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DIPLOMACY AND THE DILEMMA OF ROGUE REGIMES, RELIGION AND  
MULTINATIONAL CORPORATIONS IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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*Abstract*

*The international system has been evolving with many recurring international issues that requires collaboration of global actors to address. Since the end of Cold War, the challenges of rogue states, faith regimes, and multinational companies exploiting and violating human rights has been on the rise. These issues are fueling conflict and insecurity, economic inequality between developing and developed nations, social unrest and terrorism etc. In all these, diplomacy has been instrumental in the pursuit for peace and stability through its practice of conducting negotiations, mediation and relationship building. Using the secondary and multidisciplinary sources, this study examines diplomacy and the dilemma of rogue regimes, religion and multinational corporations' in international relations. The study also used the realist and liberalism theories as a template for analysis. The study reveals that many international issues affecting the smooth conduct of international relations and diplomatic practice persist because state and corporate powers refuse to adhere to international laws. The study concludes that the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century international system can be addressed only if diverse approaches, such as balancing coercion, engagement, containment, collective action and collaboration of major actors are prioritised. Actors in global community must act in accordance with the rules governing the international system. The study recommends amongst others,*

*that international institutions should be restructured and strengthened to address the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.*

*Keywords; diplomacy, human rights, rogue state, liberalism, religion, multinational corporations.*

## **Introduction**

One recurring themes in international relations and diplomacy is how the international system can be governed to the occasion that it poses no threat to the fragile peace and stability of the world. Diplomacy is basically an art of persuasion and not coercion, an alternative narrative to conflict and war, aimed at seeking for and finding common ground, forging agreement and achieving a balance of benefits that will allow each party to go home with at least some degree of satisfaction (Fretchette 2013). Alternatively, there are consequences for setbacks or lack of diplomatic conversations, discussion or agreement, and one of such is the distortion of the international system which has brought global actors together. International community here comprises network of states, institutions, organizations and individuals interacting on a global stage for mutual benefits. It is the framework for international relations which outlines who interacts with whom, how they interact and what the rules of engagement are (Immerse education 2023).

The international system is volatile and unstable in contrast to what it portray to be. For instance, when navigating the nexus between terrorism and rogue states, Huang (2016) observed that, emerging rogue states like Iran is considered a top state sponsor of terrorism by the US. Becoming one of the most pressing threats to the US and its allies. Also Iran uses terror networks operating in the Middle east to destabilize the region, with an attempt to topple legitimate regimes. It is also important to mention that, Iran had occupied the US embassy in Tehran and held the diplomatic staff hostage for 444 days (Farhad 2017). Which is against international diplomatic protocol in Article 22(2) of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations.

Furthermore, how do states engage faith regimes driven by radical evangelical religious ideology? How can the international community deal with corporate powers carrying out significant volume of world trade to the occasion that it poses no threat to human rights and environment? The impact of global economy on the Ogoni people and environment standout as one of the worst cases of human rights abuse, capitalist exploitation and environmental degradation.

This research examines international diplomatic issues and offered valuable insight into how international corporation and collaboration of global actors can deal with rogue states, faith regimes and greedy companies. The study maintains that the power dynamics within the international system has made it volatile and difficult for the application of certain international laws. It however calls for global corporation and collective action to advance the frontiers of peace and stability. International laws and convention must be followed strictly in order to maintain law and order within the international community.

## Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design to gain an in-depth insight of the topic under research, and further revealed its wider implication on international relations and diplomacy. The qualitative approach allows for the exploration of complex phenomena, and the underlying causes that quantitative methods might not fully capture. It further utilized the secondary and multidisciplinary source to gather the data needed for the study.

## Literature Review

### Diplomacy

Diplomacy simply mean a game changing alternative narrative to war, violence and conflict. According to Cornago (2008, p. 574) diplomacy can be defined as “the conduct of international relations by negotiation and dialog or by any other means to promote peaceful relations among states”. Through negotiation, dialog and mediation, countries have pursued peaceful resolution of conflict and war. Diplomacy is basically an art of persuasion and not coercion, an alternative narrative to conflict and war, aimed at seeking for and finding common ground, forging agreement and achieving a balance of benefits that will allow each party to go home with at least some degree of satisfaction (Fretchette 2013).

To Obuah (2017; 2019) diplomacy is an important means by which states pursue their foreign policies. Because states are guided by self-interest and greed in pursuing their foreign policy objectives, diplomacy becomes the main vehicle by which states resolve their difference other than war and conflict.

For Baker (1992) diplomacy is seen as an art of managing and enhancing relations between states, institutions, non-governmental and governmental organizations. By this, diplomacy bridge the gap between countries and other actors that operate within the international system towards maintaining a friendly relation. Nbete (2022) as cited in Sangha (2023) explains that diplomacy and diplomatic practice is not just about having embassy or consulate in other countries, it is about exploiting and exploring areas of mutual interest and shared values between a country and another. Diplomacy has moved beyond state to state to people to people.

## Theoretical framework

### Realist theory

This theory has its root from ancient times with Thucydides who is considered the father of realism. This theory has shaped international relations and diplomacy as it continues to influence diplomatic practices, negotiations, global governance and international institutions. This is one of the oldest and influential theories of international relation and emphasizes the role of power, security and self interest in shaping state behavior. Holsti (1979) explain that states are in constant struggle to increase their own power relative to other states. This is because a powerful state, by military power, will always out-do its weaker competitors. The increasing influence of Rogue state, faith-based communities and corporate powers show this theory in action. Because states are controlled by humans who act according to self-interest, states seek for power to compete and advance national interest. Iran challenge the existing global power structure and international laws. On the issue of crazy religious diplomacy, Iran expressed hope to create a new world order centred around a Muslim community called

“Ummah” (the universal Muslim community) (Farhad 2017). Corporate powers are primarily driven by economic interest which is detrimental to societal goals thus they work to maximize interest even without regard to international laws and human rights.

### **Liberalism Theory**

The theory of liberalism emerged in international relation as an alternative narrative or approach to realism, providing valuable insights which are ideologically driven in managing issues of international politics and diplomacy. Toprak (n.d) it is an approach that attaches importance to issues such as cooperation, institutionalization, justice, law, order, freedom, and human rights in international relations. It believes that with restructuring of international society, the formation of international law norms and international institutions, will lead to a more functional and less competitive global order. Liberals maintain that for there to be stability in the global system, states need to de-emphasis on military force, promote democratic values, comprises, uphold the rule of law and priorities economic growth by increasing global production of goods (Pease 2012). The theory has been used to explain the UN, EU integration, WTO, ICJ etc. The involvement of international institution in containing rogue states, via multilateral diplomacy illustrate this theory in action. For instance, the Iran, USA and E5+1 Agreement on the Nuclear Weapon Proliferation threat of Iran has further deepen understanding of the theory in modern diplomacy.

### **Empirical Review**

Saaida, (2023) in his article *The global issues that matter the world*, looked at some of the global issues touching on everyday life of individuals such as climate change, unemployment, food security, health issues etc. Finding reveals that the main driver of many global issues is the economic factor which states continue to pursue. It concluded that global issues are complex and multifaceted, requiring a coordinated approach that addresses their underlying causes and promotes sustainable solutions. Saaida recommends “finding alternative ways for making life easier through friendly environmental ways of living”. This work did not deal with the issues of power dynamics between states like Rogue states, religious diplomacy, the impact of greedy companies exploiting the global public etc, which is what this paper hope to achieve.

Sangha (2023) in his dissertation titled *The diplomatic dimensions of Ogoni struggles 1990-2010* looked at the role of international organizations in addressing the issue of human rights, economic exploitation and environmental problems in Ogoni land. The study revealed that greedy companies like Shell was responsible for carrying out wide spread environmental degradation in Ogoni land, the company through its operations was involved in the systemic human right abuse and the violent repression of the Ogoni people. Sangha concluded that the Ogoni people became victim of international politics because of the unique backwardness of the Nigerian state in ensuring that multinational companies adhere to international laws and standard practice. The study recommends that government should prioritise and uphold human rights in oil producing regions.

Altynbek et al, (2023) in *Religious and political factor in Iran's foreign policy in Central Asia* examined the role of religion as a central theme in Iran foreign policy and relation between

central Asian countries and Middle East. The work reveals that with the failed attempt of Iran in exporting the Islamic revolution, Iran has shifted a bit to a more pragmatic and realistic foreign policy due to the it hostile relations with Western countries and other central Asia countries. The authors concluded that even when Iran's relation with Central Asia to a large extent is not ideologically driven in recent times, its radical Islamic approach in the Middle east will adversely affect relation with the central Asia countries.

Lampas (2025) in an article titled Adjusting for "rogue states": Policy solutions for international organizations looked at the approach and ways the international organization deal with rogue states. The study reveals that aged long traditional tools like sanctions and diplomatic isolation often used in containing rogue states do more harm than good. The study concluded that the rejection of multilateralism approach to rogue state by the United States under president Trump undermines international institution, thereby weakening the effectiveness of international organizations. It concluded that Trump's return to power is a stress test for the fragile multilateral system.

### **The Impact of Rogue State on International Relations**

International politics is anarchic and highly competitive in all ramifications because states and corporate powers constantly seek self interest by all means possible. Having this in mind, some states use unconventional means to pursue national interest. Lampas, (2022) explain that throughout the history of the discipline of international relations the concept of rogue state has been used to describe a small group of states that has been marginalized by the international community due to their aggressive behavior. These states feel threatened by the existing international system perceived as a stumbling block to their national interest. In an attempt to balance power, they resort to unconventional means to breakthrough and if possible obliterate the existing system which according to them favours the West.

Litwak (2000) as cited in (Sharp (2009) however observed that the use and significance of the concept have greatly increased since the end of the Cold War with the United States and its allies labelling a small number of middle and minor power states as rogues and outlaws. For the US these states are considered the greatest threat to peace and security since the end of the cold war; rogue states replaced the threat of the Soviet Union, and this was evidenced by the transformation of US national security policy following the fall of the Soviet Union (Nicholaos, 2002).

The idea of rogue state therefore assumed the existence of an international community united behind supposedly universal western interest and values. For Mousavizadeh (2010) the main challenge to American dominance came from those states unwilling to accommodate themselves to the end of history and conform to US values. While this can be considered as an American concept no objective criteria define the term because despite the characterization the common use of the term to describe Cuba, Iran, Libya, Iraq and North Korea allowed observers to establish that they were countries associated with several undesirable behaviors-namely the pursuit of weapons of mass destruction, support for terrorism, blatant disregard for human rights and vocal animosity towards the United States (O'Sullivan 2000). Rogue state should be seen in this regard as not pre-given, but politically constructed to categorise states that seek nuclear proliferation. In essence rogue states do not exist rather states are cast as rogues (Sharp n.d).

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Some of the factors that motivate states towards a certain behavior/action includes the need to maintain or develop their own domestic power either to be considered as equal/show or show capacity protect themselves against potential threats. And they have managed to remain through strong state centered ideology, powerful alliances and having key resources. Their growing influence lies in their strategic partnership and corporations with Russia and China which are also members of the UN security council. This has made it a bit difficult dealing with some of the rogue states like North Korea and Iran.

Some of the rogue nations include, Iran, Libya, Iraq, Pakistan, Cuba, Syria, North Korea, Afghanistan, Cuba, Venezuela, etc. Iran as far back as 1984 was designated rogue by the United states of America, due to its stances in promoting terrorism in the middle east. Iran uses terror networks operating in the Middle east to destabilize the region, with an attempt to topple legitimate regimes. Iran had occupied the US embassy in Tehran and held the diplomatic staff hostage for 444 days (Farhad 2017). Libya from the period of 1980 under the administration of Muammar Qaddafi was designated rogue because of its sponsor of international terrorism. Libya by 1988 carried out a deadly terrorist attack with the Pan Am Flight 103 killing about 259 people on board (Schwartz 2007). Iran was designated rogue for its pursuit of Weapon of Mass Destruction (WMD), support for terrorism, brutal suppression of citizens (Bush 2002 as cited in White House 2002). Similarly, North Korea was designated rogue for its pursuit of nuclear weapon. North Korea has carried out multiple tests of its nuclear weapon which has cast doubt on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) of 1968.

**Characteristics of Rogue States**

- They are usually aggressive
- They are hostile to some other states which they view as enemies. Example, Iran's contempt for Israel.
- They are believed to be sponsors of terrorism and also carry out state terrorism.
- They seek to acquire Weapon of Mass Destruction (WMD) and go nuclear
- They are rigid and irrational
- They are oppressive both internally and externally

**How to Deal with Rogue States**

- ★ Sanction; Sanctions are restrictive diplomatic tool or measures used by state actors, and international governmental organization to influence the behaviour of a rogue state. It could be in form of economic, financial sanction, military sanction, sanction on military hardware, etc. from the beginning of 2020 to 2023, there has been series of economic as well as military sanction on Russia for invading Ukraine.
- ★ Regime change; this is a policy option for dealing with the threat of rogue states with a view of reintegrating rogue states into the international community. It was a policy used by the United States of America used in 2003 when the Bush administration invaded Iraq. The invasion led to the removal of Saddam Hussein (Gordon & Trainor, 2006) as cited in (Lampas, 2022).
- ★ Diplomatic Engagement; this is a non-confrontational policy of states and supranational organization used in dealing with rogue states. It was used by the international

community in the case of Libya from the period of 1980 when Libya was strongly condemned and designated as one of the massive sponsors of international terrorism (Schwartz 2007).

- ★ Multilateral Diplomacy; multilateral diplomacy is highly favoured now in international relation and negotiation. It was used in the case of the **Iran, USA and E5+1 Agreement on the Nuclear Weapon Proliferation threat of Iran**. The agreement was reached in Vienna in on 15<sup>th</sup> July, 2015. The purpose of the JCPOA was to make sure that Iran would not develop a nuclear weapon and implemented measures to ensure the peaceful nature of their nuclear program (Mosk 2017) as cited in (Sangha, 2024).

### **The Impact of Faith-Regimes on International Relations and Diplomatic Practice**

Religious diplomacy specifically engages religious actors and institutions to address issues related to religion, identity, and conflicts with religious dimensions. In essence faith-based factors, principles, and actors are used in diplomatic efforts to promote understanding, peace, and cooperation among different religious communities and nations (Haynes 2009).

The resent radicalization of some religion with extremist driven ideologies since after September 9/11 attack in the United States of America has left a significant impact on global security, diplomacy, stability and human rights abuse. Religious radicalization especially in the Middle east has accelerated a growing wave of terrorism ravaging the entire West Africa. This radicalization suppresses women and other minority groups, causing migration and refugee crisis. It in no way give room to freedom of speech, gender equality, and freedom of association. Also education and development suffers greatly due to how some extremist would target schools especially those believed to be teaching or promoting western practices.

For instance, In the Middle East, religious diplomacy has dominated the politics of the region. The relations of the Middle East often illustrate the problems posed by religion for diplomacy in their sharpest form (Sharp n.d). The rise of extreme religious evangelical movement is posing a fundamental challenge to international peace and stability. This is because some state actors are backing religious extremist and fundamentalist with both technical and tactical support to operate in states like Lebanon where Hezbollah is freely operating. Some of these groups include Al-Qaida, Taliban, Boko Haram, ISWAP, etc. They have exploited wars, state collapse and geopolitical upheaval in the middle east, gained new footholds in Africa like Boko Haram in Nigeria. These groups possess arms which has created proliferation concerns in the international system, as they all have gained access to significant weaponry, through smuggling or what was left behind after by retreating forces. There is also the issue of cyber security, as there have been rampant cases of the use of the internet to recruiting members and turning them into spies.

The inability to contain crazy religious diplomacy in the Middle East has given rise to fears about religion-driven movements aimed at institutionalizing religious ideologies and even civilizations posing unprecedeted challenges to the idea of globalization steadily overwhelming the resistance of older, local or regional forms of social organization (Huntington 1996) as cited in (Sharp 2009). Crazy religious diplomacy according to the Muslim world, hope to create a new world order centred around a Muslim community called "Ummah" (the universal Muslim community) (Farhad 2017). This shift in ideology of some Middle East states

like Iran may be vague and unrealistic, but it remains a threat to international peace and stability.

### **Criticism of Against Faith Regimes**

- Human right violations: it is driven by faith-based ideology and perception that tend to theorize the international system from the lens of faith. It opposes secular knowledge and lifestyle. For example, the Vatican diplomacy on reproductive rights.
- Fueling global conflicts: it poses significant challenge to the continuous crisis in the Middle; political, territorial, and ideological differences have made it difficult to reach a lasting resolution.
- Religious differences and competing claims to sacred sites have exacerbated tensions and hindered peace negotiations. E.g, Israel-Palestinian claim to Jerusalem holy sites.
- Promoting extremist ideologies to create a new international system based on religious laws. They prioritize geopolitical considerations and religious interest over dialogue and understanding, such as the case of Middle East.
- Funding extremist groups with evangelical religious undertone.

### **Multinational corporations and it Impact on International Relations**

Greedy company refers to the behavior of companies or corporations with the primary aim of maximizing profits often at the expense of ethical considerations, environmental concerns or social responsibility. One of the contending issues for diplomats in international relations before now, was how to negotiate for the creation of open market for the production and distribution of goods and service. This opportunity was provided through the instrumentality of globalization which link different economies and markets for efficient and easy access to raw material, goods and other services.

There are various transnational companies providing different service all over the world. International multinational companies are increasingly becoming more exploitative, as a result of the conducive environment for business growth. Some of these companies does not put in best or global operational standard in the regions they operate thereby leading to exploitation, environmental degradation and pollution of the land in cause of extracting raw materials needed for production. Some of these unfair and often illegal business practice that multinational corporations practice includes; price fixing, blocking competitors, access to distribution channels false and misleading advertising, tax evasion, exploitation, environmental pollution, degradation etc.

For instance, in the oil rich Niger Delta Ogoni, Shell has been found guilty of one of the worst cases of environmental pollution in the world. By 1958, crude oil was discovered in Ogoni, with about 9000 million barrels of oil with an estimated value of 30 billion US dollars have been mined from Ogoni since 1958 to 1993 (Saro-wiwa 1992 as cited in Sangha 2023). These huge wealth has in no way been used to develop or benefit the people of Ogoni. Poverty and environmental degradation has been the evidence of oil extraction in the region. Furthermore, Chevron is also responsible for the violent repression of peaceful opposition to oil extraction. In Nigeria, Chevron has hired private military personnel to open fire on peaceful protesters who oppose oil extraction in the Niger Delta.

In the automobile sector, Ford Motor is among one of the top automakers. Ford Motor Company is considered to be one of the worst when it comes to fuel economy. Every year since 1999, the US Environmental Protection Agency has ranked Ford cars, trucks and SUVs as having the worst overall fuel economy of any American automaker. This is why Ford's current car and truck fleet has a lower average fuel efficiency than the original Ford Model-T (News in the News, 2005).

These corporations sometimes lobby government officials or fund think tanks to influence government policies in ways that it would benefit their financial interest at the detriment of the local community this was seen in the case of ExxonMobil where documents revealed that the company had known since the 1970's that its products causes global warming but ignored the warning of their scientist and financed a campaign to deceive shareholders and the public about the realities and risk of climate change (The Equation, n.d). Christopher and Collins (2023) observed that in 2016 the company finally issued its first public statement that burning of fossil contributes to climate change after years of denial but behind closed doors they strategised over how to diminish concerns about warming temperatures.

### **Conclusion.**

This paper has been able to discuss some of the international diplomatic issues like the global power dynamics of rogue states, faith regimes and their impact on international politics and diplomacy, and the impact of Multinational corporations carrying out significant volume of trade all over the globe.

This study concludes that some of the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century international system are mostly man made. Addressing the dilemma posed by these actors requires balancing coercion, engagement and containment. These issues can be resolved on the round table using multilateral approach instead of war. This is because in navigating complex international issues such as rogue regimes, sanctions have proven to be less effective or not accomplishing its desirable aim, therefore dialogue and leveraging on incentives is important in mitigating dispute without the use of a military attack. Corporate powers need to ensure that corporate interest aligns with public interest, sustainability and protection against exploitation and human right abuse. Faith regimes should engage in constructive dialogue with de-radicalization effort measures.

This study therefore calls for collaboration and collective action to tackle the recurring challenges of rogue Regimes, Faith regimes and corporate powers. With proper application of international law, most of these contending issues can be addressed if member states and global actors play according to the rules governing the international system. The international institutions for global governmentality must be strengthened, equipped and robust enough to meet up modern reality of the 21st century.

### **Recommendations**

The study recommends the following:

- ★ **Promote inclusive global governance and economic structure:** global governance structures like the United Nations should be restructured to the occasion where it reflects transparency and enhance respect for sovereign nations. Some of the emerging rogue states feel threatened by the present international system which they view as an unfair and unbalance international system. If you take a look at the security council today, you will notice that members of the security council mostly act based on self-interest carrying out unilateral operation that undermine the very existence of international law guiding the international system.
- ★ **Promote inter faith based dialogue:** there should be an avenue for multilateral negotiation on religious matters, such that encourage understanding between different faith based communities, respect values and build trust and religious tolerance.
- ★ **Promote human rights and best operational standard practice in business:** Emerging and developing nations should ensure multinational companies respect human rights and maintain best operational standard practices in business. This will guild against exploitation and environmental degradation.

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