactive engagement is evident in its responses to humanitarian crises, health challenges, and the fostering of strategic alliances but weak in governance and political stability. It also ends with acknowledging the need for continued vigilance and strategic policymaking to address neocolonial contentious trends, ensuring Africa's active and influential participation in the global arena.

Keywords: Neocolonialism, African Diplomacy, Foreign Policy, Initiatives.

1.0 Introduction

Diplomacy has its ancient roots firmly in Africa, the cradle of humanity. Yet the idea of "African diplomacy" is surprisingly new, because most African states are very young compared to those in the rest of the world. The legacy of colonialism, combined with the damage caused by Cold War proxy wars, has infused the continent's diplomacy with a collective memory of subjugation and marginalization. An historical context is therefore essential to understand the themes that guide Africa's contemporary diplomacy. Among these are a preoccupation with pan-African unity, insistence on sovereign equity in the global arena, and the pursuit of elusive security and development for the continent. The diplomatic style in which these goals are pursued is predominantly multilateral and collective, marked by a unique activist-like approach and emphasis on solidarity among incumbent leaders. The practice of African diplomacy and foreign policy initiatives is a nuanced landscape shaped by historical legacies and contemporary challenges. Against the backdrop of neocolonialism, African nations navigate contentious trends to assert their sovereignty, foster regional cooperation, and address pressing issues. This exploration delves into the dynamic interplay between African states, global powers, and the quest for a self-determined diplomatic agenda in the face of persistent neocolonial influences.

2.0 Conceptual Clarifications

2.1 African Diplomacy

African diplomacy encompasses the strategic interactions and negotiations undertaken by African nations on the international stage to promote their interests, secure economic partnerships, and contribute to regional and global stability. It involves the conduct of foreign affairs, establishment of diplomatic relations, and the pursuit of diplomatic initiatives to address challenges such as conflict resolution, economic development, and political cooperation. This diplomatic practice is deeply influenced by historical contexts, colonization, and the subsequent struggles for independence. African countries, having emerged from colonial rule, often employ diplomacy as a tool for asserting their sovereignty, fostering unity among diverse nations, and addressing issues unique to the continent. Key elements of African diplomacy include multilateral engagements through organizations like the African Union (AU) and regional

economic communities, bilateral relations with other nations, conflict resolution mechanisms, and participation in international forums. African diplomats work to balance the interests of their nations with the broader goals of the continent, seeking partnerships that can bolster economic growth, technological advancement, and social progress. Furthermore, the concept of Ubuntu, emphasizing interconnectedness and shared humanity, often influences African diplomatic approaches. African nations aim to build relationships based on mutual respect, solidarity, and collaboration, emphasizing dialogue and cooperation over confrontation. In the face of neocolonialism, African diplomacy becomes particularly crucial. It involves navigating power dynamics with former colonial powers, addressing economic disparities, and asserting independence in decision-making. African diplomats strive to counter neocolonial influences by promoting policies that prioritize local development, inclusivity, and sustainable governance. In essence, African diplomacy is a dynamic and evolving practice that reflects the aspirations of the continent, shaped by its history, cultural values, and the imperative to overcome the challenges posed by neocolonialism on the global stage (Yolanda, 2018).

2.2 Foreign Policy

Foreign policy refers to a set of principles, strategies, and actions that a sovereign state employs to manage its relations with other countries and international actors. It is a comprehensive framework that guides a nation's interactions on the global stage, encompassing political, economic, security, and cultural dimensions. The primary objectives of foreign policy include safeguarding national interests, promoting economic prosperity, ensuring security, and contributing to international stability. Elements of foreign policy often include diplomacy, treaties, alliances, trade agreements, military engagements, and participation in international organizations. These components are orchestrated to advance a country's goals and address challenges within the complex web of global affairs. Diplomacy is a fundamental aspect of foreign policy, involving the establishment and maintenance of relations with other nations through negotiations, dialogues, and the exchange of ambassadors. Treaties and agreements are formalized expressions of foreign policy, shaping the legal framework for interactions between countries. Economic considerations play a crucial role, with foreign policy often geared towards securing favorable trade terms, attracting

investments, and fostering economic partnerships. Security concerns drive decisions related to defense alliances, arms control, and participation in collective security arrangements. Cultural diplomacy is another facet, involving the promotion of a nation's culture, values, and soft power abroad. This can include educational exchanges, cultural events, and initiatives that enhance a country's global image and influence. Foreign policy is dynamic and responsive, adapting to changing geopolitical landscapes, emerging threats, and opportunities. States formulate foreign policy based on their geopolitical positioning, historical experiences, and the prevailing international environment. It requires a careful balance between pursuing national interests and contributing to the collective well-being of the global community. In essence, foreign policy is the external expression of a nation's identity, aspirations, and strategic priorities. It reflects the diplomatic, economic, and security decisions made to navigate the complexities of an interconnected world, fostering cooperation, mitigating conflicts, and advancing the interests of the state on the international stage (Britannica, 2023).

2.3 Neo-colonialism

Neocolonialism is a concept that describes the continuation or resurgence of colonial-like power dynamics and influences in the post-colonial era. Unlike traditional colonialism, where direct political control is exerted by one state over another, neocolonialism operates through more subtle economic, cultural, and political means. It often involves powerful nations, corporations, or international institutions exerting significant control over less powerful states, perpetuating a form of economic and political dependency. Neocolonialism is frequently associated with economic exploitation. Powerful nations or multinational corporations may exploit the resources and labor of less developed countries, often at the expense of local populations. Unequal trade relationships, debt burdens, and the extraction of natural resources without fair compensation are common manifestations of economic neocolonialism. Neocolonialism also involves political influence, where powerful countries or entities exert control over the political decisions of weaker nations. This can be through manipulation of elections, support for compliant regimes, or interference in domestic affairs, undermining the sovereignty of the affected countries. Cultural aspects are not immune to neocolonial influences. The imposition of Western cultural values, languages, and norms can marginalize indigenous cultures, eroding local identities. Media,

education, and popular culture often play roles in shaping perceptions and reinforcing neocolonial power structures. Neocolonial dynamics are sometimes perpetuated through international institutions. Policies and decisions made by global financial institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank, can disproportionately favor the interests of powerful nations, contributing to economic imbalances and reinforcing dependency. Developing nations may find themselves ensnared in a cycle of debt, often owed to powerful nations or international financial institutions. The conditions attached to loans can lead to economic policies that prioritize repayment over local development, perpetuating the neocolonial relationship. However, understanding neocolonialism requires an examination of power structures, both overt and covert, that persist in the global arena. It is a concept that highlights the need for developing nations to assert their sovereignty, pursue equitable economic relationships, and resist external influences that hinder their independent development. Neocolonialism remains a complex and evolving challenge in the contemporary geopolitical landscape (Edwin, 1966).

3.0 Neocolonialism in Africa

In the context of Africa, neocolonialism refers to the persistence or reemergence of colonial-like power dynamics and exploitation in the post-independence era. Despite achieving political independence from colonial rule, many African nations continue to face economic, political, and cultural challenges that mirror aspects of historical colonialism. Here's a detailed exploration of neocolonialism in Africa:

3.1 Economic Exploitation: Neocolonial economic dynamics in Africa often manifest through unequal trade relationships, resource extraction, and economic policies that favor external interests. Powerful nations and multinational corporations may exploit Africa's natural resources, contributing to economic imbalances and hindering local development. The terms of trade agreements may not be equitable, leading to the continuous extraction of wealth from the continent (Thomas, 1965).

3.2 Debt Dependency: Many African countries face significant debt burdens, often owed to international financial institutions and powerful nations. The conditions attached to loans can force these countries to implement economic

policies that prioritize debt repayment over social welfare and development. This perpetuates a cycle of dependency, resembling the economic control exerted during the colonial era (Thomas, 1965).

3.3 Political Influence: Neocolonial political dynamics involve external interference in the domestic affairs of African nations. This can include support for compliant regimes, manipulation of elections, and interference in governance structures. Such interventions may undermine the sovereignty of African states, hindering their ability to determine their own political destinies (Thomas, 1965).

3.4 International Institutions: The policies of international financial institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank, can contribute to neocolonial structures in Africa. Structural adjustment programs and conditionalities attached to loans may prioritize economic liberalization over local development, perpetuating a dependency on external financial institutions (Thomas, 1965).

3.5 Cultural Impact: Neocolonial influences are also evident in the cultural domain. The imposition of Western values, languages, and norms can marginalize indigenous cultures. Media, education, and cultural products often reflect and reinforce external perspectives, contributing to a sense of cultural dependency (Thomas, 1965).

3.6 Conflict and Instability: Neocolonialism can exacerbate conflicts in Africa, as external powers may exploit divisions within nations for their strategic interests. Proxy wars and interventions can further destabilize regions, hindering the prospects of peace and development. Understanding neocolonialism in Africa involves recognizing the multifaceted ways in which historical power imbalances persist. Addressing these challenges requires efforts to promote economic self-sufficiency, foster political autonomy, and preserve and celebrate diverse African cultures. It also involves advocating for fair and equitable international relations that prioritize the well-being and development of African nations (Thomas, 1965).

3.7 Mode of African Diplomacy

The mode of African diplomacy encompasses diverse strategies and approaches employed by African nations in their interactions on the global stage. Here's a detailed exploration of the modes characterizing African diplomacy:

3.8 Pan-Africanism: Rooted in the ideals of unity and solidarity among African nations, Pan-Africanism is a central theme in African diplomacy. It emphasizes collective action and collaboration to address common challenges. Institutions like the African Union (AU) exemplify this mode, providing a platform for member states to coordinate policies, resolve conflicts, and promote economic integration. For example; the African Union (AU) serves as a practical manifestation of Pan-Africanism in diplomacy. Established in 2001, the AU aims to promote unity, peace, and cooperation among African nations. It has been involved in conflict resolution, such as mediating in the Darfur crisis and coordinating peacekeeping missions in Somalia (Stephen, 2017).

3.9 Conflict Resolution and Peacekeeping: African diplomacy often involves proactive engagement in conflict resolution and peacekeeping efforts. African nations contribute troops and resources to peacekeeping missions, demonstrating a commitment to stability within the continent. Diplomatic initiatives aim to address conflicts, such as those related to borders, ethnic tensions, or political instability, through dialogue and mediation. For example; Nigeria's involvement in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Ceasefire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) during the Liberian Civil War demonstrates a commitment to conflict resolution. ECOMOG played a crucial role in stabilizing the region and facilitating peace talks (Stephen, 2017).

3.10 Economic Diplomacy: Recognizing the importance of economic cooperation, African nations engage in economic diplomacy to foster trade, attract investments, and enhance development. This involves negotiating favorable trade agreements, participating in regional economic communities, and seeking partnerships with both traditional and emerging global economic powers. For example; The East African Community (EAC) focuses on economic integration and cooperation. Member states, such as Kenya and Tanzania, engage in economic diplomacy by negotiating trade agreements within the EAC, fostering cross-

border investments, and promoting regional economic development (Stephen, 2017).

3.11 South-South Cooperation: African diplomacy increasingly emphasizes collaboration with other developing nations, known as South-South cooperation. This involves partnerships with countries in Latin America, Asia, and the Middle East to share expertise, technology, and resources. It aims to diversify diplomatic ties beyond traditional Western relations. For example; Nigeria's partnership with Brazil in the areas of agriculture and technology exemplifies South-South cooperation. Through initiatives like the Brazil-Nigeria Binational Commission, both countries exchange knowledge and collaborate on projects to address shared challenges (Stephen, 2017).

3.12 Cultural Diplomacy: Acknowledging the significance of cultural exchange, African diplomacy promotes cultural diplomacy to enhance understanding and cooperation. This involves initiatives like cultural festivals, educational exchanges, and the promotion of African arts and literature globally. Cultural diplomacy serves to counter stereotypes and showcase the richness of African heritage. For example; The "Africa Month" initiative by South Africa showcases cultural diplomacy. It involves a series of events, including art exhibitions, film festivals, and music performances, aimed at promoting African culture and fostering a better understanding of the continent's diversity (Stephen, 2017).

3.13 Environmental Diplomacy: As environmental issues gain prominence, African diplomacy increasingly addresses concerns such as climate change, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable development. African nations collaborate in international forums to advocate for policies that address environmental challenges and promote sustainable practices. For example; Ethiopia's active participation in international climate change conferences illustrates environmental diplomacy. The country advocates for sustainable development, renewable energy, and climate resilience. Ethiopia's commitment to the Paris Agreement showcases its diplomatic efforts to address global environmental challenges (Stephen, 2017).

3.14 Humanitarian Diplomacy: African nations engage in humanitarian diplomacy to address crises such as famine, epidemics, or displacement. This involves diplomatic efforts to mobilize international support, coordinate relief efforts, and advocate for sustainable solutions to humanitarian challenges. For example; During the Ebola outbreak in West Africa, Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone engaged in humanitarian diplomacy. These nations, along with international partners, coordinated efforts to contain the virus, mobilize resources, and seek assistance from the global community to address the health crisis (Stephen, 2017).

3.15 Strategic Alliances: African nations form strategic alliances based on shared interests, often within regional contexts. These alliances may involve military cooperation, intelligence-sharing, or joint efforts to address specific challenges. Regional organizations, such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) or the East African Community (EAC), play significant roles in fostering such alliances.In essence, the mode of African diplomacy reflects a dynamic and multifaceted approach that combines principles of unity, collaboration, and strategic engagement to navigate the complexities of the global arena and address the unique challenges facing the continent. For example; Morocco's return to the African Union in 2017 marked a strategic diplomatic move. By rejoining the AU, Morocco aimed to strengthen ties with African nations and enhance its diplomatic influence. This strategic alliance reflects the broader trend of African nations seeking partnerships for mutual benefit (Stephen, 2017). These practical examples demonstrate how African nations employ various diplomatic modes to address regional and global challenges, foster cooperation, and advance their interests on the international stage. The combination of these diplomatic approaches reflects the adaptability and dynamism of African diplomacy in navigating a complex and interconnected world.

4.0 The Practice of African Diplomacy

The practice of African diplomacy is a multifaceted and dynamic endeavor shaped by historical legacies, geopolitical realities, and the pursuit of national and continental interests. Here's an in-depth exploration of the practice of African diplomacy:

4.1 Historical Context: African diplomacy is deeply influenced by historical experiences of colonization, independence struggles, and post-colonial challenges. The legacy of colonial borders, the impact of liberation movements, and the quest for unity and sovereignty shape diplomatic practices in the continent. For example; The legacy of apartheid in South Africa significantly influenced diplomatic practices. After the end of apartheid, South Africa's diplomatic efforts focused on reconciliation and establishing itself as a key player in African and global affairs, showcasing the transformative power of diplomatic engagement in overcoming historical challenges (John, 2016).

4.2 Pan-Africanism: Central to African diplomacy is the principle of Pan-Africanism, emphasizing solidarity and unity among African nations. Institutions like the African Union (AU) play a pivotal role in fostering cooperation, resolving conflicts, and promoting a collective approach to addressing challenges ranging from economic development to peace and security. For example; The African Union's involvement in mediating conflicts demonstrates Pan-Africanism in action. The AU has played a crucial role in resolving crises, such as the mediation efforts in the Ivory Coast post-2010 elections and the peacekeeping mission in Somalia through the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) (John, 2016).

4.3 Conflict Resolution and Peacekeeping: African nations actively engage in conflict resolution and peacekeeping efforts. Diplomatic initiatives often involve mediating in regional conflicts, deploying peacekeeping forces, and participating in international efforts to maintain stability. For example; Nigeria's involvement in peacekeeping missions, particularly in Liberia and Sierra Leone during the 1990s, exemplifies a commitment to conflict resolution. Nigerian troops contributed significantly to restoring stability in the region under the ECOWAS peacekeeping initiative, other notable examples include the African-led missions in Mali and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (John, 2016).

4.4 Economic Diplomacy: Economic diplomacy is a key practice for African nations seeking to enhance trade, attract investments, and promote development. This involves negotiating trade agreements, participating in regional economic blocs, and engaging with global partners for mutually beneficial economic relationships. For example; The East African Community (EAC) has engaged in

economic diplomacy to foster regional integration. Member states, such as Kenya and Tanzania, have collaborated on trade agreements and infrastructure projects to enhance economic cooperation within the region (John, 2016).

4.5 South-South Cooperation: African countries increasingly prioritize South-South cooperation, forming alliances with other developing nations. This involves partnerships with countries in Latin America, Asia, and the Middle East to share expertise, technology, and resources, fostering a more diversified diplomatic landscape. For example; Ethiopia's collaboration with China in infrastructure development, including the Addis Ababa-Djibouti Railway, reflects South-South cooperation. This partnership has contributed to Ethiopia's economic growth and exemplifies how African nations engage with emerging global powers (John, 2016).

4.6 Cultural Diplomacy: Cultural diplomacy is employed to showcase the richness and diversity of African cultures. Through initiatives like cultural festivals, art exhibitions, and educational exchanges, African nations seek to promote a positive image globally and counter stereotypes. For example; Nigeria's film industry, Nollywood, serves as a cultural diplomacy tool. Nigerian movies, widely popular across Africa and beyond, contribute to shaping a positive image of Nigerian culture, fostering cultural understanding, and countering stereotypes (John, 2016).

4.7 Environmental Diplomacy: Given the environmental challenges faced by the continent, African diplomacy addresses issues such as climate change, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable development. Active participation in international forums allows African nations to advocate for policies that consider the continent's unique environmental concerns. For example; The Lake Chad Basin Commission involves countries like Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, and Niger collaborating on environmental issues. Addressing challenges such as water management and climate change, this diplomatic initiative reflects a commitment to sustainable development in the region (John, 2016).

4.8 Humanitarian Diplomacy: Humanitarian diplomacy is practiced during crises, such as health emergencies or natural disasters. African nations, often in

collaboration with international partners, mobilize resources, coordinate relief efforts, and seek assistance to address humanitarian challenges affecting their populations. For example; During the Ebola outbreak in West Africa, international collaboration, including the efforts of the World Health Organization (WHO) and various African nations, demonstrated effective humanitarian diplomacy. Coordinated responses aimed at containing the virus and mitigating its impact showcased the importance of collective action (John, 2016).

3.9 Strategic Alliances: African countries form strategic alliances based on regional considerations and shared interests. Regional organizations like ECOWAS, SADC, and COMESA provide platforms for diplomatic collaboration, allowing member states to address common challenges collectively. For example: The Southern African Development Community (SADC) has been instrumental in addressing regional challenges. Member states, such as South Africa and Botswana, collaborate within SADC to promote economic development, regional stability, and cooperation on issues like HIV/AIDS (John, 2016).

4.10 Digital Diplomacy: With the increasing role of technology, African nations engage in digital diplomacy to amplify their voices on global platforms. Social media, online diplomacy, and digital campaigns are employed to shape narratives, advocate for policies, and connect with the global community. For example; Rwanda's use of digital platforms and social media in diplomatic engagement showcases the growing importance of digital diplomacy. The country utilizes online platforms to promote its development successes, attract investments, and engage with the global community. The examples highlight the adaptability and effectiveness of African diplomacy in addressing contemporary issues and shaping the continent's role in the global arena. In essence, the practice of African diplomacy is characterized by a blend of historical consciousness, regional cooperation, and engagement on the global stage. African nations navigate a complex diplomatic landscape with the goal of promoting peace, development, and the well-being of their populations within the broader context of international relations (John, 2016).

5.0 Issues of Neo-colonialism: Contentious Trends in Africa.

Neocolonialism contentious trends in Africa manifest in various ways, reflecting the ongoing challenges associated with external influences and power dynamics. Here's a detailed exploration of some key trends:

5.1 Economic Exploitation: Neocolonial trends are often evident in economic relationships, where powerful nations or multinational corporations exploit Africa's natural resources. Unequal trade agreements and resource extraction without fair compensation contribute to economic imbalances, hindering the development of African nations. For example; the extraction of natural resources in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) by international corporations has been contentious. Despite having vast mineral wealth, the DRC faces challenges of exploitation, with external entities benefiting disproportionately from resource extraction, contributing to economic disparities within the country (John, 2017).

5.2 Debt Dependency: African countries often face significant debt burdens owed to international financial institutions or powerful nations. The conditions attached to loans may force these countries to implement economic policies that prioritize debt repayment over social welfare, perpetuating a cycle of dependency. For example; Zambia's debt challenges have raised concerns about neocolonial dynamics. Heavy reliance on external loans, particularly from China, has led to a debt burden that some argue compromises Zambia's economic sovereignty. The conditions attached to these loans have sparked debates about the potential influence and control exerted by external actors (John, 2017).

Political Influence: Neocolonial dynamics involve external interference in the political affairs of African nations. This can include support for compliant regimes, manipulation of elections, or exerting influence in governance structures, undermining the sovereignty of African states and impeding their self-determination. For example; External interference in African elections has been observed, as seen in allegations of meddling in the electoral processes of countries like Nigeria and Kenya. Accusations of foreign involvement in funding campaigns and influencing political outcomes raise questions about the extent of external influence in shaping the political landscape (John, 2017).

5.3 International Institutions: Policies of international financial institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank, can contribute to neocolonial structures. Structural adjustment programs and conditionalities attached to loans may prioritize economic liberalization over local development, reinforcing dependency on external financial institutions. For example; Structural adjustment programs imposed by the IMF and World Bank in the 1980s and 1990s led to austerity measures in many African countries. These policies, intended to address economic challenges, are criticized for prioritizing liberalization over local development, contributing to economic disparities and reinforcing neocolonial economic structures (John, 2017).

5.4 Cultural Domination: Neocolonial influences are often reflected in cultural trends, where Western values, languages, and norms dominate. Media, education, and popular culture may perpetuate external perspectives, marginalizing indigenous cultures and eroding local identities. For example; The dominance of Western media and entertainment in Africa is a manifestation of cultural neocolonialism. The overwhelming influence of Hollywood, Western fashion, and media narratives can marginalize indigenous cultures and shape perceptions, influencing societal norms and values (John, 2017).

5.6 Land and Resource Grabs: The acquisition of large tracts of land and resources by foreign entities, sometimes in collaboration with local elites, is a contentious neocolonial trend. This can result in displacement of local communities, environmental degradation, and the concentration of economic benefits in the hands of external actors.

For example; Large-scale land acquisitions by foreign entities in countries like Ethiopia and Sudan have raised concerns about neocolonial land grabs. These acquisitions, often for agricultural or industrial purposes, can displace local communities, impact food security, and concentrate economic benefits in the hands of external actors (John, 2017).

5.7 Technology and Data Exploitation: The digital divide and the exploitation of African data by external entities contribute to neocolonial trends. Lack of control over technological infrastructure and data can limit African nations' ability to

harness the benefits of emerging technologies and may result in information asymmetry. For example; The control and exploitation of data by external tech companies is a neocolonial concern. Instances where African user data is owned and utilized by international tech giants without significant local benefits exemplify how asymmetrical technology relationships can perpetuate neocolonial dynamics (John, 2017).

5.8 Military Interventions and Proxy Wars: Neocolonialism can manifest through external military interventions and proxy wars that exploit internal conflicts in African nations. Powerful nations may pursue their strategic interests, exacerbating regional instability and hindering the prospects of peace and development. For example; The involvement of external powers in conflicts on the African continent, such as the proxy wars in Libya and the Central African Republic, raises questions about neocolonial military interventions. Strategic interests of external actors can exacerbate regional instability, hindering the prospects of peace and development (John, 2017).

5.9 Health and Pharmaceutical Dependency: In the context of health, neocolonial trends can be observed in pharmaceutical dependency. Reliance on external sources for vaccines, medicines, and health technologies may compromise African nations' ability to address health challenges autonomously. For example; Dependency on external pharmaceuticals, particularly during health crises like the COVID-19 pandemic, highlights neocolonial trends. Limited local production capacities and reliance on international pharmaceutical companies for vaccines and medicines underscore vulnerabilities in health sovereignty (John, 2017).

5.10 Environmental Exploitation: Neocolonial practices often contribute to environmental exploitation, including deforestation, pollution, and unsustainable resource extraction. External actors may prioritize their interests over sustainable development, negatively impacting local ecosystems and communities. For example; Large-scale mining operations in Ghana, often led by international companies, have faced criticism for environmental degradation. Concerns about deforestation, pollution, and the impact on local communities highlight how neocolonial practices can prioritize economic interests over sustainable development (John, 2017). The examples above illustrate the complex and

multifaceted nature of neocolonialism in Africa, emphasizing the importance of addressing these contentious trends to foster genuine sovereignty, sustainable development, and equitable international relations. Understanding these neocolonial trends is crucial for African nations seeking to assert their sovereignty, address historical imbalances, and pursue sustainable development. Efforts to counter these trends involve advocating for fair economic policies, strengthening political institutions, promoting cultural diversity, and fostering international collaborations based on mutual respect and equality.

6.0 How these Contentions Affect Africa's Diplomacy and Foreign Policy Initiatives Using Niger Crises of 2023 as a Case Study

Neocolonialism contentious trends significantly impact Africa's diplomacy and foreign policy initiatives, shaping the way African nations engage with the global community.

Neocolonial economic exploitation constrains Africa's economic autonomy. The reliance on external actors for investments, loans, and trade partnerships often influences foreign policy decisions. African nations may find themselves navigating diplomatic waters to balance economic interests with the need for sustainable development. The debt dependency resulting from neocolonial economic practices can influence foreign policy choices. African nations, burdened by debt, may prioritize relationships with creditor nations or international financial institutions in diplomatic engagements, impacting their ability to pursue independent policy objectives. Neocolonial political dynamics, including external interference in elections and support for compliant regimes, challenge Africa's political sovereignty. Diplomatic initiatives may be influenced by the need to navigate relationships with external powers, affecting the pursuit of independent and transparent governance. Policies imposed by international financial institutions as part of neocolonial economic structures can shape foreign policy. African nations engaging with these institutions may find their diplomatic choices constrained by conditionalities that prioritize economic liberalization over local development and social welfare. (Udoka, 2021).

Neocolonial cultural domination, seen in the prevalence of Western values and media, can impact how Africa is represented globally. Diplomatic efforts may

include cultural diplomacy to counter stereotypes and promote a positive image, but the challenge remains in asserting cultural independence while engaging in global dialogue. Neocolonial trends in resource and land grabs can influence diplomatic strategies. African nations may need to navigate relationships with external actors involved in these activities, impacting their ability to manage resources sustainably and address the socio-economic needs of their populations. Neocolonial exploitation of technology and data creates information imbalances. In diplomatic engagements, African nations may face challenges in negotiating fair technology partnerships and ensuring that data generated within their borders benefits local development rather than reinforcing external dominance. Neocolonial health and pharmaceutical dynamics influence diplomatic responses to health crises. Dependency on external sources for vaccines and medicines may affect the negotiation of equitable access, highlighting the need for African nations to assert their health sovereignty in international forums. Neocolonial environmental practices, such as unsustainable resource extraction, affect diplomatic engagements. African nations may need to navigate relations with countries or corporations involved in environmental degradation, emphasizing the importance of diplomatic efforts to promote sustainable practices. Neocolonial military interventions and security dynamics impact Africa's foreign policy initiatives. The presence of external powers or involvement in conflicts can influence diplomatic efforts to address security challenges, emphasizing the need for regional cooperation and independent conflict resolution strategies. In essence, neocolonialism contentious trends create a complex backdrop for Africa's diplomacy and foreign policy. African nations navigate these challenges to assert their sovereignty, promote economic development, and engage in international relations that align with their interests and the well-being of their populations. Addressing neocolonial influences remains a crucial aspect of shaping an independent and effective foreign policy agenda for the continent (Udoka, 2021).

7.0 Understanding How Neocolonialism Contentious Trends Affect Africa's Diplomacy and Foreign Policy Initiatives

7.1 Debt Crisis in Sub-Saharan Africa: Many African countries faced debt crises in the 1980s, exacerbated by economic policies influenced by neocolonial dynamics. Structural adjustment programs imposed by international financial

institutions as conditions for loans prioritized economic liberalization, contributing to economic challenges. In addressing the debt crisis, affected nations had to navigate diplomatic engagements to renegotiate terms, highlighting the impact of neocolonial economic structures on foreign policy choices.

7.2 Political Interference and Governance Challenges: Post-Election Crisis in Ivory Coast (2010-2011):The political turmoil in Ivory Coast following the 2010 elections involved external interventions, showcasing neocolonial influences. The international community, including former colonial powers, played a role in supporting a particular political faction. This external interference influenced diplomatic efforts to resolve the crisis, emphasizing the challenges African nations face in asserting their political sovereignty (John, 2016).

7.3 Cultural Domination and Media Representations-Western Media Coverage of African Conflicts: Neocolonial cultural dynamics are reflected in Western media representations of African crises. For instance, media coverage of conflicts often perpetuates stereotypes and simplifications. African nations, in their diplomatic efforts, have to contend with the impact of biased narratives, necessitating strategies to counteract negative perceptions and promote a more accurate representation of their realities (John, 2016).

7.4 Resource Exploitation and Environmental Crisis-Niger Delta Oil Spill: The environmental crisis in the Niger Delta, attributed to oil extraction by multinational corporations, illustrates neocolonial resource exploitation. African nations grappling with environmental degradation must navigate diplomatic relations with these corporations and address the associated environmental and social challenges. This case highlights the interplay between economic exploitation and environmental issues in diplomatic initiatives (John, 2016).

7.5 Health Crisis and Pharmaceutical Dependency- Ebola Outbreak in West Africa (2014-2016): The response to the Ebola outbreak showcased challenges related to neocolonial health dynamics. African nations faced difficulties accessing essential resources and medicines, revealing dependency on external sources. Diplomatic efforts were required to negotiate international assistance and address

the health crisis while emphasizing the need for equitable partnerships (John, 2016).

7.6 Military Interventions and Security Challenges- Conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC): The DRC has experienced prolonged conflicts, partially fueled by external interventions. Neocolonial military dynamics, including proxy wars, have shaped diplomatic initiatives. African nations, as well as international bodies, engage in diplomacy to address security challenges, emphasizing the need for independent conflict resolution strategies.
These case studies underscore how neocolonialism contentious trends influence Africa's diplomacy and foreign policy initiatives during crises. The challenges range from economic dependencies and political interference to cultural misrepresentations and environmental exploitation. African nations navigate these complexities in their diplomatic engagements, emphasizing the importance of asserting sovereignty, promoting equitable partnerships, and addressing the root causes of crises influenced by neocolonial dynamics (John, 2016).

8.0 Foreign Policy Initiatives and Practice of African Diplomacy that Ccontradicts Neo-colonialism.
Africa's foreign policy initiatives and diplomatic practices often include efforts to counter neocolonialism, asserting independence, promoting sovereignty, and fostering equitable relations. Here are detailed explanations of foreign policy initiatives and diplomatic practices in Africa that contradict neocolonialism:

8.1 Pan-Africanism and Unity: African nations actively promote unity and solidarity among themselves, as seen through institutions like the African Union (AU). Pan-Africanism fosters a collective approach to problem-solving, reducing vulnerabilities to neocolonial economic exploitation and political interference.

8.2 Economic Diversification and Regional Integration: Economic diversification and regional integration. African countries pursue economic policies that prioritize diversification and regional cooperation. Initiatives like the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) aim to reduce dependency on external markets and encourage intra-African trade, fostering economic autonomy and resilience. For example; AfCFTA aims to create a single market, promoting

economic diversification and reducing dependency on external markets. By encouraging intra-African trade and cooperation, member states challenge neocolonial economic structures that favor external economic powers.

8.3 South-South Cooperation: Strengthening ties with non-traditional partners. African nations actively engage with countries from the Global South, fostering partnerships that are not rooted in historical colonial ties. Collaborating with nations in Latin America, Asia, and the Middle East promotes mutual benefit and reduces reliance on traditional Western powers. For example, FOCAC represents a South-South cooperation initiative, fostering partnerships between African nations and China. Through economic collaborations, technology transfer, and infrastructure projects, African nations engage in diplomatic initiatives that diversify their global partnerships beyond traditional Western relations.

8.4 Cultural Promotion and Counter-Narratives: Cultural diplomacy and counter-narratives. African nations invest in promoting their own cultural narratives and countering stereotypes. Initiatives include cultural festivals, educational programs, and media campaigns that showcase the diversity and richness of African cultures, challenging neocolonial cultural domination. For example; Nollywood, the Nigerian film industry, serves as a cultural diplomacy tool. African nations, through the promotion of their film industries, challenge neocolonial cultural domination, shaping positive narratives and countering stereotypes on a global scale (Sven & Jo.Ansie, 2024).

8.5 Natural Resource Management and Environmental Sustainability: Sustainable resource management. African nations adopt policies that prioritize sustainable resource extraction and environmental conservation. By implementing responsible mining practices and addressing environmental concerns, they aim to break away from neocolonial patterns of resource exploitation that prioritize external interests over local well-being. For example; Ghana has implemented policies to promote responsible mining practices. By prioritizing environmental sustainability and community well-being in the mining sector, Ghana challenges neocolonial resource exploitation patterns that prioritize external interests over local development.

8.6 Technology and Innovation Autonomy: Developing technological self-reliance, African countries invest in building technological capabilities and innovation hubs. Efforts to develop local tech industries and promote digital literacy aim to counter neocolonial information and technology dependencies, fostering autonomy in the digital era. For example; Rwanda's commitment to building a technology-driven economy involves fostering local innovation and tech entrepreneurship. This initiative challenges neocolonial dependencies on external technological sources, emphasizing the importance of self-reliance and autonomy.

8.7 Health Sovereignty and Biomedical Research: Investments in health sovereignty. African nations are investing in healthcare infrastructure, research institutions, and pharmaceutical industries. By developing capabilities for local vaccine production and investing in biomedical research, they aim to reduce dependency on external sources during health crises. For example; South Africa's efforts to build vaccine production capabilities showcase a commitment to health sovereignty. By investing in biomedical research and local pharmaceutical industries, South Africa challenges neocolonial dynamics that often result in dependency on external sources during health crises.

8.8 Peacekeeping and Conflict Resolution: Active participation in peacekeeping missions. African countries actively contribute troops to regional and international peacekeeping missions. By taking a lead in resolving conflicts within the continent, they challenge neocolonial narratives that suggest external intervention is the primary solution to African security challenges. For example; African nations actively contribute troops to missions such as the United Nations-African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID). By taking a lead in resolving conflicts within the continent, they challenge neocolonial narratives that suggest external intervention is the primary solution to African security challenges.

8.9 Humanitarian Diplomacy and Global Advocacy: African nations actively engage in international humanitarian efforts, advocating for global support during crises. This showcases a commitment to addressing challenges independently and challenges neocolonial stereotypes by highlighting African agency in responding to humanitarian needs. For example; Ethiopia engages in humanitarian diplomacy

during crises, mobilizing international support and coordinating relief efforts. This showcases African agency in addressing humanitarian challenges and challenges neocolonial stereotypes by highlighting active participation in global advocacy (Sven & Jo. Ansie, 2024).

8.10 Education and Knowledge Exchange: African nations foster collaborations in education and research. Initiatives include academic exchanges, joint research programs, and partnerships with institutions globally, promoting knowledge exchange that is not solely dependent on Western educational models. These foreign policy initiatives and diplomatic practices collectively work to counter neocolonialism by emphasizing independence, cooperation, and the pursuit of Africa's interests on the global stage. They reflect a commitment to shaping a future where African nations play a proactive and empowered role in international relations. For example; PASGR fosters partnerships for knowledge exchange in social research and governance. By engaging in educational collaborations and research initiatives, African nations challenge neocolonial educational models, promoting diverse perspectives and contributing to the global knowledge landscape (Sven & Jo. Ansie, 2024).

9.0 Achievements of African Diplomacy

African diplomacy has achieved notable successes across various domains, demonstrating the continent's diplomatic prowess and commitment to addressing regional and global challenges. Here are detailed explanations of achievements in African diplomacy, supported by practical examples:

9.1 Conflict Resolution and Peacekeeping: Successful peacekeeping efforts. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) played a crucial role in resolving conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone during the 1990s. ECOWAS-led interventions, including the deployment of peacekeeping forces, contributed to stabilizing the region and facilitating post-conflict reconstruction (Sven & Jo. Ansie, 2024).

9.2 Regional Integration and Economic Cooperation: Advancements in regional economic integration. The establishment of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) represents a significant achievement. The initiative aims to

create a single market for goods and services, promoting economic integration and cooperation among African nations to boost intra-African trade (Sven & Jo. Ansie, 2024).

9.3 Diplomatic Leadership in International Forums: Diplomatic leadership on the global stage. South Africa's role in international diplomacy, including its membership in the BRICS group, highlights African nations taking leadership roles. South Africa actively contributes to discussions on global governance, economic cooperation, and sustainable development, showcasing the diplomatic influence of African nations.

9.4 Health Diplomacy: Collaborative efforts in addressing health challenges. African nations' collective response to health crises, such as the coordinated efforts during the Ebola outbreak, demonstrates effective health diplomacy. Cooperation among African countries and engagement with international partners showcased the continent's ability to address health challenges collectively (Sven & Jo. Ansie, 2024).

9.5 Climate Change Advocacy: Advocacy for climate change mitigation. African nations actively participate in international climate change conferences, advocating for global efforts to address environmental challenges. Ethiopia, for instance, is recognized for its commitment to sustainable development and its active role in climate change negotiations.

9.6 Humanitarian Diplomacy: Effective humanitarian responses. African nations, such as Nigeria and Senegal, have demonstrated humanitarian diplomacy during crises, including providing assistance during conflicts and natural disasters. Their efforts showcase the diplomatic capacity to mobilize resources and coordinate relief efforts on both regional and global scales.

9.7 Peaceful Transition of Power: Peaceful transitions of power. Ghana is celebrated for its consistent peaceful transitions of power through democratic elections. This achievement underscores effective diplomatic and political mechanisms in place to ensure stability and democratic governance, setting a positive example for the continent.

9.8 Cultural Diplomacy: Global influence through cultural exports. Nigeria's Nollywood film industry has become a cultural phenomenon with global influence. Nollywood movies not only contribute to the cultural identity of Nigeria but also serve as a soft power tool, fostering positive perceptions and cultural understanding on the international stage.

9.9 Digital Diplomacy: Utilization of digital platforms for diplomacy. Kenya's active engagement in digital diplomacy, including utilizing social media platforms, showcases the country's ability to shape its narrative globally. Digital diplomacy allows African nations to amplify their voices, share information, and connect with the global community in real-time. Strategic Alliances and Partnerships: Strategic alliances for mutual benefit. Morocco's return to the African Union in 2017 marked a strategic diplomatic move. By rejoining the AU, Morocco aimed to strengthen ties with African nations, fostering diplomatic relationships for mutual benefit and regional stability. These achievements highlight the diverse and impactful contributions of African diplomacy, demonstrating the continent's capacity to navigate complex global issues and actively shape its role on the international stage (Sven & Jo. Ansie, 2024).

10.0 Challenges of African Diplomacy

African diplomacy faces several challenges that impact the effectiveness of diplomatic efforts. Below are challenges in African diplomacy, supported by practical examples:

10.1 Economic Dependency and Imbalances: African nations often face challenges related to economic dependencies, including reliance on a few key export commodities. When global economic conditions fluctuate or there is a decline in commodity prices, as witnessed with oil-dependent economies during price slumps, it exposes African nations to economic vulnerabilities (Van & Sven, 2023).

10.2 Political Instability and Governance Issues: The persistence of political instability in countries like Somalia and Libya poses challenges for effective diplomacy. Inconsistent governance structures and internal conflicts hinder

diplomatic efforts to represent a stable and unified front in regional and international forums (Van & Sven, 2023).

10.3 Conflict Zones and Security Concerns: The presence of active conflict zones, such as in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan, poses diplomatic challenges. These conflicts not only disrupt regional stability but also require diplomatic efforts to address root causes and facilitate peace-building initiatives (Van & Sven, 2023).

10.4 Humanitarian Crises and Refugee Movements: Humanitarian crises, as seen in regions like the Lake Chad Basin, present diplomatic challenges. Addressing the needs of displaced populations and coordinating international assistance requires robust diplomatic efforts and collaboration with humanitarian organizations (Van & Sven, 2023).

10.5 Diversity of Languages and Cultures: The multitude of languages and cultures across Africa poses communication challenges in diplomatic engagements. While multilingualism is a strength, it can also be a barrier to effective communication and understanding, requiring diplomatic efforts to bridge linguistic and cultural gaps (Van & Sven, 2023).

10.6 Historical Legacies and Colonial Residue: Colonial-era borders and historical grievances can impede diplomatic relations. Disputes over borders, as seen between Ethiopia and Eritrea, highlight how historical legacies continue to influence diplomatic challenges in resolving territorial issues (Van & Sven, 2023).

10.7 Resource Management and Environmental Concerns: Environmental degradation due to unsustainable resource extraction, as witnessed in mining activities in various countries, creates diplomatic challenges. Balancing economic interests with environmental sustainability requires nuanced diplomatic approaches (Van & Sven, 2023).

10.8 External Interference and Neocolonial Dynamics: Foreign interventions in African political processes, as observed in post-election scenarios in various

countries, can disrupt diplomatic initiatives. Neocolonial dynamics, such as interference in governance and political decisions, challenge African nations' ability to assert their sovereignty (Van & Sven, 2023).

10.9 Health Crises and Pandemics: The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted challenges in coordinating regional responses and securing access to vaccines. Diplomatic efforts are crucial for ensuring fair distribution of resources and navigating global health governance structures (Van & Sven, 2023).

10.10 Infrastructure Gaps and Connectivity Issues: Limited infrastructure, such as transportation and energy networks, poses challenges to effective diplomatic engagements. Improving connectivity within regions requires diplomatic efforts to attract investments and foster regional cooperation. Addressing these challenges necessitates concerted efforts in diplomacy, regional collaboration, and strategic planning to navigate complex issues and foster sustainable development across the continent (Van & Sven, 2023).

11.0 Conclusion

In conclusion, the practice of African diplomacy and foreign policy initiatives in the face of neocolonialism contentious trends reflects a complex and dynamic landscape. African nations have navigated historical legacies, economic dependencies, and external influences to assert their sovereignty and pursue development goals. The challenges of neocolonialism are evident in economic exploitation, political interference, and cultural domination, yet African diplomacy has showcased resilience and strategic responses. African countries have implemented initiatives that contradict neocolonial dynamics, emphasizing Pan-Africanism, economic diversification, and South-South cooperation. These efforts aim to foster unity, reduce economic dependencies, and reshape global narratives about the continent. Real-life examples, from the establishment of the AfCFTA to diplomatic leadership in international forums, highlight achievements that demonstrate the agency and effectiveness of African diplomacy. However, challenges persist, ranging from economic vulnerabilities and political instability to issues of linguistic diversity and historical grievances. Neocolonial dynamics, such as external interference, add layers of complexity to diplomatic endeavors. Despite these challenges, African nations actively engage in diplomatic practices

that counter neocolonialism, emphasizing regional integration, cultural promotion, and technological autonomy. The achievements of African diplomacy, such as successful peacekeeping efforts, advancements in regional integration, and influential cultural exports, underscore the continent's capacity for proactive and impactful engagement on the global stage. Humanitarian diplomacy, responses to health crises, and strategic alliances showcase African nations as active participants in addressing shared challenges. In facing neocolonialism contentious trends, African diplomacy has proven adaptable and forward-thinking. The continent's leaders and diplomats continue to refine strategies, leveraging both traditional and innovative diplomatic approaches. The pursuit of economic autonomy, cultural resilience, and technological self-reliance stands as a testament to Africa's commitment to shaping its destiny in a multipolar world. As African nations navigate the complexities of international relations, the practice of diplomacy remains a critical tool for safeguarding interests, promoting cooperation, and advancing the vision of a self-determined and thriving continent. The challenges posed by neocolonial dynamics serve as a call for continued vigilance, strategic policymaking, and collaborative efforts to build a future where African nations stand as equals in the global arena.

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