Challenges and Prospects for Achieving Africa's Core Interests in International Relations

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I. INTRODUCTION:

International Relations (IR) can be defined as an act and as a field of academic pursuit. As an academic pursuit, it is the study of economics, law and politics on a global level. International relations as an act mean the diplomatic-strategic relations of states. Baylis[1] defines it as relations among states. There are many pluralities that characterize Africa as a continent. Africa has the highest number of states (54) compared to the other six continents. Africa is characterized by varying political maturity as a result of the different number of years these countries have been independent except Ethiopia and Liberia which were not colonized. Africa is also coupled with ethnic diversity such as Arabs and Negros subdivided into Bantus and Nilotic.[2]

The states in the African continent ideologically differ in terms of political-economic development; they are neither fully socialist nor pluralist. Economic indexes of these countries also vary widely. Nigeria, Ghana and Sierra Leone, for example, are of mixed economies. Language diversification also makes up part of Africa. Geographically, Africa is divided into Anglophone and Francophone countries. All these diversities reflect individual state's foreign policies.[3] In her IR, Africa seeks to advance regional integration, democratization, peace and security, and accelerated economic development. However, IR implementation in Africa is characterized by many challenges. IR is as profoundly affected by domestic political setting as by international constraints. The domestic issues have been interconnected with global challenges such as security, the environment, terrorism, immigration, trade and so forth.

Purpose of the Study:
The aim of this paper was to discuss the challenges that Africa needs to address and the prospects for achieving the regions core interests in international relations.

II. THEORETICAL REVIEW:

This paper is guided by the Strategic Theory. "Strategy" is perhaps one of the most often used words in public discourse. Anything from governmental policy and company strategies to personal decisions may be described by the term. Only a few people, however, understand the true meaning of this phrase and what it signifies as a method of studying social issues Bernard Brodie and Thomas Schelling's work has helped spread the idea of Strategic Theory as a technique of analysis into the broader field of International Relations and Political Studies, and it has been increasingly used as a tool to aid in decision-making[4].

Strategic theorists are primarily interested in the calculations of so-called "unitary" political actors, such as governments, sub-state groups, or any other social grouping. The goal of a Strategic Theory study is to describe the options accessible to such actors and to assess the quality of their decision-making. As a result, strategic theorists will usually try to follow a political entity's thought process in order to figure out how it plans to attain its goals. Strategic Theory, according to Smith and Stone[5], provides a succinct and cohesive foundation for analysing the social behaviour associated with conflict, that is, when players are attempting to protect their

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[1] Baylis, John. *The globalization of world politics: An introduction to international relations*. Oxford university press, USA, 2020.

[2] Herbst, Jeffrey. *States and power in Africa: Comparative lessons in authority and control*. Vol. 149. Princeton University Press, 2014.

[3] Kumar, Vilachoor Srinivasan, Dr Utham Kumar, and Dr R. Thenmozhi. "Economic Diplomacy with Africa." *Journal of Management* 6, no. 2 (2019).

[4] Yarger, Harry R. *Strategic theory for the 21st century: the little book on big strategy*. DIANE Publishing, 2006.

[5] Smith, M. L. R., and John Stone. "Explaining strategic theory." *Infinity Journal* 1, no. 4 (2011): 27-30.

own interests and values against the interests of other political actors. It frequently collaborates with other academic disciplines, although it is not a part of any of them. Its core issues are not inextricably tied to any historical, ethical, or other context. On the contrary, it is defined in such a way that it assists the theorist in overcoming situational prejudice.

III. METHODOLOGY:

The study used a case study design. By using this study design, the study sought to obtain in-depth information from one single bounded case or element, that is the challenges that Africa needs to address and the prospects for achieving the regions core interests in international relations. A case study design also contributes to reliable generalization of findings. The study used qualitative method; the data employed in this study is mainly secondary. It was derived from documents, literature reviews, journals and reports of similar studies. The production of new knowledge was fundamentally dependent on past knowledge, based on discussions and observations made by past scholars. In data analysis, deductive method was used to generalize data based on past studies and documentaries, through looking at the general pattern from those studies.

IV.   DISCUSSION:

Challenges that Africa needs to address
Conflicts and political instability:

African IR, for years, has focused on conflict resolution. The continent has since 1960s been marked by persistent conflicts, revolutions and emigrants, all of which resulted in key IR fears for particular countries and African regional organizations. The case of genocide in Rwanda between April and July 1994 lends credence to this argument. Members of the Hutu ethnic, who are the popular in the country killed about 800,000 people, mostly of the Tutsi minority.[6] The massacre began from the extreme Hutu in the capital of Kigali, and spread throughout the country with surprising speed and cruelty, as ordinary people were incited by local representatives and the Hutu leaders to wage war against their neighbours. In response, the Tutsi-led Rwandese Patriotic Front (RPF) overthrew the government through a military aggression in early July. By then, hundreds of thousands of Rwandans had been killed and many displaced. The RPF triumph created 2 million additional refugees (mainly Hutus), aggravating what had already become a total humanitarian crisis.

Changes in political leadership in some regions has had negative effects in the pursuant and implementation of already negotiated Memorandum of Understanding, gravely affecting IR undertakings. Political differences between sub-state leaders and the state have sometimes adversely affected their relationships, for instance, what is currently happening in Ethiopia and its northern region, Tigray. Regional conflicts have thereby stepped into ethnic wars leading to new challenges such as the rise of refugees, illegal arms trade across borders and even environmental degradation. The need to build African institutions that would foster regional integration and assist in conflict management has become a critical IR objective. Its implementation, however, has been marred by regional economic retrogression and escalating conflicts that hamper level interstate relations.

Insecurity:

The main challenges that have plagued IR implementation in this era include rise of terrorism attacks brought about by increased conflicts in the Horn of Africa region, and West Africa.[7] This has led to Kenya and other countries' involvement in Somalia under the notion of self- preservation as the country deals with the Al-Shabaab menace. In November 2011, Kenya made a military entry into Somalia to fight the Islamic terror group -Al Shabaab. In the move dubbed *'Operation Linda Nchi'* (Protect the Country), Kenya sought to trash the militants after several attacks by the group within the Kenyan border especially the Kenyan Coast where Kenya's tourism sector booms. Kenya therefore responded to the mounting threat, and made the Kenya Defence Forces (KDF) respond to armed attacks with force. KDF invoked Article 51 of the United Nations (UN) Charter, which reiterates a state's right to self-defence given the lives of its citizen were threatened. But in spite of the move, Kenya has continued to suffer attacks both internally and by its soldiers in Somalia.

Increased piracy within the coast of Africa has also affected Kenya's trade and its economic growth with tourism increasingly deteriorating in the wake of these attacks. Immigration and low border security have led to the rise proliferation of small arms and light weapons, refugees, human and drug trafficking and even

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[6] Meierhenrich, Jens. "How Many Victims Were There in the Rwandan Genocide? A Statistical Debate." *Journal of Genocide Research* 22, no. 1 (2020): 72-82.
[7] Ujunwa, Augustine, Chinwe Okoyeuzu, and Ebere Ume Kalu. "Armed conflict and food security in West Africa: socioeconomic perspective." *International Journal of Social Economics* (2019).

terrorism. While the country has implemented policies to aid in curbing these vices, some of the policies have faced international criticisms and complicated the relations with neighbouring countries.[8]

Domestic political setting:

IR has been described as policy pursued by a state in its dealings with other states. Unlike domestic policy, IR creation and implementation typically encompasses limited number of people and less publicity. The nation's head of state is usually tasked with the key responsibility of discharging IR and various tools are used to conduct IR. These include, diplomacy, foreign aid and military force. Challenges of implementation thus arise from conflicting interests between the central and sub-state governments.[9] One of the major complaint is that specific aspects such as environment, human rights, energy flow, cultural exchanges and so forth are a concern of the sub-state governments hence the agenda in international relations should incorporate sub-state governments role. However, the same is not achieved as there is no formal structural system that guides the international relations interaction between sub-state and national governments.

Financial weakness and policy dependence:

Many countries in African are underdeveloped except few rich states endowed with natural resources. Because of the poor economic development and financial weakness, their governments are weak. As a result, this strains IR implementation processes in numerous ways. The most obvious and direct is that these financially weak states cannot afford to establish strategic embassies and foreign missions abroad as well as employ adequate number of diplomatic staff, which alone limits their impact.[10] Similarly, their lack of significant military forces or huge markets renders them not much attractive compared to other powerful states in other continents. The financial weakness and low economy is closely linked to political instability and internal conflicts. The extent of Africa's financial weakness and reliance on assistance from powerful foreign nations renders internal political activities into issues of IR contestation.

Feraru[11] argues that a major challenge in IR implementation during this era is the overarching need for survival by weak states. IR is used by the African elites who were instrumental in the colonial liberation to garner political and economic resources from foreign states to ensure the state's survival. The IR also reflects continual attempts to manage security threats and untoward external manipulation. Hence, the pre-occupation is on legitimacy of the states, political stability, economic growth and national security.

Unskilled workforce:

Challenges in the implementation of IR emanate from untrained diplomatic personnel, lack of finances and the absence of a written policy.[12] During the 1990s, a debate arose on the roles of the African diplomats with most acquiescing to the fact the African diplomats role in the international arena was missing or was at a very low-profile. Potential foreign investors were particularly concerned and voiced their apprehension on the deficiency in trade and industry knowledge by the Africa's diplomats abroad. This was attributed to the fact that there were no diplomatic cadres separating diplomats from ordinary civil service hence there were numerous instances of civil servants with no diplomatic training being appointed to represent the countries in the diplomatic arena. This together with appointments based on political associations, family relations and friendships saw an influx of unskilled/ semi-skilled individuals representing Africa in foreign affairs matters. The level of skills of diplomatic experts has been seen to have an influence on how two or more countries relate.[13]

Challenges in implementation of IR objectives:

There is a challenge in implementation of IR objectives in Africa. African countries face the challenge of reconciling principles with the practical implementation of IR. Therefore there is continued lack of peace and insecurity in Africa and hence human rights violations continue to happen in various African states such

[8] Kamande, Sarah W. "The rising challenges in the implementation of IR: a case of Sub-State Diplomacy in Kenya." PhD diss., University of Nairobi, 2017.

[9] Newton, Kahlil. *International Relations and World Politics*. Scientific e-Resources, 2019.

[10] Soudien, Crain, and Gregory Houston. "African Perspectives on Development in the Context of a Changing International System." In *New Paths of Development*, pp. 25-41. Springer, Cham, 2020.

[11] Feraru, Atena S. "Regime Security and Regional Cooperation among Weak States." *International Studies Review* 20, no. 1 (2018): 101-126.

[12] Op cit. "The rising challenges in the implementation of foreign policy: a case of Sub-State Diplomacy in Kenya" pp. 11-17.

[13] Blom, Tannelie, and Sophie Vanhoonacker. "The role of Expertise in the EU's Emerging Diplomatic System." In *The Contestation of Expertise in the European Union*, pp. 123-143. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, 2020.

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Somalia, South Sudan and Central Africa Republic (CAR).[14] Human suffering as a result of hunger and poverty continue to affect a significant population especially in the Horn of Africa. This means that African countries must put in place effective IR implementation techniques and strategies to ensure that these goals are achieved.

Current trends in international relations and diplomacy surrounds the issues of globalization, human rights and democracy. The formation of the AU in 2002 created prospects that would see advancement in various aspects of their IR objectives. But, as Ujunwa among others[15] note, African States have not achieved all of their IR objectives and they will not in the near future. This is attributed to rigid and strong sovereignty norms, which include states' inability to incorporate various diplomatic practices in their IR implementations. This is because domestic political actions commonly have a lot of influence on policy making and implementation processes.

Furthermore, Africa's image is shattered and despite immense efforts by diplomats and other officials in Africa to outside countries to explain Africa's stance, their efforts have been fruitless since most African states maintain an absolute definition of national sovereignty. They argue that human rights and related issues are African affairs and hence require African solutions. A case in point is the Kenya verses International Criminal Court (ICC) from 2010 to 2015, Genocide in Rwanda and elusive peace and security in South Sudan.[16] Most leaders in Africa sit down within boundaries of their countries and treat citizens as they like without much attention to the reaction from the international community. Though democracy and human rights were initially internal affairs in law and international relations, they are becoming important determinants in IR.

Industrialization:
Africa remains greatly reliant on the sale of a few commodities to more industrialized markets such as USA, China and Germany. For example, Although Africa accounted for only 4% of China's transnational trade in 2011, Africa's significance as a Chinese trading partner has been conspicuously growing. For example, Chinese firms, mostly large state-owned enterprises, have recently invested millions of dollars in resource- rich African countries, with resource poor countries left for dead in terms of their ability to industrialize.[17]

The prospects for achieving the regions core interests in IR
Improved sovereignty and territorial integrity:
The African continent is faced with challenges when it comes to sovereignty and territorial integrity. Though some progress has been made, there are still cases of countries fighting over certain boundaries, such as Kenya and Somalia. This is exacerbated by the instances of insecurity. However, the decision of Kenya to fight the Al-Shabaab terror group in Somalia has received international support. The movement into Somalia was partly an implementation of the IR objective of global peace and security. The *Operation Linda Nchi conducted* resonates as one of the milestones in the fight against international terrorism. The move was supported by the OAU and a resolution to integrate KDF to AMISOM following the UN Security Council Resolution 2036 was seen as a boost in the fight against terror. Kenya has also been offering troops during peace missions and participates in regional security initiatives that assist peace and stability for its neighbours. This continued support between African may prove essential in the future prospects of the IR in the continent.

Marrying domestic and external policies:
Domestic policies are inseparable with the external policies. The formation of AU in 1963, which is a result of pan African movement, has not made things any better for Africa in terms of forging collective national interests in international scene to inform her IR objectives. Article II of the AU Charter articulates the collective interests put in five points and which summarily comprises of unity and solidarity, cooperation to achieve improved life for African society, sovereignty, territorial integrity as well as independence. Ironically, Africa is criticized for acting contrary to these objectives such as desecration of human rights and protecting those in leadership from the international community actions. Many countries in Africa are also not yet fully independent in their IR and policy making since they are still bonded by views of their respective former colonial masters, mostly the European nations.

The AU seeks to promote the objectives of regional ties, democratization, peace and security, and enhanced economic progress in her IR. Diplomacy is a key tool of IR implementation. Diplomatic engagement, however, has become gradually technical in nature, necessitating additional capabilities in variety areas such as

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[14] Murithi, Tim. *Regional Reconciliation in Africa: The Elusive Dimension of Peace and Security*. Nordiska Afrikainstitutet; Uppsala universitet, 2019.
[15] Op cit. "Armed conflict and food security in West Africa: socioeconomic perspective" pp.2-3
[16] Clark, Phil. *Distant justice: The impact of the International Criminal Court on African politics*. Cambridge University Press, 2018.
[17] Op cit. "Regime Security and Regional Cooperation among Weak States" pp. 101-126.

parliamentary diplomacy, environmental diplomacy, health diplomacy, development diplomacy, economic diplomacy, science diplomacy as well as media diplomacy. If these areas are integrated in international relations in Africa, international relations may be improved in the long run.

Combined efforts in security:
African governments are increasingly co-operating with other states and international agencies on matters of international security as regional governments are drawn into issues of international concern such as terrorism, migration, people trafficking and drug trafficking. For future IR to work, the governments in Africa should revise their national and local security policies that lay within the frameworks of international security provisions, to accommodate the major issues of concern highlighted in the international documents. Security is an area where one country cannot stand alone, and therefore combined efforts need to be spurred for a better and secure tomorrow.

Culture and economic development:
Culture has been promoted as a means to nation building and as identity politics.[18] It has been linked to economic development and used by governments for public diplomacy, place marketing and image-making. Some governments actively promote specific virtues of their own regions. For instance, the East African governments have promoted the Swahili culture and sought to endear tourism hence endorsing the continuing linkages between culture and enterprise. Nigeria is also a good example in those countries that are continuously promoting their culture. Generally, culture is often a contentious field. Arguments range from what would be the content of culture, its' role in international interactions and whether it should be promoted in its own right. In Kenya, the national government has sought to promote cultural pluralism in its international trade interactions. Other governments are consequently enacting international actions that do not interfere with IR.

Economic development is a major driver of international interactions with state governments giving it a high priority. While highly institutionalized, the international interests of governments tend to be more limited in nature and render a high importance on coordinated economic interactions across borders. State governments mainly seek to promote foreign direct investment into their regions taking advantage of international trade liberalization through free trade and removal of trade barriers. They also seek international markets for their small and medium enterprises and cooperate in areas of technological research and development. This improves IR in the region as every nation is dependent on another for economic growth and development.

Working on country-specific diplomacy:
Diplomacy has been made more complex with the rise of technological innovations. Information travels faster, fake information is on the rise and developments in any one region in the world have a dramatic and instant effect to the rest of the world. Conflicts and war, climate changes that have led to recurrent droughts and food shortages have driven most countries' IR to address these changes and hence cement their standing within the international arena. Most countries are also grappling to overcome domestic challenges and have enacted policies that will overcome these challenges and attract foreign direct investment while at the same time progress towards the realization of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). With this realization, the future of IR may be in good hands.

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[5]. Fukuyama, Francis. *Identity: The demand for dignity and the politics of resentment*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2018.
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