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Ndubuisi Idejiora-Kalu\*

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Economic and religious interplay of  
interests as a reason for drastic change in  
Africa's electioneering dynamics



CENTRO DE ESTUDOS AFRICANOS  
UNIVERSIDADE DO PORTO

\* *Director of Policy & Strategy, African Youth Union Commission, Abuja, Nigeria. Email: ndukalu@yahoo.com*

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## Abstract

Africa due to its geostrategic repository of huge natural resources of global interest as well as its growing population and markets have become of huge interest to powerful states of the world. The clash of civilizations in the 21st century, with religion now playing a major factor in the world and foreign policy is also a factor which has caused powerful nations of the world to look towards Africa. These interests have changed electioneering dynamics in Africa and have to a large extent become the denominator and determinant of who comes into power in African states. The paper identifies what these interests and players are, and how the political structure and foreign policy of African states is fast changing not to suit the African peoples but to answer the strategic interests of foreign powerful nation states who have interests in Africa.

**Keywords:** Strategic Interests, Berlin Conference, Colonialism, Master-Slave Psychology Syndrome

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## Resumo

A África, devido ao seu repositório geoestratégico de enormes recursos naturais de interesse global, bem como ao crescer da população e dos mercados, tornou-se de grande interesse para os poderosos estados do mundo. O choque de civilizações no século XXI, com a religião desempenhando agora um fator importante no mundo e a política externa são fatores que levaram as nações poderosas a olhar para África. Esses interesses mudaram a dinâmica do processo eleitoral e, em grande medida, tornaram-se o denominador determinante de quem assume o poder nos estados africanos. O documento identifica quais são esses interesses e atores, bem como a estrutura política e a política externa dos estados africanos, que mudam rapidamente, não para se adequar aos povos africanos, mas para responder aos interesses estratégicos dos países estrangeiros poderosos com interesses em África.

**Palavras-chave:** Interesses Estratégicos, Conferência de Berlim, Colonialismo, Síndrome da Psicologia do Mestre-Escravo

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## Introduction

The history of the strategic and covert involvement of powerful actors outside Africa who come to Africa and influence the part of the population that join politics dates back to the Atlantic slave trade of the 15<sup>th</sup> century where most locals and citizens of these colonized countries were used as agents for ruling over the African people. Furthered through colonialism however, this trend continued even after the independence of most of these countries from their mostly European colonial leaders. Today, these forms of control are still evident in the intricate relations that exist between African states and most of their former colonial masters.

The decision of for instance Europe to maintain this grip with Africa (a strategic form of relations) is borne out of strategic religious and economic interests. During the colonial era, the appointment of warrant chiefs and kings of African descent who assisted the European administrative officers were born out of the zeal to use them to control the affairs of the state on their behalf, to further control the natural resources and people and wherever possible to reflect the strategic interests of Europe which were mainly economic. A major concentration was in keeping an eye on the trade interests which ranged from handling natural resources to the human resources (the cheap labour) available in those countries at that time. African kings in particular were systematically made to strictly align with these strategic interests and those that did not agree with this arrangement were either killed or banished. Those who agreed were rewarded and given leverage of political power and continuation of their rule, honours from the colonial countries and control over their people and to some extent, the natural resources. This set a dangerous dynamic in the Africa's political system one which has intricately continued even after independence. One of such vivid and dramatic political realities occurred as the Nigerian civil war from 1967 to 1970. This war lasted so long as a result of some intricate factors which were not Nigerian or Biafran. A major factor in the elongation of this conflict was the direct or indirect effects of the case of the clash of strategic British interests mainly represented as its oil and gas investments in the part of Nigeria which wanted to secede from Nigeria, the Southern or Biafra region. These strategic interests



were represented mainly by the energy company, Shell-BP and its associated investments (Uche, 2008:111). This clash of strategic interests compelled Britain to use its influence to prevent the Nigerian military government from conceding to the demands of the Biafra dominated Southern part of Nigeria even when their demands seemed plausible and reasonably beneficial to solving the country's ethno-religious-centric diversity problem. This influence of Britain dragged the war longer and to a large extent was responsible for the huge unquantifiable human and material losses associated with that war and its prolonged duration.

Such obnoxious interference by powerful external actors have trickled down, making sure that the representation of the people who sit in governments are only the ones that maintain these "good relations" with these former colonial leaders. This is usually only possible when the mechanics of the political system of a country (such as electioneering) are carefully doctored by these powerful actors from inception (where the choice of candidates for these offices are made) to the structure of the political parties and finally in the nature of results announced at the end of the elections. This strange structure makes sure that the people who are chosen by the political parties in these countries are the ones who have been cleared and vetted by the diplomatic representation of these countries and found to be loyal to their strategic interests. Most times, these politicians would have to visit the diplomatic representations of these countries and avail their support before their political parties can accept to present them to the people as their candidates. The diplomatic representations of these countries run covert operations in these countries which allow this type of mediation. The electorates in these countries only have the people chosen and presented to them by the political parties and these are the ones their voter-cards can vote for. In this realism, these vetted politicians end-up not being the choice of the electorate (or the people) but simply bona-fide stooges of powerful countries who put them there in the first place and who have vested strategic interests in these countries. In the past, these interests had been mainly economic and directionally political (for instance the direct tussle for domination between socialists and capitalist countries), today with the polarization of modern civilizations (of which religion has become a prime component), has now become strictly economic and religion-centric with these civilizations clashing at an incredible rate to dominate Africa and with new actors



emerging as more countries become more economically and politically relevant in the world scene.

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## The Plausibility of the Huntington Thesis

When considering the fact that this strange relations between powerful actors and the States they have interests in have much to do with religion, the Huntington thesis (Huntington, 2002:36) becomes plausible as indeed religions (as modern civilizations) have polarized our modern world with the Abrahamic religions - Christianity, Islam and Judaism taking center stage. Geo-strategic concerns for instance reflect these realities and is blatantly the case of those who either stand with countries that have these religions affiliations or not. It is important to note that at this instance, the culprits who were formerly colonial powers today comprise new entrants (countries) who have now become more economically and politically relevant in the world and most times powerful representations of most religions. Huntington's thesis has become so vivid in our time as our world has become bipolar with those who stand with the Judeo-Christian Western hemisphere-centric front namely the United States of America, Israel, Britain, Germany, Italy, France, Canada and Australia and much of the European Union against the Islamic front which have Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Iran, Syria, Pakistan, standing along with Russia, China and North Korea. Russia, China and North Korea though not Islamic States (going by the fact that the Judeo-Christian Western hemisphere seem to have a common dominating hegemonic influence globally), tend to choose alliances with the Islamic-centric States who they feel going by historic antecedence in religion, mostly do not completely agree with the Judeo-Christian States. This religion-centric alignment is to a great extent what is shaping foreign policy today and one which forms a central feature that shapes the interference criteria in Africa's political and electioneering system.

In light of this, Africa (the continent with most of the natural resources the world needs for sustaining its economic and technological drive), and a population so vibrant and ready to be engaged with cheap labour, readily becomes a target region to influence for economic and religious interests. Thus, Africa therefore fits in the interest range of these powerful countries and by dint of these mainly economic and geo-strategic benefits has become the epi-center of the clash of civilizations of major economic and religious powers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This reality may extend beyond the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Considering



the world view of most of these religions, Africa, again by dint of her economic and geostrategic benefit is not only seen as a continent for exploitation but also a continent which neither of the two mainstream religious fronts would love to allow to fall into the hands of the other. Whilst the US for instance is scared that Africa may fall into hard-line control of Islamic States (along with their China-Russia alliance) which could be against their strategic interests, the Islamic world (also along with their China-Russia alliance) are also competing seriously to avoid the West from having any further grip on the African continent which invariable means benefit of its natural resources and population. This resolve is further heightened especially when considering the role of this polarization factor in the power tussle between Israel and the Palestinians and how this conflict has also become a major confrontational field and yardstick between known civilizations.

Other similar cases include the cold war and the sudden tussle between Poland, Ukraine and Russia in the annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation. In the end however, these two powerful players (the Judeo-Christian centric and Islamic fronts) make sure that politicians are funded and all is done to get politicians who agree with them into power to protect the interest of not their people but the interests of religion and the economic benefits that come along with it when they control these countries. The best part of this influence would have to be from the top, the political hierarchy where the leaders are being made. On a more broader scale, when it is time for African countries to agree on global charters in trade, macroeconomic planning, international co-operation, more evident socio-cultural diversities like same-sex relationships and its acceptance, support for climate change, etc, these leaders (or proxy leaders of these external actors) concede again to the envisions of the external actors making sure the agreements again align with the envisions of their controllers even when they are lopsided and inimical to the socio-cultural interests of their people or industrial developmental envisions. Therefore such external interference is indeed what shapes the foreign policy of many African States and not the inherent resolve of the African people.

To some African States and their economic developmental logic, climate change for instance is not much a greater worry than their need for industrialization and economic take-off which (going by restrictions being put forward by climate change pundits e.g. carbon caps), could hamper the actualization of these industrialization efforts. The logic



further goes on to imply that the Western Hemisphere countries and China have all experienced industrial take-off and now that Africa is about doing same it is being told to cut down on carbon emissions to meet global climate change restriction mandates. Such global charters which Africa is forced to align itself to comes along with huge dissatisfaction at home but are only made possible due to the case of their leaders answering to the envisions of the external actors who put them in government in the first place. This is already being seen in the plethora of economic partnership agreements, defence collaborations, macroeconomic policies which do not agree with realities on the ground and have continued to restrict Africa's developmental envisions and increase the inequality the exists in Africa today. (Acemoglu et al., 2012:122) support this assertion in their demonstration of how for instance Europe "deliberately" stamps out the possibility of economic growth in many parts of the world that they conquered and how the failure of most nations today is heavily influenced by their institutional histories which have such external interference trajectories. This work also details how most of the policies made in Africa are "deliberately" made not to succeed.

Countries such as Britain, the USA, Belgium, France, Russia, Germany, Pakistan, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Iran and recently but discretely, China, are speedily furthering their strategic economic interests in Africa and secretly influencing African politicians and supporting them with billions of dollars, making sure that these politicians get into governments in African states to basically protect their strategic economic interests. This wave of interests is furthered through covertly influencing the electioneering systems and manipulating the people in these countries. It is a vigorous struggle between these nations to copy the model already set in place by Africa's colonial former masters. Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Iran and Russia are covertly funding politicians who would protect Islamic interests against the efforts of the Judeo-Christian dominated Western hemisphere States. We already see part of this in the ongoing Syrian Civil War where Russia is backing the Syrian government. The same operational strategies for this (e.g. funding politicians, influencing and even owning political parties and manipulating electioneering results) are also being utilized in most natural resource-rich countries in Africa. In the 2015 elections in Nigeria, most politicians who emerged in mainstream political parties and offices in Northern Nigeria (a part of Nigeria known to be mainly Islamic) were known to be heavily



bankrolled by Islamic fundamentalists groups in Saudi Arabia, Iran, Pakistan and Turkey. It is also a firm truth that these groups had direct support of their States in the process. The range is in billions of dollars. The upcoming 2019 general elections in Nigeria which would usher in a new administration is expected to have such strategic interference again all meant to beat the Judeo-Christian influence in this natural resources rich country, a country known to be Africa's most populous nation.

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## The State of Reality Case

It is therefore evident that these clash of civilizations with their external interests are what determine the electioneering pattern in Africa and not the African people themselves. Normally, the electioneering pattern does not only mean how the elections are run but must reflect the envisions of the people. In Africa, the envisions of the people are replaced by envisions of powerful external actors who make sure people who represent their own economic and religious interests (and not the interests of Africans) are served to the people. The people thus have no choice and their voter cards become emasculated all the time as these cards or polls would not bring the people of their choices. This regrettable case of reality comes along with the case that at the end, these politicians would not answer to the yearnings of the people but would only answer to the strategic wishes of the external actors. The second resultant is a case where the African people continue to wallow in extreme inequality with their natural resources only serving the interests of foreign powers.

This in essence is against the fundamental rights of sovereign African States in whichever way one wishes to explain it. When considering such realities in Africa, one can comfortably admit that Africa has not yet began its journey or path to sustainable socio-economic and political development, ownership and autonomy. One can also further imply that ever since the 1884-85 Berlin Conference, Africa has never been ruled by Africans but has continued to be ruled by proxy. This is counterproductive for Africa as what it means is that the political structure of Africa which determines the policy direction of the continent still resides in the hands of actors who are not African even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century when new and interesting marvels such as the 4<sup>th</sup> industrial revolution, knowledge economy, inclusive markets and multilateralism (especially in trade) are taking center stage and demand the balanced cooperation of all parts of the world which should include Africa not as a burden but as a major positive contributor. It is therefore an undisputed fact that the disadvantaged status of Africa today is as a result of the doctoring of its affairs by external actors. This is an aberration to the rights of any people in modern society more so Africans. It is indeed an illegality.

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## Recommendations

Africa should be ruled by Africans and not external actors. Independence cannot be fully achieved or legally acceptable when external actors continue to call the shots in the countries they formally ruled as colonial masters. Governments in Africa should adjust their economies in ways that will make room for the middle class to emerge and become politically active. For this to be possible, electioneering in Africa should be less money-based but be an exercise which is ideology-based. Much of the reason why external actors submerge the political system in Africa is because the middle class in most African countries is non-existent and does not have the huge amount of money meant for vying for political office. The political class and its electioneering system in Africa are still governed and owned by the elite. Major reasons for this again is that Africa's political system is still not ideology-based but money-based (money politics). This development is known to be the singular reality that frustrates well-meaning citizens who cannot be bought with money from going into mainstream politics. A possible removal of this type of political system and its replacement by an ideology-based political and electioneering system where people who vie for political offices would be considered by the developmental logic they profess and not how much money they have or are willing to give the electorate. This when done will definitely see a strengthened move of well-meaning people into African politics, a people who will not be influenced by external actors who have only selfish economic and religious interests. African countries must put in place laws that will prohibit the use of money politics as a major determinant in its political and electioneering system.

On the international scene, there should be an international political policing system that would prevent external actors from meddling in matters of other countries or regions considered former colonies. This political policing system would work behind the scenes as an international watchdog to prosecute countries, organizations and individuals found guilty of meddling in political affairs of other countries for their selfish economic and religious interests. The political policing system should be backed by appropriate international law to regulate the process and should be supported by The International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL).



Trade between countries and regions should be balanced especially when dealing with former colonial powers. It is pertinent that innovative international commercial and trade models with better instruments for transaction (e.g. new currencies and their accompanying legal framework) which will balance trade and commercial activity between countries (especially when dealing with natural resources and intellectual property) be devised. If trade and intellectual property handling between nations are made more transparent and balanced, then external political interference to protect economic interests would be eradicated as there will be no need for the later. Such commercial models and their currencies would actually complement the activity of the political policing system as it would further uncover shady external influence just as it would also uncover shady-trade deals and processes. Again such commercial models and currencies can be better since the US dollar (a fiat money) and major currency in international trade does not have what it takes to balance trade between nations in a manner that would reflect transparency. This is because the US dollar has huge fiduciary restrictions, fringe interferences and control discreetly regulated by the issuing country which is the USA. All these make trade balance an impossibility.

The author is developing the operational framework of such alternative currency, using *Lex monetae* as its legal binding component. Trade and commercial relations between Africa and Europe is being used as a case study in this work. The aim of the research is to produce an alternative currency different from the US dollar which would balance trade and commercial activity as a better fiduciary for trade of natural resources and intellectual property and other critical State-centric commercial engagements under international law. Eradicating interferences in the politics and electioneering system of nations would require emasculating some intricate string attachments operating covertly as still binding agreements, evident as economic and political partnership agreements, diplomatic charters, etc. A legal methodology must be developed which would review former signed agreements and possibly re-write or cancel them if they are only found to do the bidding of the more powerful States involved in these agreements. Most economic partnership agreements for instance signed between Africa and most European countries which regulate the trade of Africa's natural resources and intellectual property are still



lopsided and not beneficial to the African countries that own them. The strategic interests of the powerful countries who have strategic investments on the ground worth billions of dollars act as a bait and compel these powerful countries to meddle in the political and electioneering affairs of these countries as a means of safeguarding or sustaining their selfish strategic investments in these countries. They wouldn't want a situation where a politician who would not like the agreements cancel such agreements. Therefore they would rather influence a politician of their choice who naturally would not be the choice of the people. Thus, the cancellation of such lopsided agreements which do not serve the purpose of the country in which the natural resources or intellectual property is sighted in, or a review which would balance it up to serve mutual interests between both countries will discourage unwanted external interference in political and electioneering matters in these countries by more powerful States. For this to be possible, a legal and operational framework has to be developed as well.

Another vivid example is the 1884-85 Berlin conference which sealed the colonization plan of African states without the participation of any diplomatic representation from Africa even when most African empires and sovereign states were known to have diplomatic representations in most European countries at the time of this conference. (Gershoni, 1987:293) confirms that as early as 1847, Liberia for instance, a black republic on the coast of West Africa was already sovereign and maintained regular diplomatic relations and actually signed various agreements of friendship and trade with some countries of the then presumed "civilized world" such as France, England, Imperial Germany and the U.S. It is necessary to investigate why Africa was not invited to the 1884-84 conference, a meeting which had so much to do with their fate. It is important to question if this non-invitation to this conference was an illegality under international law. In this light as well, it is also reasonable to still review the resolutions of this conference and fish-out any binding clauses which are still being directly or indirectly utilized in bilateral relations between Africa and Europe. A review or outright cancellation of such clauses have to be made if this is the case. Also, it is necessary to investigate if there exists a "*Master-Slave Psychology Syndrome*" in modern day relations between Europe and Africa (especially in the area of trade and regulation of intellectual property) hence a major component of the resolutions of the 1884-84 Berlin conference was to own Africa,



its natural resources and peoples. (Becker, 2009:1) already reveals unequal relationship between the Northern hemisphere and its former colonies. If this unequal relationship is substantiated as a result of a "*Master-Slave Psychology Syndrome*", it will be good to know if this psychological pattern in foreign relations can be used as a basis for explaining the continued quest of nations wanting to control other sovereign States either because of the consciousness of past historical dominances (e.g. colonialism) or mere economic, technological, intellectual, military or political dominance. Can this possibly be the driving factor which seems to compel new entrants in the global economic and political power dominance arena namely China, Saudi Arabia and Turkey to dominate the political and electioneering pattern of Africa and other regions?

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