

Interests of Super Powers in the Chadian Conflict

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Abstract: This paper discusses Libya's interests in Chad which seems to be motivated by political, religious and strategic considerations. France interests in Chad, being the mother country that colonised Chad and granted Chad's independence in 1960, certainly has a number of interests to protect in that country which ranges from economic, socio-cultural, political, military and strategic considerations. United States interests in Chad are predicated on two factors, the question of former East-West rivalry and political and economic interests. Soviet Union (USSR) was a very strong supporter of Libya, and Libya seemed to be the chief surrogate of Soviet penetration in Africa. This was how USSR got involved in the conflict. In fact, there is no way the crisis in Chad can be finally settled without the settlement of the Aouzou strip occupation.

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I. INTRODUCTION

No relationship between two or more countries is completely without strains, interests or possibilities of conflicts and misunderstandings. Strains and interests are bound to occur whether on a minor scale requiring diplomatic efforts to resolve them or on a grand scale leading to military confrontation. Chad, of all Nigeria's immediate neighbours, posed the most serious challenges to Nigeria's security issues. Since its independence in 1960, the country has witnessed innumerable political crises that led to several civil wars. These wars resulted in massive interventions by some of the regional states and by countries outside the continent of Africa. It is in view of this that this paper intends to examine the interests of the super powers that are involved in the conflict.

II. METHODOLOGY

This paper is an extract from my thesis submitted for the award of Doctor of Philosophy (international relations) at Usmanu Danfodiyo University. Therefore, the data is predominantly empirical rather than speculative. The data was obtained through a thorough and careful examination of the existing literature on the interests of super powers in the Chadian conflict since 1980 to the current period of the relations. Therefore the sources of data included textbooks, journals, magazines, internal sources and personal interviews.

Libya's Interests in Chad

Libya's interests in Chad seemed to be motivated by political, religious and strategic considerations. Libya's participation in the crisis should be viewed within the context of these factors. Political interest derived from the geo-politics and politics of Libya itself. Libya, because of its anti-imperialist posture, had become sort of isolated in North Africa, being on no good terms with Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco and Nigeria. Sensing the consequences of its isolation, Libya exerted its influence in Chad by allying and becoming a mentor to any of the political groups with considerable support in Chad in terms of providing bases, financial support and arms. The calculation of late Colonel Gaddafi was that Chad, under Libyan influence, would provide security to Libya's Southern border (Goodluck, 1999).

Another factor of Libyan concern was the manpower need, being under populated with only 8.5 million people as of 2008 (Moses, 2010). Libya is rich and possessed an impressive arsenal of formidable weapons, thus Libya could intervene in Chad under its influence for its own development purpose. Another political factor was Libya's quest to acquire nuclear technology for which uranium is important and Chad had it in large quantities. This explained Libyan occupation of the Aouzou strip of Chad since 1983, the area where most of the uranium deposit is located (Wilson, 1992).

Religion is one of the primary objectives of Libya in Chad to help the Muslim majority in Chad to have an effective say if not total control of affairs in Chad. Islam plays an ideological role in Gaddafi's interest in the spirit of his own brand of Islamic socialism. Religion plays a means to an end in Libya designed on Chad as a

conscious means. Thus, Libya has natural advantage to get considerable support in Chadian social and political circles. Certainly Gaddafi saw Libya's support for the Muslim nationalist faction as a way of Islamic Cultural Revolution in Africa. It is obvious that Libya's activities in Chad hinged on Gaddafi's Pan-Islamic pursuit in the continent (Meredith, 2011).

As Meredith (2011) remarked "The extension of Pan-Islamic radical belt stretched from Chad to Port Sudan was the acme of Gaddafi's hope", that was why any assessment of the impact of Libyan activities in Chad must take into account the Islamic factor. Libya helped considerably in building mosques and institutions of Islamic learning in Chad. In Gaddafi's view it was necessary to control Northern Chad in order to protect Chad's Muslim population from their continued domination by the Southern Christians.

Gaddafi's obsession with Pan-Islamism was such that his foreign interventionist force was called the "Islamic legion". Gaddafi has taken to Islamic crusade as a way of rallying African states for a common pursuit. Gaddafi has never been discouraged in the slightest from his zealotry to make North Chad into a secured base from which to radiate his own special brand of Arabic and Islamic radicalism (Williams, 1992). There is no way the crisis in Chad can be finally settled without the settlement of the Aouzou strip occupation. Enthroning a regime friendly to Libya in Chad also served a strategic purpose: easier access to Sudan's Western flank for Libya.

It was Gaddafi's belief that no peace or government should take root in Chad out of the realm of Libya's assent. It is therefore not surprising when Libyan Premier, Abdulsalam Jallond openly boasted that "any solution for Chad which has not received our approbation is doomed to failure," and that was still Gaddafi's dream in Chad before his demise. This aptly illustrated the role of king maker which Gaddafi has chosen to play in that unfortunate country.

France Interests in Chad

France interests in Chad, being the mother country that colonised Chad and granted Chad's independence in 1960, certainly has a number of interests to protect in that country. More than any country, France committed the greatest violation on integrity of Franco-phone African states and had gotten away with it, as evident in their policy of assimilation in all the countries they colonised. The fact that the Chadian crisis has assumed wider geo-political dimensions was largely due to strategic design of Western international politics.

French interests in Chad, the strategic location of Chad made it a staging area for French intervention in Central African Republic (CAR), Chad's vast uranium reserve was crucial to France's independent nuclear interests. French policy had brought about an intervention in Chad to support governments known to have a friendly disposition and prevented a hostile one from coming to power in Chad. The French aid system in N'djamena has influenced a military base for the country which was responsible for their ability to launch fighting offensive anywhere in Africa. Before the evacuation of 1990, France maintained 2000 permanent troops in N'djamena apart from the five hundred military and technical advisers attached to the Chadian army (Williams, 1992).

France has defence agreement signed with Chad at independence which provided for France's intervention in the event of external attack. Furthermore, Chad was and still depends on France for its military supplies and training. In fact, France official sources confirmed that as of 1992, technical assistance and mission attached to the Chadian armed forces consisted of six hundred and twenty (620) men. When Abdulrahman Ali, an official in the Nigerian Embassy in Chad Republic was interviewed he said that the intervention force (s) sent in 1992 to assist Chadian army against rebel faction in Northern Chad was as a result of an arrangement between the two countries to send France's special paratroops to their country.

Chad is rich in manganese and uranium deposits which played a central role in France's defence calculation which hinged largely on the development of an independent nuclear defence force. Secondly, France's nuclear industry which has undergone various stages of expansion is expected to place that country in the first position on the list of exporters of radioactive materials. Uranium politics, therefore, plays an important role in French foreign policy especially in Africa which contains the richest reserves outside the former communist bloc (Godson, 2000).

The main France economic interests in Chad are uranium and manganese reserves which France gets at a concessionary price to develop its nuclear industry and exchange it with other countries especially, South Africa. Chad is economically one of the poorest of Franco-phone African countries. Since independence in 1960 up to 1998 the Chadian government has run a budget deficit and drawing directly from France's treasury for its annual budget needs as well as for development plans (Cumming, 1999).

Chadian economy which appears to be extremely bright has kept France in Chad. France reported in 1990 that the Chadian oil reserve "could equal that of North Sea or even Saudi Arabia". Most of these areas are in the Southern part of Chad and East of the Lake-Chad. Further deposits are also reported to exist around the Libyan border. France nuclear industry which has undergone various stages of expansion is expected to place

France first position on the list of exporter of radio-active materials which would yield economic benefit to that country.

United States Interests in Chad

United States interests in Chad are predicated on two factors, the question of former East-West rivalry and political and economic interests. The United States has no interest in Chad to involve itself in the crisis. US President Ronald Regan saw Chad as part of East-West crisis, with Gaddafi who operated as a Soviet ally bent on building a Marxist revolutionary crisis across the Sahara.

Chad is unknown to US according to New York Times (January, 15th, 1990), Chad is a blur, another columnist which United States describes as being “at the back of beyond”. Two incidences made Chad to get lead head lines in US. One was despatched surveillance planes to Sudan and the running feud between US and France that broke into the open over what should be the appropriate US or France response to the rebels challenged by the government of the then President Hissen Habre. US defended the sending of surveillance and said that threat to US security could arise worldwide and the Washington post supported US and said “though Chad is obscured and of no importance to US in any traditional or conventional sense, it was nonetheless part of the business of being a great power to do what can be done to keep local or regional bullies from pushing unoffending countries around”. US President was reported to have said also that Chad “is not US primary sphere of influence but is that of France”. US expected France to exercise its historical responsibility in Chad (John, 2008).

When Habre was chased out of Chad in 1981, US became unhappy, coupled with President Goukouni’s closeness to Gaddafi. From this point, according to France’s secret service, the US, supported by Egypt and Sudan, threw its support for Habre was backed by US with Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) funds to the tune of \$10 million while in Sudan. It was with this fund and medical facilities Libyan withdrawal from Chad in 1991. US saw it fit to intervene in the crisis since its involvement was indirect to support US protest in Chad. France served as the NATO front in Chad. The US involvement was covert, as it intervenes through US’s surrogates like Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) which was US proxy. The presence of DRC forces in Chad constituted a forward position to prevent the ideological subversion of USSR (Kissinger, 1986).

Apart from pursuit of its national interests globally the US also has economic interest in Chad. This could be seen in the number of oil companies US has in Chad like Lexicon, Conoco and Chevron, all oil explorers prospecting for oil in Chad, as such oil company’s interests must if they are to succeed and be protected by the show of US might by way of meddling in the Chadian crisis as a minor but influential power broker. In particular US economic interests are drawn to the large deposits of oil, uranium and manganese found in Chad (Akinyemi, 1995).

Soviet Union Interests in Chad

According to Omoweh, (2003) Soviet Union (USSR) was a very strong supporter of Libya, and Libya seemed to be the chief surrogate of Soviet penetration in Africa. Libya’s action in Chad necessarily provoked reactions from Western countries and was Libyan support from Government for National Unity in Chad (GUNT) that provided Habre’s qualification for aid from Soviet Union.

Soviet Union had to become involved in the crisis indirectly. Economically, the Soviet Union has no oil companies or for that matter any type of business in Chad. However, USSR has derived some economic benefits by the sale of USSR’s arms to Libya which Libya stockpiles. The SSR felt duty bound to support Libyan’s position by aiding it (Omoweh, 2003).

To the USSR, US and France were the real enemies of Chad. For them, Goukouni’s order for withdrawal of Libyan troops was merely an attempt by US to install an anti-Libyan Habre in power “to open a Southern front against Libya” US was accused of supplying arms to Sudan whose troops it was claimed, fought side by side with Habre. An interesting aspect of the fight in 1982 was the Libyan bombardment of Habre’s forces positioned in FAYA the capital of B.E.T, showed clearly how close Chad was in igniting the East-West war in Africa (Eric, 2000).

III. CONCLUSION

In this paper, attempts were made to discuss the interests of the super powers in the Chadian strife. It explored their various areas of interests, ranging from economic interests, political interests, religious interest, security and strategic interests, socio-cultural and military interests by their former colonial elites. The paper submitted that, US involvement was covert, as it intervenes through its surrogates the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) which was US proxy. The presence of DRC forces in Chad constituted a forward position to prevent the ideological subversion of USSR. Any peace process in Chad will not be complete without the blessing of France as the mother country of Chad.

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