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The Russia-Ukraine war in Africa: Strategic positioning of African States and the African Union

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M.Sc.International Relations

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Declaration

I, Orazulike Chinedu Sopuluchukwu, declare that this thesis is a result of my research investigations and findings. Sources of information other than my own have been acknowledged and a reference list has been appended. This work has not been previously submitted to any other university for the award of any type of academic degree.

Signature.....Date.....

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Any errors are mine alone.

ABSTRACT

This research work ventures into understanding and making sense of some African States and the African Union's strategic positioning in the wake of Russia's war against Ukraine since February 2022. This work will answer the main questions; What are African responses to Russia's full-scale Invasion of Ukraine? Followed by sub-research questions that aim to ascertain how and by what means are African states and AU are communicating their positioning and how is this positioning is changing or shaping global politics. In answering these questions, the conceptualization of National interest, International norms, and identity with realist and constructivist views will serve as a thinking tool for making sense of what is happening. The realist view of National interest explains why states act the way they do for self-interest, power, survival, and security concerns. The constructivist takes note that national interest is dynamic and reproduces through social interactions, and as such plays a crucial role in modifying the state's national interest.

Furthermore, the methodology which will rely on a secondary source of qualitative data analysis which was sourced from government papers, experts, key stakeholders statements, journal articles, verified news media, and think tanks will be utilized in creating a linkage between the the conceptual tools, research questions, and analysis. The analysis and discussion chapter will delve deeper by analyzing the United Nations' votes on five resolutions concerning Russia's invasion of Ukraine by African countries, then analyze AU's strategic positioning and what is it for the continent. To further narrow it down, three countries of which are South Africa, Nigeria, and Eritrea will be discussed in detail of what is their positioning, and why they made such choices.

Lastly, my finding shows that African countries even with a lot of pressure from the West are divided in their strategic positioning as a result of a lot of factors. Firstly, they are putting into consideration what is of national interest to each which could transcend to be economic, security, political, military, or material benefits that they will achieve from Russia and the West. Secondly, their commitment to NAM, Pan-Africanism and colonial legacies possess some level of weight in shaping their response as this could be traced to their identities and shared international norms. Thirdly, at the Organizational level, the AU 2063 agenda and aspiration could be another possible cause as the agenda focuses on African development as a priority over everything. And lastly, because of the past and present relationships or linkages with both parties. This study tends to contribute to extant literature by showcasing Africa's stance which goes beyond neutrality and linking it to the possible reason for making such decisions.

Keywords: Strategic position, identity, International Norms, National Interest, United Nations, NAM, AU

Table Of Contents

DECLARATION	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	ii
ABSTRACT	iii
TABLE OF CONTENT	iv
LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS	v
LIST OF FIGURES	vii
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 RESEARCH QUESTIONS	2
1.2 THESIS OUTLINE	3
CHAPTER 2: NATIONAL INTEREST, NORMS, AND IDENTITY: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON STRATEGIC POSITIONING	4
2.1 NATIONAL INTEREST IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS	4
2.1.1 <i>Constructivist Perspective on National Interest</i>	7
2.1.2 <i>Realist Perspective on National Interest</i>	9
2.2 NORMS IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS	11
2.3 STATE’S IDENTITY IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS.....	15
2.4. SUMMARY	16
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN	18
3.1 SECONDARY SOURCE AND INTERPRETATIONS	18
3.2 RELEVANCE AND ACCESS	21
3.3 VALIDITY AND ETHICS	21
CHAPTER 4: CASE STUDY: AFRICAN STRATEGIC POSITIONING ON THE RUSSIA - UKRAINE WAR	23
4.1 AFRICAN STATES’ VOTING STYLE IN THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY	23
4.1.1 <i>The UN Vote on Condemnation of The Invasion On 2nd March 2022</i>	27
4.1.2 <i>The UN Resolution on Suspension of Russia from Human Rights Council on April 7th, 2022</i>	30
4.1.3 <i>The UN Rejection of Annexation Claims on October 12th, 2022, By Russia</i>	31
4.1.4 <i>The UN on Reparations for Ukraine on November 14th, 2022</i>	32
4.1.5 <i>The UN Resolution on Comprehensive, Just, And Lasting Peace in Ukraine</i>	32
4.1.6 <i>Summary of UN Votes</i>	33
4.2 AFRICAN UNION: STRATEGIC POSITIONING OF AFRICAN AGENCY.....	35
4.3 AFRICAN STATES: SOUTH AFRICA, NIGERIA, AND ERITREA	42
4.3.1 <i>South Africa and Its Strategic Positioning: National Interest and Identity</i>	42
4.3.2 <i>Nigeria and Its Strategic Positioning: International norms, identity, and national interest</i>	46
4.3.3 <i>Eritrea and Its Strategic Positioning: Security Concerns, identity, and survival tactics</i>	49
4.4 EXTERNAL PERSPECTIVES ON AFRICA: THE WESTERN AND RUSSIA’S PERCEPTIONS	53

CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION.....	58
REFERENCES	62
APPENDIX.....	74
APPENDIX 1: Distribution of five UN Votes	74

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

AGOA- African Growth and Opportunity Act

ANC- African National Congress

AU -African Union

AUPSC- African Union Peace and Security Council

BRICS - Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa

CSIS- Center for Strategic and International Studies

COVID-19 - Coronavirus Disease 2019

DIRCO - Department of International Relations & Cooperation

ERIPS - Eritrean Research Institute for Policy and Strategy (ERIPS),

EU. - European Union

HRW- Human Rights Watch

IR - International Relations

ISS - Institute Security Studies

LDC - Least Developed Countries

MBT - Major battle tanks

NAM - Non-Aligned Movement

NATO - North Atlantic Treaty Organization

PFDJ - People's Front for Democracy and Justice

RSTC - Red Sea Trading Corporation.

STC-TTIIIE- Specialized Technical Committee on Transport, Transcontinental and Interregional Infrastructure, and Energy

UDHR - United Nations Declaration of Human Rights

US- United States

UAE-United Arab Emirates

UN - United Nations

UNGA - United Nations General Assembly

UNHRC - United Nations Human Rights Council

UNSC - United Nations Security Council

List of Figures

Figure 1. All African voting (%) in 5 UNGA resolutions relating to the Russia-Ukraine war

Figure 2. Distribution of five UN votes

Figure 3. African Peace Mission's 10-point proposal

Chapter 1: Introduction

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine has sparked debate about the international order, and particular concern is directed at the African continent. The reactions of African states to this war have been nuanced and complex (Ryder and Kebret (2022), but it is important to study how their positioning unfolds, shaping foreign policies and international order. The war has shown wide coverage and implications because of the interconnectedness of the globe, showing how regional geopolitical conflicts may have far-reaching effects beyond the region. This was collaborated by the President of South Africa Ramaphosa when he noted that the negative effects of the Ukraine war affect us all in an interconnected world (DIRCO, 2023). The aim of this thesis is to study African strategic positioning on the Russia-Ukraine war.

The war has drawn the attention of everyone and led to debate about the implications of the war in terms of politics, economy, and security concerns. This makes it not only interesting but also puzzling to study strategic positioning on this war in international relations, as these are new and unfolding outcomes. Staeger (2023) noted that the war has led to much debate about Africa's position in international relations, and that these debates are mainly coming from expert commentaries and media coverage. According to him, the major focus of the debates is on "whether and how Africa has taken sides in the crisis" (Staeger, 2023:559). This expresses an interest in analyzing African positions and dividing them into clear sides.

To make sense of African strategic positioning, this thesis draws on International Relations (IR) theories to study how and why actors act the way they do on the international scene. In this thesis, the actors are African states and the African Union as a regional international institution. Hence, in order to make sense of their actions and understand strategic positioning, the concepts of national interest, norms, and identity inform the analysis and to interpret their responses. National interest focuses on a country's shared priorities while associating with the rest of the world. International norms rely on shared expectations of global actors in the international scene, while identity deals with awareness of one and their ideology. I explain these concepts by using theories of realism and constructivism. While the realist perspective of national interest focuses on power, security maximization, and alliance as a means to ensure survival in the international scene, the constructivist perspective focuses on the dynamism in the system, emphasizing social interactions that are shaped by ideas, cultural and normative

terms that inform national interest. I learned that the concepts are interconnected and linked, where one helps in shaping the other. For instance, a country cannot know its national interest without first focusing on who they are (identity). Without interest, identity lacks motivational power.

In this thesis, I contribute with a case study of African strategic positioning on the Russian-Ukrainian war. I do this in three steps. First, I analyze the voting of African states on five votes on the war in the UN General Assembly in 2022. Next, I analyze the strategic positioning of the African Union. Third, I focus specifically on three countries and have selected South Africa, Nigeria, and Eritrea. By focusing on three countries from different regions in Africa, I intend to gain their perspectives and responses based on how they are responding to the war. Nigeria and South Africa were selected, because they can never be left out of conversations that relate international relations to Africa. South Africa is among the biggest ten economies in Africa alongside Nigeria, which makes them outstanding and worth studying for their response to the war as they are economic powers on the continent. Furthermore, South Africa enjoys ties with the West and a close relationship with Russia because of their contributions during the apartheid era which helped in shaping their identities. South Africa also has close economic links with Organizations of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (BRICS). Overall, Nigeria and South Africa are interesting states to study in depth because they are constantly presented with the opportunity to choose on whose side to belong. Eritrea, on the other hand has not drawn much attention in international relations, except for human rights violations noted by the Human Rights Watch and the United Nations. Though they are not among the top economies, Eritrea on its part has been anti-west judging from various sanctions melted on them by the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) influenced by the West for violating Human rights. However, their voting pattern, consistent communicative language, and outright support for Russia in the ongoing war show a sharp contrast from other African countries. It is worth studying to know their motivations, intentions, and what caused their response. Issues of national interest, ensuring survival, security concerns, power, and military alliance were among several factors that could have shaped their responses to the changing world order.

1.1 Research questions

Research questions have been developed to guide the theoretical framing and aid in analysis. This thesis seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What are African strategic positioning on Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine?
2. How and by what means is the African Union, Nigeria, South Africa and Eritrea communicating their strategic positioning on the Russia-Ukraine war?
3. What are the implications of the African strategic positioning on the Russia-Ukraine on international relations?

1.2 Thesis outline

The thesis is organized into three main chapters, enclosed by the above introduction and a conclusion at the end. In the next chapter, I address the conceptual framing of national interest, international norms, and identity with the theoretical lenses of constructivism and realism. This serves as an analytical tool to make sense of African strategic positioning in the Russian-Ukrainian war. The revision of these concepts will showcase a comprehensive evaluation of current and existing views on the subject matter. The next chapter introduces the methodological approach and methods used in this thesis, emphasizing secondary data sources. It further explains the choices made for the research and justifications why such choices were made. The third main chapter 4 examines the African states' voting pattern at the global level in the United Nations General Assembly on five resolutions and what it says about their strategic positioning. It will followed by an analysis at the regional level of AU as an agent of Africa's strategic positioning. Furthermore, South Africa, Nigeria, and Eritrea will be analyzed based on the country level to buttress their responses considering the importance of these countries whenever the conflict between Russia against Ukraine is mentioned. Finally, the Russian and Western views of the strategic positioning of African states will be examined to show outsiders' perspectives on the issue. In the conclusion, I summarize the thesis' primary results and findings based on the analysis and research question posed.

Chapter 2: National Interest, Norms, and Identity: Theoretical Perspectives on Strategic Positioning

This chapter will lay out the concepts and theoretical framework of this thesis which focuses majorly on answering the research questions. In studying this strategy on the Russia-Ukraine war from an African perspective, some concepts in IR would be useful in the explanation of the responses as it involves actors like the African states and the African Union (AU). The concept of national interest, norms, and identity will be conceptualized in this unit to make sense of why they responded in the way they did and by what means.

National interest focuses on what is of utmost importance to a State while trying to steer its affairs both in domestic and international politics. The realist and constructivist dimensions of national interest will be discussed as this concept is known to be produced, dynamic, and never fixed. Norms focused on perceiving international norms and expected standards and how these norms shape their response in the international scene. Identity is seen on the premises of affiliation of oneself and beliefs and how that shapes their perception, response, and behavior. These concepts will serve as a thinking tool and analytical framework to guide this research and support the research questions of this thesis within the already established IR literature.

First, this chapter will conduct a literature review of the concept of national interest, realist and constructivist views on it. Norms in International relations will be discussed along with Identity and making sense of how these can shape the state actors' responses. Finally, my contribution and what I have learned by reviewing these concepts will be highlighted.

2.1 National Interest in International Relations

Trifunović & Ćurčić in their conceptualization of national interest noted that the concept does not possess a generally accepted definition but the understanding focuses on “the paradigms of the approach within which it is analyzed as well as the understanding of the theorists themselves” (Trifunović& Ćurčić, 2021:76). Smith in his analysis collaborated that the concept of National interest can be used to “mean whatever the user wishes' ' and that the term has a “commonsensical appeal” (Smith, 1986:23). In explaining the assertions, they meant that for one to make sense of the concept of national interest, we should take into account of the model and the pattern of analysis used. By pattern or paradigms of approach, in this sense, it simply means understanding from the IR perspective the concept is utilized. National interest has different frameworks and interpretations from Liberal, realist, and constructivist schools. Thus,

the most important thing is the adequate understanding from the same perspective of whoever is making use of the concept and how he presents the concept and arguments to the readers.

Nye (1999) in his analysis also noted that national interest is seen as a “slippery concept” used interchangeably with foreign policy and hence has raised a lot of arguments and debates around the concept and how to pursue it (Nye, 1999:22). This assertion by him suggest that many scholars have always resort to mix the usage of National interest and foreign policy as there is a thin line between them and this further shows how broad the concept is and how it has could be adapted to different meanings by users. National interest in its varieties like economic, political, security, cultural, and humanitarian needs have diverse interpretations, hence, this diversity suggests how the concept can easily be substituted in usage with foreign policy to suit the context. This mix-up has raised concerns and contestation on the concept, and that is why Smith disassociated National interest from foreign policy and lamented how scholars and foreign policymakers interchanged the term despite its “serious deficiencies” (Smith, 1986:23).

Trifunović (2021) further confirms the difference between National interest and foreign policy when he asserted that Aaron Raymond argued that National interest does not exclusively relate directly to foreign policy because of the historical category that needs to be put into consideration. What Raymond means here is that national interest extends beyond the ideas it might share with foreign policy which are; diplomacy, security, and geopolitics, and then ventures into how historical context and experience need to be put into account to explain how a country defines its interest. The historical context can take in form of institutional framework, cultural heritage, past conflicts, colonial legacies, societal values, and political ideologies which are unique to each state. In all, national interest and foreign have separate meanings and they have been contested, even though they might be interchanged and used in a loose context to refer to one another. Hence, on this premise above, the definitions of National interest will be further discussed.

National interest, according to Burchill, is the strategic and economic capacity of a country, as international politics is seen as an arena for struggling for power between states (Burchill, 2005). This view of national interest focuses on how national interest is defined from the perspective that involves being tactical and usage of economic might to influence decisions and policies in the international scene. Basically, the economic strength in the form of resources, trade, and productivity and strategic might in the form of diplomacy, geo-political

strength, and deterrence are what determine what a state can incorporate into her national interest or determine what policies to pursue, by merely having the strategy without compensation of the will to execute, it will probably be regarded as a wish.

Nye (1999) in his analysis defined national interest as a set of “shared priorities” in relation to the “rest of the world”. The shared priority in Nye’s analysis refers to what a country sees fit to venture into and is of utmost importance to them while relating to the rest of the world. The shared priorities are shaped by domestic considerations in certain areas like security concerns, economic prosperity, protecting human rights, and global challenges like pandemics and climate change, and how these priorities are advanced and guided in the international scene.

Clinton 1986 (1986) asserted that national interest means the overall and general good of an entire society. He noted that the view rejects society as the framework of communication, even though it is somewhat competitive and sometimes cooperative. Instead, the national society is viewed to possess a “common standard of political ethics”, and “mutual respect and appreciation” joining its members together (Clinton 1986, 1986:497). This definition by Clinton shows that national interest is for the common good of the nation and not reserved for some group of people. But I argue some of the policies or decisions made for national interest reflect the specific interest of some actors or elites. However, the majority is for the common good. He noted society is not the main framework of interaction, instead, the main focus of national interest is on principles and values that bring the members of the society together. Hence these shared values and principles serve as measures for assessing policies while aligning them to the national interest.

Weldes (1996) also posited that National interest acts as a rhetorical device through which legitimacy and the state’s support are linked. In other words, the state gets legitimacy of its action through national interest. In this sense, the state presents its decision as having the collective welfare and common good as noted by Clinton. By so doing, the state at the same time legitimizes its actions to the citizens, and actors in the international scene by claiming it has taken consideration of diverse choices for the greater good of the society before making a conclusion. This device noted as national interest will serve as a tactic for the state to avoid being criticized, consolidate their policies, and maybe overcome opposition groups.

However, the concept has faced a lot of criticism, for instance, Nuechterlein noted that the concept has suffered a lot of “widespread ambiguity” in international politics and some scholars

have suggested abandoning and replacing it (Nuechterlein, 1976:246). He further noted that replacement and changing of the concept will further lead to “jargon-creation” which will worsen the problem instead of fixing the issue (Nuechterlein, 1976:246). Instead, a precise definition of the concept should be suggested and adopted. In understanding Nuechterlein’s view, he means that the National interest has been used loosely in international relations and it encompasses a lot of things that should probably stand alone as a separate entity e.g. self-interest, and national security, state interest, and foreign policy. All these are interlinked but they are all different in their forms. In trying to replace the concept, this idea will probably exacerbate the issue surrounding the concept instead of getting it resolved. The solution is to see this from Trifunović & Ćurčić’s view of national interest from the viewpoint of the theorist and the theory being used.

Others have attributed the national interest to be said to be “oversimplified and wrongheadedly dogmatic” and also has been proclaimed as “ a weapon that saps democratic processes” (Hoffmann, 1978, Wood, 1969 in Clinton 1986:495). The oversimplification in this sense means that the concept failed to capture the diversities and complex interests in terms of economic, social, and political. Rather it grouped and simplified all with the term national interest which should not be so given the concept in question. Reflecting on the issue of national interest serving as an anti-democratic process, this means that it gives the leaders, especially in authoritarian regimes the opportunity to suppress democratic principles and tenets like Human rights, the rule of law, and the multi-party system, etc. These leaders hide under the umbrella of national interest and commit to policies that might serve the interest of some stakeholders.

2.1.1 Constructivist Perspective on National Interest

Constructivism in International Relations focuses on how social constructs, such as ideas, norms, and identities, influence the interactions and results of state actors and international actors. As Onuf (2013) noted, constructivism marked a big change in the field of International Relations, as it made people start to understand that international relations are actually “socially constructed”. According to him, this shift in thinking started in the late 1980s to early 1990s. Constructivism emerged with Nicholas Onuf often recognized as the person who coined the term "constructivism" in his work in 1989 *World of Our Making: Rules and Rule in Social Theory and International Relations*.

Though Alexander Wendt has been attributed as the most prominent figure on the concept and its development within the IR framework. His classical work of *Anarchy is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics* serves as a masterpiece. Wendt noted that the national interest of state actors are constructed by ideas and not given naturally (Mengshu, 2020). His view contradicts the mainstream IR theory of realism and liberalism that focuses on material things and power politics as a source of national interest.

Constructivists view national interests not as fixed entities but as dynamic constructs that are continuously shaped and reshaped through social interactions and discourses within the international system (Checkel, 1998; Kratochwil, 2009). In Kratochwil's arguments, he says national interest is not typically what other scholars have reduced or limited it to, but it is seen as a normative term in political and other spheres, but can never be categorized as we do in taxonomic categories. Instead, for a better understanding of the term and its usage, one needs to investigate the logic of its use depending on the surrounding criteria. Reflecting on Checkel and Kratochwil's view, it means that national interests are not finalized, confined, or fixed like we do in biology and some related sciences. However, what determines it is the environment in which it exists, the environment contributes to its development and changes over time based on what is happening in this environment. Thus, the environment and the communication within the environment determine national interest. For instance, a country can react in a certain type of way in the international scene based on their perceived thought about another country. This perception can alter the already existing relationship and their national interest will be adapted to the recent situation.

Weldes collaborated with the view of Kratochwil when he suggested that the concept should be reconceptualized from a constructivist perspective noting that national interest comes as a construction through "the dual mechanisms of articulation and interpellation" of representations of international politics Weldes (1996:275). By dual mechanism of articulation and interpellation, it means a double function of means of communicating national interest like diplomatic statements, speeches, votes etc by policymakers and leaders, and also persuasion of the people to accept the interpretation of policy as it was made for the national interest which transcends to common good. Hence this influence could come in the form of propaganda or narratives by the state-sponsored media house all in the quest to command the legitimacy of their actions.

Katzenstein is also another constructivist theorist who acknowledged the idea and emphasized that security policies and national interests are not only shaped by material factors like military power or geopolitical considerations but also greatly influenced by cultural and normative factors (Katzenstein, 1996; Hurd, 2008). According to Hurd (2008), This process involves the active participation of states in the international community, where they negotiate, interpret, and sometimes contest the meanings and implications of what is considered their national interest. Reflecting on Hurd and Katzenstein's analysis, it simply means that national interests are not only shaped by material interests, but we need to look beyond those material interests and focus on some elements that make up interest like the norms, cultural determinants as culture is the people's way of life. Hence, societal values such as human rights, sustainability, and their shared identities and experiences can shape a state's attitude toward national interest. States in their own capacity actively engage with stakeholders in better understanding and positioning themselves for their interests. Thus, the engagement can be in the form of criticism, contestation, and interaction in the international arena.

In sum, the agreement posed by different scholars centers on the premise that national interest does not go without it being dynamic and ensures flexibility as it happens in the system that involves interactions that are further shaped by ideas, cultural and normative terms. These interaction breeds adjustment and readjustment to suit the national interest of a country at a particular given time.

2.1.2 Realist Perspective on National Interest

Realism as the oldest and dominant school of thought in IR is often attributed to the work of Thucydides (ca. 47-400 B.C.E) with his first work on the *History of the Peloponnesian War*, on war between the Greek states (Cohn, 2010). According to Manam (2017), realism remains relevant in the practice of international politics as its elements like state actors, national interest, balance of power etc remain important in terms of theory and practice of international politics. Cohn in his political economy analysis noted that two strands of realism exist, he asserted that one of the strands of realism focuses on the fact that economics and politics are separate entities and cannot be linked together.

The second strand of realism of Cohn focuses on the economic-political interactions, Cohn compared Machiavelli's and Thucydides's submissions and noted that Thucydides sees wealth

as a channel of military strength. "*War is a matter not so much of arms as of money, which makes arms of use*" (Cohn, 2010). This strand attempts to cover both political and economic importance in considering the interest of the state. That is to say the co-existence of both spheres in understanding the concept of national interest is relevant.

Hans J. Morgenthau in his *Politics Among Nation*, described national interest while highlighting the six principles of political realism. He said that national interest is the main driver of a state's behavior and that without the concept, everything seems impossible in the theory of politics, international or domestic (Morgenthau, 1978). In this sense, it means that a country acts the way they do because of national interest as it serves as a motivator. Hence, State prioritize their political, economic, and security interest and most times align with other countries that can offer their interest. In other words, the state's action is focused on a realist view of the system as state-centric and self-help.

Keneth Waltz (2000) in his *structural realism after the Cold War* noted that Structural change in politics affects the behavior of countries and the outcomes that they produce as a result of the interactions. He noted that the unforeseen shadow of the future "cast its pall" over Nations in their interactions, and the uncertainty inherent in the international arena drives nations to prefer relative over absolute gains (Waltz, 2000). Reflecting on Waltz's analysis, it means that as the state is not sure of what the future holds and what will be perceived outcomes in the international scene. Thus, they would be forced to try to maximize their gains in the system at the expense of the others, and not considering mutual benefits in the system. Every state has their concern as its primary focus in so far international relations is concern.

Drawing from Kenneth Waltz's analysis of the structure of IR politics, John Mearsheimer (2001) asserted 5 assumptions in his offensive realist theory guiding the actions of states in International relations. Four out of the listed 5 assumptions relate to the subject matter which is the realist perception of national interest, even though all the assumptions are practicable in International Relations. He asserted that the state's intentions are hard to perceive since intentions are thought and not written down anywhere nor can they be measured (Mearsheimer, 2001). In my understanding, the state's intentions are in the minds of the leaders and their decisions are guided by their beliefs, values, and strategic calculations. The state's intention can further come in an ambiguous manner in such a way that it would be hard to be fixed under an interpretation by people or, actors and opposing groups. That's why we see an instance of

leaders denying their assertions while offering nuances to them as no one can fix them on their ambiguous assertions.

More so, John Mearsheimer (2011) said that survival seems to be the key element or guiding principle in the international arena for national interest. States would do anything to ensure its survival. He also noted that states are rational entities. Toft (2005) noted that they think about their external situation and make choices on the best strategy that seems to preserve their survival. Reflecting on this, since sustenance and existence are the main focus in the international arena, the state would possibly do anything to ensure that they stay afloat and are not drowned by international politics and games. By focusing on creating an alliance to gain more power and secure their spot in the international scene, states heighten their security concerns and make it a priority of national interest. On this premise, the state calculates what is of advantage to them, the cost benefits involved, assess the risk factor, and knows if it is goal-oriented and its adaptability to the system. By so doing, the state gains satisfaction for the fulfillment of goals and interests while considering some trade-offs.

In sum, realist theorists view national interest from the perspective that it is the main focus of the state's action and behavior and from the assumptions that the state needs to maximize its security concerns and protection, survival in the system which is categorized as being uncertain due to the nature of the system. Therefore, the ball is in the court of the state to make rational choices to what it believes would ensure their existence.

2.2 Norms in International Relations

According to Finnemore and Sikkink (1998), International norms can be defined as shared expectations among global actors regarding proper or acceptable behavior. They include topics ranging from human rights, environmental standards, and diplomatic conduct, and are often encapsulated in official policies, laws, treaties, and agreements. It is also the standard of appropriate behavior for actors with a given identity (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998; Tallberg, et al., 2020). Reflecting on these definitions, it means what is categorized as international norms is already established and further evaluated based on reactions by different actors. These actors are states, diplomats, and institutions. Hence, the actors are expected to conform to the guiding rules and principles to ensure peace in the international arena. Deviation against the

guiding principle can raise questions and debate about the legitimacy and binding power of the norm.

According to Wiener (2023), norms serve a variety of roles in global government. They can direct behavior, coordinate inter-state relationships, and even serve as a framework for conflict resolution. Despite widespread acceptance, the interpretation and execution of these norms can nevertheless be challenged and evolve throughout time (Wiener, 2023). In this case, it suggests that norms despite their legitimacy possess some element of flexibility in interpretation and execution as it is not fixed or confined permanently. Norms also play several roles in guiding a state's behavior towards expected outcomes, managing interstate relations, and further serving as a legal procedure for conflict management and resolution to avoid outbreak of wars and other issues that could affect relationships in the international scene.

Studies have shown that international norms significantly shape the responses of states and influence their national interests in various ways. One key aspect is how international norms become integrated into national policy frameworks, particularly under certain conditions that include the domestic structural context and the domestic salience of the issues at hand (Cortell and Davis, 1996). This integration often leads states to adjust their policies in ways that align with global standards, particularly in domains like human rights, environmental protection, and governance. This view suggests that so long as the state belongs to an international institution where norms have been given and internalized, the state will further cascade the norms and possibly apply them in their domestic context to reflect the existing international norm. The international norms serve as a blueprint, as states adjust their already existing policies to conform to accepted and shared expectations. On this note, it is great to point out that the system of government will further determine how international norms are being cascaded. Democratically elected governments will likely adopt and adjust their policies, unlike authoritarian rule that would resist international norms.

Furthermore, the contestation and adaptation of norms are significant in shaping state behavior. States often interpret and implement international norms based on their regional and cultural contexts, which can lead to varied adaptations of the same norm (Lantis, 2017). For example, the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) norm has seen different receptions and adaptations in regions like Africa, Southeast Asia, and Latin America, reflecting regional political dynamics and pre-existing local norms. This goes to show that there is a connection where local norms

can also help shape international norms, or at least their interpretation (Lantis, 2017). This suggests how powerful culture and regional context can influence international norms as the society in which the norm is meant to be reflected on might be or not receptive to the norm. In some cases, states find a way to adapt and blend it with their culture. That is why for instance we see that Human rights norms have different levels of acceptance and practice by different countries. The Western world adheres strictly to the Human rights watch through their institutions, while for instance, the global south has some level of adherence to Human rights and its tenets.

In addition, Martha Finnemore's research provides additional support by showing how international norms influence the behavior of states and the global order. In her work *National Interests in International Society* in 1996, Finnemore examines how International Organizations and norms shape the actions of states and play a role in shaping state interests (Finnemore, 1996). Her research shows that global norms, like the ones that govern humanitarian intervention or the worldwide dissemination of science and technology, have a big influence on world politics. In Finnemore's analysis, it is revealed that states sometimes behave in ways to conform to globally accepted norms and values (Finnemore, 1996). Reflecting on Finnemore's work, it shows how international Organizations such as UN, EU, and AU and their norms influence state's decisions. Being a member of an organization naturally reflects on one's perceptions about things in a different way, compared to when there is no existence of any organization. Thus, the international institution acts as an agent of socialization and dissemination of norms, which countries would adopt and reflect on their policies.

More so, according to Finnemore and Skkink (1998), there is a process through which norms influence state and nonstate behaviors. Their argument focuses on how International norms affect state behavior not only by "coercion or incentives," but also by considering what state terms acceptable behaviors (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998) In their analysis, norms start first as ideas pushed by norm entrepreneurs, who work to convince key actors of their importance. Once a critical mass or "tipping point" is reached, the norm begins to cascade and spread more broadly through imitation and socialization, until it is eventually internalized by the actors involved. This life cycle model of norms helps explain how they gain influence and become integrated into the behaviors of states and non-state actors (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998). Furthermore, as these norms begin to cascade, socialization processes such as

diplomatic engagement, praise, and ridicule become more important. Eventually, internalized norms guide behavior almost unconsciously, without the need for active dissemination (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998).

After this, actors use norms in strategic social construction, this is done by purposefully and strategically using norms to shape the identity and preferences of other actors. This involves using norms not only as standards of behavior but as tools in negotiations and diplomacy to reshape international interactions (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998). These stages of norm internalization highlighted by Finnemore et al show how the norms process goes and what is involved in the process. Norms do not just appear and then be accepted by the people or get legitimized by actors, but they involve different levels of processes and inculcations before they finally transcend into shaping national interest through identity and preferences. International norms acknowledge that a state's behavior is influenced by traditional means of use of threats, rewards, soft power, and forceful coercion. Recently, it has moved beyond those traditional means to encompass what the state seems acceptable. This gives the state the upper hand to participate in their norm internalization and decision without being influenced by bigger powers.

In addition, within the constructivist theory of IR, norms are a major focus which views the development of norms not merely as strategic plays by states but also as socially constructed elements that define and reshape international interactions (Tallberg, et al., 2020). This view specifically emphasizes the importance of norms in creating social reality in the international arena, influencing how states understand their roles and interests in a global context (Tallberg, et al., 2020).

In sum, norms in international settings focus on the agreed and expected outcomes of different actors and how those actors communicate and interact with the shared norms. These norms in turn affect state behavior and shape their interest while considering the cultural, belief system, and regional context of the environment. These norms have an internal process of socializing before it is accepted and internalized by actors. It also performs different roles such as management of inter-state relationships and conflict management based on the established rules and expected practices.

2.3 State's Identity in International Relations

The topic of identity in international relations is complex and has been nuanced differently by scholars. It came into the limelight in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the same period to which postmodern critiques of modernity's "naturalized" categories and the transformative geopolitical shifts post-Cold War (Berenskoetter, 2010). This epoch saw scholars increasingly turn to the concept of identity to explain the socially constructed nature of states and their behaviors, highlighting the changing character of international relations. At the center of the conversation lies scholars like David Campbell, who described identity as a fundamental dimension of being, and Ted Hopf, who argued that a world without identities would be one of chaos and peril (Berenskoetter, 2010). This assertion by Hopf shows that identity is in the center of our existence which reflects the attached importance to it. Countries are being categorized based on the identity they share or identify under. Campbell's assumptions show that identity is the essential factor for the existence of mankind through the process of man being aware of oneself through a combination of psychological, social, cultural, physical, and emotional factors.

According to Alexandrov and Wendt, Identity often pertains to how states view themselves and others within the global arena, influencing their foreign policies, decisions, alliances, conflicts, and interactions (Alexandrov, 2003; Wendt, 1994). This self-perception by the state could be in the realm of political ideology, historical and cultural context, national values, and colonial legacies which shape how the state understands its positioning in international relations. Hence, the state's identity can in turn affect the state's choices, decisions, and actions. States refer to the identities while making alliances, national interests, and interactions between and among other actors.

Deutsch (2015) in his analysis studied the role of communication and transactions in forming and shaping political empires, he stressed that shared values and norms could lead to a sense of identity that controls the state beyond the concept of self-interest. Hence, identities within the international system are not static but develop and reproduce by interacting. Deutsch also stressed the importance of psychological and cultural factors in shaping global politics. (Deutsch, 2015). Reflecting on this suggests that state's identities are not fixed eternally, but interaction and communication can remake or reshape identities to suit the current situation. But that does not take away the already existing identities, rather states take note of the existing identities and newly developed identities while making choices. This could be the reason why

for instance when it has to do with siding with two parties, the state considers the identities shared by both parties while getting a common ground to favor all.

For constructivists, state identities are “socially produced” through relations, norms, and international discourses, rather than being stated, predicted, or predetermined (Wendt, 1994). This point of view negates realists who argue that the nature of these interactions can lead to several outcomes, from cooperation to conflict, stressing the importance of social conceptions in determining global politics (Wendt, 1994). In Wendt’s work, *Anarchy is what states make of It*, he argues that the anarchic nature of the system does not dictate a state’s behavior, instead, states’ identities and interests are shaped by social interaction, which could have a varying level of cooperation or conflict (Wendt, 1992). This suggests how constructivist scholars view identity and how it shapes a state’s behaviors through social interactions. As against the realist scholars that believe that social interactions in the system can breed either cooperation or conflict.

In sum, identity reflects the perception of a state and others in the global scene, and this perception accounts for their existence and being. State through interaction and communication shapes their identities to reflect the changing social environment which makes identity dynamic and flexible within a framework of time.

2.4 Summary of what I learned.

In reviewing and reflecting on the concept of national interest, international norms, and identity, I was able to deduce that all these concepts are connected and interact in shaping the state’s response, behavior, and communication in the international system. A state’s national interest is shaped by the state’s perception of the concept of identity and the norm in the society within which the state operates. That’s why Wendt noted that an actor does not know what he wants till he knows who he is and what makes him up through reflection of history, culture, and precedents. States’ identities and norms influence actors to understand in a better way how to take up their interests. For instance, a state with a strong related ideology on democracy will likely venture and be an ally into policies that promote human rights, freedom of speech, and other tenets of democracy. Without identity, Wendt noted that national interest seems to lack direction. On international norms, identity and national interest play their own part in norm assimilation and internalization. For instance, an actor with an opposing view of particular

shared norms that negates their identity and national interest can contest and reject the norm based on the premise of their identity and national interest. Accepting it means that the norm relates to their belief and interests as a nation.

Understanding the relationship and how these concepts interact is crucial for making sense of complex situations in the international system and how states react in the global arena given the nature of dynamism inherent in the system. Thus, this chapter has laid the foundation for understanding the research questions with a link to the analysis of how responses can be perceived while relating to other states.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter will justify the methodological approach used in this study for analysis, the research design, access to information, sources and their relevancy, and also the challenges associated with the research. Bryman et al (2012) noted that conducting research requires one to be transparent and open in making methodological choices and how findings were achieved.

The following sections go into detail to explain how the data selections were made, explaining secondary sources as methods of data collection and why secondary source data is the most fitted to answer the research questions of this thesis. Also delving in-depth into the various secondary data sources that were used in the analysis chapter. The next Unit discusses access to the sources and their relevance to the topic. The next outline discusses its validity, reliability, and ethical problems that may have arisen when analyzing data.

3.1 Secondary Sources and Interpretations

For any research work to be completed, there is data to be analyzed which will usher one to the conclusions of the research. Thus, for the sake of this research, a secondary data source was used for this research. Secondary data is data gathered out of an existing and concluded research work. In this research work, the focus is on some African states' strategic positions and actions, and secondary sources happen to be the best fit as they not only provide us with a lot of best-analyzed data but also consider the scope of work which would be better without primary methods of analysis. The scope focuses on the strategic positioning of African states and AU from the onset of the invasion till the moment of writing and concluding this paper. The secondary data provides the research work of analyzing information based on written/processed documents as it can only be used in ascertaining the degree and level of African stance based on the available wild publications ranging from research institutes, international institutes, and government institutions, etc.

The secondary research strategy used in this thesis takes use of the several advantages described by Clark et al. (2021), such as excellent data quality, cost, and time efficiency, the ability to unearth new analytical options, and the discovery of innovative interpretations or views. This analytical framework has enabled the investigation of credible materials written by persons with deep insights into the subject matter under consideration (Bryman, 2003).

In my analysis, I used several secondary sources to properly ascertain the strategic positioning of the African States. Firstly, while analyzing the votes of the United Nations I relied on various

UN news published for the votes which covered the Resolutions like the A/RES/ES-11/1, A/RES/ES-11/13, ES-11/4 , and ES-11/7. I supplemented the policy research report of the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) written by Ryder and Kerbret in 2022 “Why African Countries Had Different Views on the UNGA Ukraine Resolution, and Why This Matters”. Also, a Policy research report by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace by Ronak Golpaladas titled “Will the invasion of Ukraine change Russia-Africa relations? A policy paper by Africa reimagined was used for a visual representation of the African votes. Finally, a journal article was used by Bochway that focuses on “Global Leadership Dynamics in the Wake of Russia Ukraine Conflict: African Perspective”. Articles by Siegle Joseph (2022, 2022) And other materials which were used to justify my arguments.

In analyzing the AU’s positions, several documents were combined to get a diverse view of the AU. I started with the AU statement immediately when the war broke out on 24th February 2022 by the chairperson and the Chairman. Followed by another press release calling for a discussion of the impact of the Ukraine crisis during the STC-TTIIIE submit in Africa in June same year. The white paper of the African Union’s Chairman’s address to the UNGA was also used which communicated Africa's position in September 2022. Various media publications were used to ascertain the AU position like Aljazeera in one of the articles titled “Can the African Union Be a Neutral Arbiter of Peace in Ukraine?” written by Mhaka Tafia. Policy papers were consulted and used like ISS and CSIS reports written by Staeger and Kinkoh (2023), Reva & Singh 2023 on “African peace mission: one step forward, one step back?” and Nzuki (2023) “Africa’s Peace Delegation: A New Chapter for Africa and the Ukraine War”. Several academic journals were utilized in the analysis of the AU felt strategic positions like works of Siegle Joseph (2022, 2023), Staeger Ueli 2023, Nwaezeigwe 2023, Leal Filho, 2023 and news articles like works of Abrahasam Bhattacharya, 2023, Khadiagala 2023.

More so, for the secondary data used in analyzing the South African positions, I relied on policy papers such as a report from CSIS written by Nzuki in 2023 and Ryder and Kerbret in 2022. More the publication from DIRCO which is the foreign ministry of South Africa was used along with the Twitter post of Clayson Monyela who serves as the South African head of public diplomacy. President Ramaphosa’s speech was also referenced. Academic papers like the ones written by Brosig in 2024 were used as it has a detailed cover of South Africa’s strategic positioning in the wake of the war. Mohamed’s work was written

in 2023 and Orderson's work was used in making academic conversations and possible linkages to South Africa's position.

In analyzing Nigeria's strategic positions, I relied basically on newspaper publications from the trusted news media like Premium Times on an article written by Okafor in 2022 "Nigeria 'surprised' but fails to condemn Russian invasion of Ukraine". I utilized the public statement made by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Eritrea's analysis involved the use of mainstream media news like Aljazeera on "*Russia's FM Lavrov Meets Eritrean President on Africa Tour*". I also used a policy paper from think tanks like the Eritrea Research Institute for Policy and Strategy (ERIPS) on "*Eritrean Government Supports Russian Invasion of Ukraine*". Human Rights Watch article on "*Eritrea Events of 2022*". Ghebrezghiabher and Gerhelase research article on 2022.

In an analysis of the external perception of the African states and AU stance, I analyzed the US Congress letter to the Secretary of State and National advisor against South Africa's stance. The US bill H.R 731 was proposed by Meek Gregory and an article by Fabricius in 2022. President of France, Emmanuel Macron's speeches were used; his speech while addressing the UNGA in New York, trip to West African countries, and finally in the submit of the New Global Financing Pact in Paris. In analyzing Russia's perceptions, I utilized the official documents from Russia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Firstly I used Mr Lavrov's interview after the BRICS conference, followed by his speech after visiting several African countries last spring. Finally, his tour to Mauritania which was made available on the Ministry of Foreign's page.

These chosen sources, alongside other various sources not mentioned in detail, give a well-carried research that overcomes the problems noted by Clark, such as "lack of familiarity" and "control" (Clark et al 2021).

Secondary research, with all of its benefits, has limits (Bryman, 2003). Clark et al. (2021) point out that the absence of direct knowledge of the study issue is difficult. The use of secondary sources creates a level of separation from the main data, perhaps leading to a lack of control over the specificity and complexity of the information accessible. This study recognises the limitations but banks on expert knowledge and analysis such as data from academic papers.

3.2 Relevance and Access

In determining the relevance of the sources and how they best fit to my research scope, I used some criteria like the subject matter of the article or publications, the credibility publishing institution or research institution involved, and publishing dates were put into consideration in determining African stance since the war broke out in February 2022 since it covers the scope of study. This means that all my sources that reflect the African stance are from 2022 February to date as it is an ongoing and dynamic issue. The credibility of the author was also considered as most of the authors have been cited by other related work on the subject matter. Some works were African-based like the ISS report. In all, the inclusion of a variety of sources covering policy papers, journal articles, government-published works, AU-published works, speeches, and tweets since it provides all of the African state's perspectives.

Access to the document is another point of interest as it shows whether a researcher has multiple or limited access to the sources. In this case, there were a lot of sources to carry out my analysis, especially on the UN, AU, South Africa, and Eritrea strategic positioning, More so on the US, Western, and Russia's perception of the stance. However, there was a little challenge about having access to enough information on Nigeria's stance apart from the UN assembly reports and I information as regards the perception by the foreign ministry and some News media publications on Nigeria's stance.

In as much as I have a lot of sources to use, I was opportune not to use a particular source I found insightful for South African Analysis which is an article written by Awofeso 2023 on South Africa's stance because of the issue of subscription and usage of membership attached the source.

3.3 Validity and Ethics of the Study

A measure of validity according to Lakshmi and Mohideen (2013) is valid when it measures what it is scheduled to measure cleanly devoid of the inclusion of other factors. They noted that for validity to be effective, it should command verification from several sources as evidence and also be continuous over a time period. They asserted that Internal validity determines external validity as the previous determines the generalizability associated with external validity.

In ensuring validity, I made sure that the sources I used were from reputable institutes and Academics; like CSIS, ISS, Carnegie Endowment, Ueli, and Ajala to mention but a few. While considering the sources, I considered the relevance of the sources to the Research topic, how current the information is, and the authority of the author as it will show the internal and external validity. I also put into consideration how the sources collaborated in their analysis, how it has been nuanced, and its consistency and coherence in making the analysis. The methodological rigor of their research was put into consideration as I relied on their research design, analytical view, and data collected in making their analysis.

Ethics according to Madudhani (2016) focuses on a set of schemes, and values that guide scientific study. He noted that ethical responsibility lies on the researcher to follow the standards related to the research process. The first ethical consideration was the proper citing of the sources used for the study to make sure no sources were left unaccounted for. The integrity of the sources was confirmed, and the accuracy of the information given by the various sources. This includes being careful about which papers to use and how to understand them, making sure that studies don't reinforce assumptions, false information, or harm. The study carefully examines the source material to keep these ethical standards, giving truth, context, and sensitivity the highest priority.

Chapter 4: Case Study: African Strategic Positioning On The Russia-Ukraine War

In this chapter, I will analyze the African state's strategic positioning in Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Firstly, I will start by analyzing the United Nations' five resolutions which provided all countries including African states a platform to vote in favor, against, or abstain from voting. The analysis will show us how each African state has taken its position, why it matters to them, and how the positions were dynamic across other votes. Then I will analyze the AU and its strategic positioning where it acts as a mediator and requests for peaceful negotiations and resolutions. Finally, I will analyze some specific countries that are of interest judging by their close ties to the West and Russia, their voting pattern in the UN resolutions, and their status in Africa both economically and politically. These countries are South Africa, Nigeria, and Eritrea. This positioning stems from shared identities and national interests of different African States.

4.1 African Voting Strategy in the UN General Assembly

After the outbreak of war in February, the UNSC met to deliberate on the issue and was further transferred to the UNGA when Russia vetoed the decision by the UNSC. The general assembly consists of 194 member states with equal representation which gives a platform to respective countries including African states to make their decisions according to any resolutions. Meyers (1966) while describing the voting behavior of the African members in the general assembly of the UN noted that African countries over the years have its caucus restricted for basically African problems, even though it has recently diversified and co-ordinate its members' positions on other issues by rallying for collective support. He identified some terms that are used in categorizing voting in the assembly; "caucuses", "voting clusters" and "blocs" which are distinct and separate from each other in terms of meaning (Meyers, 1966). These distinctions made it possible for different African countries to exist in different groups thereby leading to diverse interests. The birth of groups like the Arab Republic caucus, commonwealth caucus, Brazzaville group and later Casablanca groups existed although they were all dissolved upon the formation of the Organisation of African Unity. (Meyers, 1966). Thus the point noted here is that African countries have always cast their votes based on perceived problems at a particular time with the collective interest of the members of the groups. Bearing in mind their commonly shared ideologies and identities.

Thus, it is worth knowing that African states constitute 54 member states which represents at least one-quarter of the whole member state of the UN nations which comprises 194 member states. Hence as noted by Meyes, the establishment of a voting cluster that could not be matched with any other group makes the outcome of the voting patterned or structured based on cooperation and mutual understanding of member states (Meyers, 1966). Botchway, (2023) further argued that the African votes can act as a balance of power within the UNSC and also contribute to legitimize their actions. However, considering the recent voting patterns in the UN, there has been a mixture of consideration of many factors which includes but are not limited to collective interest, national interest as noted by Ryder and Kebret (2022), and identities shared by some countries. White and Holtz (2022) noted the vote to condemn Russia’s invasion of Ukraine accounted for widespread support and consolidation among UN members, but African countries were divided in their votes.

Thus there have been five significant votes in the UNGA, which could be attributed to a collective means of engagement by the African States which could have an effect on political alignment. It also bears witness to the self-interest of these African states, especially in terms of significant economic and political ties (Gopaldas, 2023). Thus, the non-uniformity of the African vote across these issues reflects a continent that is not monolithic but consists of nations with varied interests and strategies shaped by their unique historical ties, and economic, and geo-political contexts (Botchway, 2023). This approach helps the African countries to maintain strategic relationships in IR, trying to balance the relationship between the West and Russia. The UN resolutions will be discussed in detail in the next subsection.

		Vote Spread					%					
Key		Condemn	Suspend	Annex	Reparations	End War	Average	Condemn	Suspend	Annex	Reparations	End War
Abstain	A	17	24	19	27	15	38%	31%	44%	35%	50%	28%
Yes	Y	28	10	30	15	30	42%	52%	19%	56%	28%	56%
No	N	1	9	0	5	2	6%	2%	17%	0%	9%	4%
Not Present	NP	8	11	5	7	7	14%	15%	20%	9%	13%	13%
Total		54	54	54	54	54	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Fig. 1: All African voting (%) in 5 UNGA resolutions relating to the Russia-Ukraine war (Gopaldas, 2023)

Date Country	02-Mar-22 Condemn	07-Apr-22 Suspend	12-Oct-22 Annex	14-Nov-22 Reparations	23-Feb-23 End War
Algeria	A	N	A	A	A
Angola	A	A	Y	A	A
Benin	Y	NP	Y	Y	Y
Botswana	Y	A	Y	A	Y
Burkina Faso	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP
Burundi	A	N	A	A	A
Cabo Verde	Y	A	Y	Y	Y
Cameroon	NP	A	NP	NP	NP
Chad	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
CAR	A	N	A	N	A
Comoros	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Republic of the Congo	A	N	A	A	A
Côte d'Ivoire	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
DRC	Y	Y	Y	NP	Y
Djibouti	Y	NP	NP	Y	Y
Egypt	Y	A	Y	A	Y
Equatorial Guinea	A	NP	NP	A	NP
Eritrea	N	N	A	N	N
Eswatini	NP	A	A	A	NP
Ethiopia	NP	N	A	N	A
Gabon	Y	N	Y	A	A
Gambia	Y	A	Y	A	Y
Ghana	Y	A	Y	Y	Y

Date Country	02-Mar-22 Condemn	07-Apr-22 Suspend	12-Oct-22 Annex	14-Nov-22 Reparations	23-Feb-23 End War
Guinea	NP	NP	A	A	A
Guinea-Bissau	NP	A	Y	A	NP
Kenya	Y	A	Y	Y	Y
Lesotho	Y	A	A	A	Y
Liberia	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Libya	Y	Y	Y	A	Y
Madagascar	A	A	Y	A	Y
Mali	A	N	A	N	N
Malawi	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Mauritania	Y	NP	Y	A	Y
Mauritius	Y	Y	Y	A	Y
Morocco	NP	NP	Y	NP	Y
Mozambique	A	A	A	A	A
Nambia	A	A	A	A	A
Niger	Y	A	Y	Y	Y
Nigeria	Y	A	Y	A	Y
Rwanda	Y	NP	Y	A	Y
São Tomé and Príncipe	Y	NP	NP	NP	Y
Senegal	A	A	Y	NP	NP
Seychelles	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Sierra Leone	Y	Y	Y	A	Y
Somalia	Y	NP	Y	Y	Y
South Africa	A	A	A	A	A
South Sudan	A	A	A	A	Y
Sudan	A	A	A	A	A
Tanzania	A	A	A	NP	NP
Togo	NP	A	A	Y	A
Tunisia	Y	A	Y	A	Y
Uganda	A	A	A	A	A
Zambia	Y	NP	Y	Y	Y
Zimbabwe	A	N	A	N	A

Figure 2: Distribution of five UN votes (Gopaladas, 2022)

4.1.1 The UN Vote on Condemnation of the Invasion on 2nd March 2022

The UN resolution, A/RES/ES-11/1 on “aggression against Ukraine” which was adopted by the General Assembly aimed to affirm Ukraine's sovereignty and demanded Russia cease its military actions. At a global level, the result showed a consensus against the invasion, yet the split among African nations reflected varied denominators.

Gopaldas (2023) noted the distribution of African votes on UN resolutions condemning Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 highlights some reflections. First, African nations are sometimes coarse into making choices between two sides of geopolitics which naturally leads many to abstain. Even though he noted that Russia's plans for Africa may be “overstated” and not mutually beneficial (Gopaldas, 2023). This view was collaborated by Siegle (2022) when he said Africa is a “theatre” for Russia’s geostrategic initiatives. Russia is not investing in Africa but rather banks on a series of “asymmetric measures” for influence like election interference, mercenaries, arms for resources deals, etc (Siegle, 2022). More so, Russia is seen to have an influence on a nation's political elite and their ability to form network links among them, which restricts their influence in African countries. However, Gopaldas (2023) noted that Russia shares strong ties with several African Nations due to shared and established economic and ideological goals as well as common distrust (Botchway, 2023; ISS, 2022) of the West by both Russia and some African States.

Ryder and Kebret (2022) noted that for us to understand the voting style of African countries, it is imperative to know that the voting was categorized into four groups considering the historical foreign policy stance of different African countries within the UN and precedents in the usage of abstention in International law. Firstly, the first group voted against the resolution based on the perceived ties (economic, political, military) and security link with Russia which are of national interest (Botchway, 2023), and perceived valid security reasons for Russia’s action against Ukraine. Eritrea falls in this category which comprises 2% of the total votes as noted above in Fig 1 of African voting patterns compiled in percentage by Gopaldas (Gopaldas, 2023). Eritrea’s support for Russia according to Ryder and Kebret (2022) was linked to Eritrea’s criticism of the UNSC for their numerous and compulsory sanctions imposed on them, hence it was a way to oppose the status quo. To further explain this, it is noteworthy that historically, Eritrea has maintained a pro-Russia stance, often aligning with Moscow politically on international issues and seeing them as a strategic ally against imperialism and seeing America as their number one enemy (Gaim, 2021). This is in part, due to the foreign

policy approach of Eritrea which heavily emphasizes sovereignty and non-interference from Western powers (Ghebregziabher and Gerhelase, 2022). Eritrea focused on their interest and shared identity with Russia upon making strategic choices. Further elaboration on Eritrea's strategic position will be discussed in detail in the subsequent unit.

The second group is categorized as abstaining for “Neutrality”. This group comprises the countries that abstained from voting and the countries that were absent in the resolution on “aggression against Ukraine” (UN News 2022). According to Fig 1 above, it represents about 46% which is a combination of the total number of neutral and absent votes. According to the CSIS report, the decision was because the countries enjoy close ties with Russia but decided to abstain because of the fundamental principles of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) which all African countries belong to except Sudan (Ryder and Kebret, 2022). Additionally, the abstention and non-participation by many African countries can be attributed to several other factors. For instance, National interest, political considerations, and historical ties with Russia during the Cold War provided support for many African liberation movements, creating a lasting impact on these Countries' foreign policies (Ajala, 2022; Botchway, 2023). Furthermore, Tawat (2022) noted that countries that abstained not only have military interest and ideological ties with Russia but also are mostly linked to regimes with authoritarian or hybrid systems e.g. Angola, CAR, Congo, and Zimbabwe even though exceptions exist. The countries in the Southern part of Africa that fall within this group are; Angola, Madagascar, Mozambique, Namibia, Eswanti, South Africa, and Zimbabwe among other countries in the continent.

The East African region witnessed neutrality and abstinence from Ethiopia, Tanzania, and Uganda out of the 7 countries in that region. The prime minister of Ethiopia Abiy Ahmed Ali in his official letter which was posted on his Twitter social media handle urged all concerned parties to exercise restraints in the Ukraine crisis. Ethiopia’s quest for BRIC membership at that time could be part of the reason for their stance which is related to the national interest of a country to act accordingly towards what it is of important to them. Their counterpart Uganda cited the reason for abstinence surrounding her chairmanship as the incoming chair of NAM which they believe reflects on their identity (Jarson, 2022). These countries according to the ISS report noted that they understood the importance of diplomacy without accusing Russia (ISS, 2022). The West African region has only four countries in this category which are Mali, Senegal, Togo, Guinea, and Guinea-Bissau out of the 16 countries in the region. Out of the 6

countries recognized by UN definitions of North Africa, Algeria, Morocco, and Sudan fell under this group of abstained for neutrality or not present. The central African countries in this category account for the remaining five countries which are Burundi, Central African Republic, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, and the Republic of Congo out of 10 countries in the region.

However, the third group as noted by the CSIS report is those that abstained and pushed for mediation and dialogue. South Africa was categorized under this group because they pushed for greater dialogue and peaceful reconciliation as against outright condemnation (Ryder and Kebret, 2022). In a bid, Clayson Monyela, South Africa's head of public diplomacy in his Twitter post accused the EU and the West of double standards in appearance over the decades. Stressing the need to condemn other aggressors in Palestinian, Yemen, Syria, Libya and Somalia territories. Hathaway (2023) corroborated this view when he said that the US has been over the last several decades one of the greatest offenders and greatest defenders. Botchway, (2023) further supports the view in his analysis by focusing on the Western so-called "interventions" in certain countries in the past, especially in Libya since it is within the African context. Despite this categorization as a request for greater dialogue, their exist still national interest which is linked to economic interest of BRICS and the identity shared with them in the form of aid against colonial rule and colonial legacies.

Finally, the fourth group voted in Favour for Ukraine's self-determination and condemned Russia's action. CSIS report by Ryder and Kebret (2022) noted that despite being a member of NAM, these groups of countries strongly believe that the principle of self-determination and the sovereign state of a nation should be respected and adhered to. This principle focused on shared international identity, norms, and the standard of respect for the territorial integrity of each nation. They stressed that despite sharing the same similar vote with the US and European countries, they did not vote for the same interest (Nwaezeigwe 2023), even though they were influenced by the West and EU. This view was also collaborated by (Singh, 2022) in his analysis when he said the West urged African states to support Ukraine in the conflict. Siegle (2022) noted that most of the countries under this category fall under Nations with advanced democracy e.g. Nigeria, Ghana, etc, this group accounts for 28 votes which is 52% of the total votes from African countries as shown in Fig 1. It is interesting to note that the majority of the votes for self-determination came from the West African region which comprises about 11 countries out of 16 countries in the region. The remaining 17 out of 28 votes were spread across

the other regions of Central Africa, East Africa, North Africa, and Southern Africa with 5,3,3, and 6 votes respectively.

4.1.2 The UN Resolution on Suspension of Russia from the Human Rights Council on April 7th, 2022

The UN resolution A/RES/ES-11/13 on “Suspension of the rights of membership of the Russian Federation in the Human Rights Council” shows the second round of vote to tackle Russia’s forceful invasion of Ukraine (UN News 2022). According to the UDHR milestone document which was proclaimed by the General Assembly in 1948 the General Assembly resolution 217A, it set out the fundamental human right that will be universally protected. Articles 3,5 and 12 of the document related directly to the infringement of Human rights by Russia against Ukraine as stated under the 2006 resolution that established the council (UN, 2022). According to the Ukrainian Ambassador Sergiy Kyslytsya, he urged various countries to support the resolution on grounds of several atrocities from the Russian army. He said

“Bucha and dozens of other Ukrainian cities and villages, where thousands of peaceful residents have been killed, tortured, raped, abducted and robbed by the Russian Army, serve as an example of how dramatically far the Russian Federation has gone from its initial declarations in the human rights domain. That is why this case is unique and today’s response is obvious and self-explanatory,” (UN News 2022).

The voting witnessed a high level of abstention of 58 countries at large compared to the last resolution of 35 countries. 24 countries in Africa account for 41% percent of the total abstention. Furthermore, according to Fig 1, 44% percent of the total African countries abstained, and 17% percent kicked against the resolution which includes Eritrea and 8 additional countries. About 20% which represents 11 countries were absent, summing all votes to 81% as against only 19% (10 countries) that voted in favor of the resolution. These voting patterns show that main African countries shifted from their previous position which was greatly witnessed in the number of “yes” votes on the condemnation and suspension in the UNHRC at the ratio of 28:10 respectively. Eg of such countries are Nigeria, Ghana, Gabon, and Kenya in which the last three constitute non-permanent members of the Security Council. Gopaldas noted that African countries abstaining, being absent, or voting against the resolution

may have done so due to strategic diplomatic relationships, economic dependencies on Russia especially food and fertilizers (Götz, Kaas and Knudsen, 2023), or as a form of protest against perceived Western hypocrisy in international law enforcement (Gopaldas, 2023). However, It is imperative to note that some African countries were consistent with their voting patterns taking into account the previous resolution. Countries like South Africa, Eritrea, Uganda, Senegal, Sudan, Namibia, Chad, Liberia, Malawi, Seychelles and Comores to mention but a few which are not exhaustive.

4.1.3 The UN Rejection of Annexation Claims on October 12th 2022 by Russia

The third vote was a demand for Russia to reverse course on “attempted illegal annexation” which is against the principle of the UN charter. According to UN news, the UNGA passed the resolution of ES-11/4 calling on nations not to acknowledge the four regions of Ukraine that have been dominated by Russia. The speech made by the Kenyan ambassador, Martin Kimani (2022) reflects on the basis that all countries were birthed out of one another by ending an empire. He stressed the fact that they reject any form of “irredentism and expansionism” of any kind and went further to condemn the breaching of International laws for the past decades including the Security Council members.

The voting pattern witnessed almost the same degree of abstinence with the votes falling to 35% from the previous vote of 44%. UN News noted that “*A majority of those countries abstaining were African nations, alongside China and India*”(UN News 2022). However, the votes in favor of the resolution account for an increase in votes, more than the last two votes at 56%. About 9% were not present, and this resolution marks the only voting stage out of all the UN votes that did not record a vote against the resolution from African countries as Eritrea previously known for their support for Russia abstained for the first time. The voting pattern reflects how countries hold the UN charter despite having differences when it comes to National interest. This UN Charter still reflects on shared and existing identity in international space. According to the UN charter, articles 1 and 2 mention that all countries are meant to respect territorial integrity and sovereignty within international borders. Development reimaged report (2023) argued that the new positive report can be attributed to reference for support for peaceful negotiation, mediation, and any other possible peaceful means which is stated in Article 33 of the UN charter. The same did not appear during the 2014 or previous

resolutions in 2022. Finally, the stronger support among African nations for this resolution compared to the previous UNHRC suspension likely reflects a broader consensus against the principle of annexation (Gopaldas, 2023).

4.1.4 The UN on Russian Reparations for Ukraine on November 14th, 2022

The fourth vote even though it does not have wide coverage as the first and second votes accounts for the resolution on Russia to pay reparations to Ukraine (UN News, 2022). According to the UN News, 50 nations co-sponsored a resolution to establish a mechanism to compensate for damages, loss, and injury in the cost of wars and outbreaks (UN News, 2022).. It is on this bedrock that the resolution was set forth with Ukrainian Ambassador Sergiy Kyslytsya claiming for Russia to be held accountable and pay for the reparations. He stressed that Russia in the Soviet era demanded and received reparations, but today tries to avoid paying the price for their war and atrocities.

Yet again, this voting pattern witnessed the highest level of abstinence from African countries at 50% of the total votes, 9% voted against the resolution which comprises Eritrea alongside Mali and Ethiopia known for having witnessed wars at some point and then Central African Republic and Zimbabwe. Siegle (2022) noted that Mali, the Central African Republic, and a few other countries have elite-based relationships and “regime security” (Götz, Kaas and Knudsen, 2023) which are helping unpopular leaders to obtain power in an illegitimate way. Furthermore, 13% of African countries were absent while 28% percent supported the vote for Russia reparations. This vote again shows how divided African votes were based on individual countries’ national interests, identity formation, and economic interests. African nations’ mixed responses could be attributed to means of cautious diplomacy, trying to balance between condemning aggression and avoiding other measures (Gopaldas, 2023).

4.1.5 The UN resolution on comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine

The resolution ES-11/7 calls for peace on the one-year anniversary. At the mark of the anniversary, the majority of African countries (56%), which represents about 30 countries, supported the resolution on the grounds of peaceful negotiation. Gopaldas (2023) noted that

this aligns with a general preference in African foreign policies for peaceful resolution of disputes and non-interference. 28% of African countries abstained from the vote, while 13% were absent. On the votes against the resolution, 4% which includes Eritrea along with Mali voted against the motion. Siegle (2022) and Götz, Kaas, and Knudsen, (2023) noted that Mali's military Coup has availed Russia a golden opportunity to be a "pivotal actor" and also to support with political cover. Hence, this is evident in their voting pattern as they ranked the second country that voted against resolutions three times out of five behind Eritrea.

4.1.6 Summary of the UN Votes

Analyzing all UNGA patterns of voting in the resolution for African states in the wake of the Russia-Ukraine conflict reveals that the strategic positions taken by most of the African states are such that they are influenced or at least affected by various factors most of which are obvious, such as historical legacies and identities, national interest (economic, military and security), international norms and sheer distrust as already highlighted in the analysis above. Even though they found themselves struggling with a dilemma as the situation of the Russia-Ukraine conflict seems delicate and dicey (Botchway, 2023; Tawat 2022). Thus, the voting behavior of African countries showed different reactions – support, abstention or non-participation, and against the resolution. Some countries have shown support for the UN resolutions condemning Russia's actions in Ukraine (Daho et al 2022), according to Siegle (2022), Tawat (2022), and Ryder and Kebret (2022), these countries are African leading democratisers and also they have ranked 20 points plus ahead other African countries in Freedom's House annual ratings. Botchway, (2023) noted that this group of countries sees it as an opportunity to denounce war and advocate for peace as they wished NATO and the Western countries would have done during the Libya invasion. Countries like Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Cape Verde, Seychelles, Sierra Leone (although their stance varies across different votes), Botswana, and Malawi are under this category. This represents countries that strategically placed themselves considering the international norm and identity.

Furthermore, a lot of other countries abstained or were not present in the UN resolution for several reasons, Gotz et al (2023) cited that their abstinence was a result of economic interest, security interest, identity formations and level of distrust of the West on other previous issues eg Covid-19 Vaccine saga, and issue of African refugee, double standard and selective morality

of the west eg Interventions in Libya as noted by Botchway and ISS report (Botchway, 2023; ISS, 2022). More so, the Complex relationship between Russia and the West (Ryder and Kebret, 2022), ideological reasons (Siegle, 2022), and further not to provoke Moscow's ire. (Götz, Kaas, and Knudsen, 2023) are part of the reasons for keeping the neutral position. Countries like Sudan, South Africa, Uganda, Namibia, Mozambique, and other countries that voted to abstain or absent could be grouped under this category. This is in a way to show the level of self-interest towards economic benefits and trade. In terms of security concerns which have a measurable weight in their choices, some countries like Mali, CAR, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Sudan, and Angola can be grouped under this category. As they are clearly not in favor of the international norm due to abstinence in condemning Russia's action, but still find a way to express their interest while considering their identities. El-Badawy et al noted that Moscow has penetrated Africa and developed relationships through various arms deals and military support which are supported by bilateral military agreements, as seen in the substantial deals signed at the Russia-Africa Summit in 2019, where Russia secured military contract agreements with numerous African nations (El-Badawy et al., 2022). More so, economic ties between Russia and African countries have grown, with trade revenues almost doubling from \$9.9 billion in 2013 to \$17.7 billion by 2021. A significant portion of this trade includes critical exports from Russia to Africa, such as grains—Russia provides nearly 30% of the grain supplies to Africa—which are essential for food security in various African nations (Droin and Dolbaia, 2023).

In terms of outrightly voting against the resolution, Eritrea maintained the position having developed a sore relationship with the West for several sanctions by the UN nudged by America (The Economist, 2022), also against non-intervention of the West (Ghebrezghiabher and Gerhelase, 2022). Though it is surprising having been abandoned and fought against by the same Russia during the African liberation movements in the 20th century (The Economist, 2022). Hence, Eritrea saw them as a strategic ally against imperialism and saw America as their number one enemy according to Gaim Kibreab who is regarded as Eritrea's historian (Giam, 2021) Eritrea also banks on Russia for survival and as an insurance policy against West (Tawat 2022; Gebreamlak 2022). Eritrea happens to be one of the countries that has security concerns among the ones mentioned above and sees Russia as an ally in its agenda against the West.

It is imperative to note that some countries established consistency in all the votes without deviations. On the note of abstaining, Mozambique, Namibia, Sudan, Uganda, and South

Africa witnessed similar abstinence votes in all votes. On the other hand, Chad, Liberia, Malawi, Seychelles, Ivory Coast, and Comoros all voted in favor across the five votes. The remaining countries had one or two shortfalls like Eritrea which abstained in one and voted against in the other four votes, Nigeria had a similar pattern with two abstentions while Mali recorded 4 votes against the resolution ranking second after Eritrea. Libya had four votes in support of the resolution and abstained from the vote regarding reparation by Russia. It is puzzling to note that Libya has been a precedent of a case in 2011 which has been widely condemned. More so, Siegle, J (2022) noted that Khalifa Haftar, Supreme Commander of the Libyan Army seems to be a close ally of Moscow. This is judged by the visit to Moscow and the presence of the Wagner group in the region for security concerns. Thus, this poses the question of why Libya voted the way it did.

Thus, the diversity in African voting patterns reflects each government's internal governance styles and choices, national interest, identities, perception of norms, and possibly the kind of international alignments it pursues. Democratically strong countries tend to support UN resolutions for Russia to be penalized, while countries with authoritarian regimes, political instabilities, and governance issues abstain or align with Russia. All these as noted by Polity reflect their domestic political and economic calculations (Polity, 2022; Siegle 2022) and also refer to their identity that has been shaped over the years. ERIP (2022) noted that the authoritarian regime supported Russia for survival, noting the countries do not want to close their doors for assistance in case they have an issue of "existential threat".

4.2 African Union: Strategic Positioning of African Agency

The African Union, according to the AU overview, focuses on Promoting Africa's growth and economic development by championing increased cooperation and integration of African states. The general strategic position of the AU as noted by Ajala and some other scholars was that of fostering peace and dialogue (Ajala, 2022; Botchway, 2023; Adams, 2023). It also highlights the AU's objective of elevating the African agency on the global stage (Staeger, 2023). The AU objective according to the Agenda 2063 in Aspiration 2 focuses on the manifestation of Pan-Africanism and the African Renaissance. However, it is worth noting that numerous African countries have faced challenges in justifying their stance of non-alignment

towards the war (Bhattacharya, 2023; ISS, 2023; Nebo Sr., 2023). Gopadas (2023) noted that their voting record in the UN General Assembly reveals a clear pattern of division, particularly when it comes to condemning Russia's invasion of Ukraine. On the other end, Staeger made it clear that some observers said “without including geo-political competition” the story about Ukraine will never be complete (Staeger, 2023:559). This suggests that in as much as the UN charter has been violated, there are underlying interests from both Russia and the West that are beyond mere outbreak of war and restoration of peace. Western countries, particularly the US and NATO, have a vested interest in reducing Moscow’s influence and maintaining control in Eastern Europe through NATO. Ukraine’s support serves to contain Russia geographically and militarily, with the sole aim of reducing its capacity to exert control over other parts of Europe and especially the defunct Soviet Union states (Hathaway, 2023).

At the beginning of the war, the AU called on the Russian Federation and other regional or international actors to “imperatively respect international law”. The territorial integrity and national sovereignty of Ukraine”. This was conveyed in the statement on the situation of Ukraine by the chair of the African Union (AU), President Macky Sall,(now formal based on one yearly rotation), and the Chairperson of the AU Commission, Moussa Mahamat (African Union, 2022). The statement urged the two parties to establish an immediate ceasefire and open negotiations process under the supervision of the United Nations (UN). The need for this ceasefire, according to the Chair and Chairperson, is to “preserve the world from the consequences of planetary conflict and also to consider the interests of peace and stability in international relations in service of all the peoples of the world” (African Union, 2022). The AU, by advocating for the respect of Ukraine’s sovereignty, aligns itself with the principle of the United Nations Charter which sets out the rights and obligations of member states (Staeger, 2023). This was a clear understanding and focus on international norms and practice. By mediating and calling for peaceful co-existence, the AU was fronting and communicating the importance of Norms and how now should be upheld if it was internalized as claimed.

Furthermore, The AU’s active involvement in this international issue marks a strategic effort to submit African perspectives in global discourse, moving beyond the traditional view of Africa as a recessive observer to that of an active participant. Thereby ensuring that African voices are heard and considered in international forums. And the same time, it serves as a strategic positioning of the AU agency which is perceived by the shared and collective international identity of preservation of peace in the international scene. Staeger noted that actively participating, makes it crucial for the continent's long-term strategic interests and helps

to keep its collective sovereignty against external influences in case of an outbreak of war in the future (Staeger, 2023).

On that note, it was nothing new when the AU called its members to discuss the general impact of the Russia-Ukraine crisis along with other issues like COP27 on the 2nd Extraordinary session of the Specialized Technical Committee on Transport, Transcontinental and Interregional Infrastructure, and Energy (STC-TTIE) from 14th to 16th June (AU Press releases 2022). As Leal et al noted, Africa will experience the impact of the ever-changing geopolitical landscape as a result of the ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine (Leal Filho, et al., 2023). As such, it was very important for them to handle relations with major international powers with great care.

The then AU president HE Macky Sall in May 2022, while addressing a joint conference with German Councillor Olaf Scholz in Dakar said he would visit Moscow and Kyiv under the umbrella of AU and noted that

“We do not want to be aligned on this conflict, very clearly, we want peace. Even though we condemn the invasion, we’re working for a de-escalation, we’re working for a ceasefire, for dialogue ... that is the African position,”(Mhaka, 2022)

More so, while addressing the general assembly on the 77th Session of the United Nations General Assembly on the theme “A watershed moment: transformative solutions to interlocking challenges” on September 2022 he declared the African position, as the article stated that he speaks on behalf of the African Union, he noted

“I have come to convey the message of a continent determined to work with all its partners ...I have come to say that Africa has suffered enough of the burden of history; that it does not want to be the breeding ground of a new cold war, but rather a pole of stability and opportunity open to all its partners, on a mutually beneficial basis” (Sall, 2022).

This assertion indicates a position of neutrality in mediation and in combining efforts to interact with all the parties without limitations and restrictions. The interactions and possible resolution for AU are for the greater good for them of getting economic, social, military, and security interests from both Russia and the West. Even though the neutrality of the AU has been seriously questioned by scholars judging from Macky Sally and other delegates' visit to Putin in the capacity of AU and how President Zelensky has made an unfruitful attempt to arrange

meetings with the AU team (Chihamdaba et al 2023; Mhaka 2022). I argue that AU in their approach focused on what is of utmost importance and good for the African State in making their decisions. Hence, the move was for self-interest and economic benefits from both sides while considering other possible connections like keeping norms in check, colonial legacies, and Non-aligned policy.

In a further bid to act as a mediator, the AU came up with the African peace missions to Russia and Ukraine on 16th and 17th June 2023 with a delegation of 7 African states and a 10-point proposal for peace (Bhattacharya, 2023). The delegation for the peace mission led by South Africa was made up of leaders from seven African countries which are Comoros, Congo-Brazzaville, Egypt, Senegal, Uganda, Zambia, and South Africa (Bhattacharya, 2023).

Khadiagala (2023) noted that the selection of the representatives was balanced as Comoros was selected in order to make the visit a legitimate one since the current AU chairman as at then is the president of Comoros. He also noted that South African involvement stems from the fact that she is the biggest economy. More so the selection witnessed four countries that voted in favor which are Senegal, Egypt, Comoros, and Congo-Brazzaville, and other countries that abstained to give the mission credibility and equal appearance. Furthermore, the inclusion of the outgoing African Union chairman, Macky Sall from Senegal, brought significant political influence and credibility to the event since he was the sitting chairman when the war broke out (Khadiagala, 2023). From my observation, Nigeria seems to be left out of the commission which I feel should be part of the commission judging from her status in the continent and also the second biggest economy. Filho et al argued that even though the success may not be evident, the mission proved the collective commitment of African states to finding a diplomatic solution (Leal Filho, et al., 2023). This highlights the gravity with which these governments perceive the conflict - not as a remote war, but as a pressing crisis that has a direct impact on Africa (ISS, 2023).

The mission agenda (See Fig 3) highlighted the negative consequences for Africa's food security and emphasized the importance of the United Nations (UN) Charter (Nebo Sr., 2023). It also buttressed how the conflict poses a significant threat to the fundamental principles of the international system. According to Bhattacharya, (2023), the initiative managed to convince both Ukraine and Russia to the table which has been recorded as a rare achievement that few International actors have accomplished. A 10-step peace plan was developed which focuses on

the significance of territorial sovereignty, de-escalation, and security guarantees for all parties involved, etc (Bhattacharya, 2023).

- African peace mission's 10-point proposal**
1. It is imperative that all sides listen to each other respectfully.
 2. The ongoing conflict can only be settled through dialogue and negotiation.
 3. Steps towards de-escalation on both sides must be prioritised.
 4. Recognising the sovereignty of states as enshrined in the UN Charter is paramount in resolving this conflict.
 5. Security guarantees are essential for all countries in the world.
 6. Supply chains particularly in the Black Sea must be opened to free trade.
 7. Humanitarian support must be ensured for all directly affected by the conflict.
 8. Steps must be taken to release prisoners of war by both Russia and Ukraine, and children affected by the conflict must be protected and returned to where they are from.
 9. Post-war reconstruction efforts must be prioritised following a cessation of hostilities.
 10. African states must remain engaged and part of the processes that would lead to ending the conflict.

Fig 3 : African Peace Mission's 10-point proposal (Institute for Security Studies, 2023)

The South African-led mission birthed the establishment of the Ukraine-Africa summit, as a means to foster closer collaboration (Leal Filho, et al., 2023), also plans to create a special Ukrainian envoy to Africa (Ndiaye, 2022) and first time of trying to settle disputes outside the African continent as they have been shying away from it (Bhattacharya, 2023). Khadiagala (2023) argued that most African actors are skeptical if the continent will continue with peace talks beyond the Russia-Ukraine war. Despite these accomplishments above, a report by the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) highlighted that the mission encountered significant obstacles primarily due to a lack of openness, ineffective communication, and uncertainties surrounding its conception and planning (ISS, 2023). The involvement of the London-based Brazzaville Foundation, led by French businessman Jean-Yves Ollivier, is another issue to take a close look at considering the various diplomatic options available to African leaders (Khadiagala 2023; Nzuki 2023). And also The reports that connect a South African businessman, Ivor Ichikowitz, to the mission raise additional concerns about its impartiality and reliability. In addition to his involvement in arms trade, Ichikowitz provides financial support to South Africa's ruling African National Congress (ISS, 2023)

More so, there was an issue of lack of communication between South African President Ramaphosa and his spokesperson, Vincent Magwenya. The conflicting reflections on the Russian missile threat in Kyiv during the trip were an issue (ISS, 2023). This has undermined

South Africa's credibility as the leader of the mission as noted by Nkuna (Nkuna, 2023). The double standards by South Africans can be linked to the mission's credibility as they allegedly gave Russia tacit support as part of the BRICS nations of which Russia is a member (Bhattacharya, 2023; Nebo Sr 2023; Nzuki 2023). Finally, Stager and Kinkoh (2023) noted that the mission despite having an AU Assembly Bureau's support, lacked endorsement from the AU Assembly and the backing of the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC), whose authority seems supreme on peace talks. In the end, the initial round of discussions was concluded with a combination of positive and negative outcomes. Both parties dismissed the African plan as impractical (Bhattacharya, 2023). Nevertheless, the previous international attempts by several actors to find a peaceful resolution to the war have also proven to be unsuccessful. Throughout these endeavors, both Russia and Ukraine have remained steadfast in their respective stances (ISS, 2023).

From the foregoing, the AU stance of maintaining peace and respect for the territorial sovereignty of UN member states can be categorized in three different broader perspectives from my studies which influenced their choices. Firstly for the need for national or self-interest and regional interest of its member states (Nwaezeigwe, 2023; Gotz et al (2023; Dandolov, 2023). First of all, African nations are acutely aware of the potential global economic upheaval resulting from prolonged conflict, particularly in terms of food security and energy prices. According to Adesina (2022) in his report on "Averting an African Food Crisis", he noted the Russian invasion accounted for the shortage in supply of about 30 million metric tons of food imported from the two countries (Adesina, 2022). The recent destruction of the Nova Kakhovka Dam in Ukraine's agricultural heartland is expected to have a significant impact on food production, leading to prolonged shortages. Russia's threats of withdrawal from the Black Sea grain deal as at then were jeopardizing the smooth flow of agricultural exports from Ukrainian ports to African States (Bhattacharya, 2023). Many African countries are heavily reliant on wheat imports from both Russia and Ukraine, and disruptions could lead to food shortages and inflation, worsening already existing food security challenges (African Union, 2022; ISS, 2023, Kohnert, 2022). Furthermore, the war could also potentially destabilize energy markets, affecting oil and gas prices, which would have severe repercussions for energy-dependent African economies. By advocating for a peaceful resolution, the AU aims to stabilize these critical supply chains and mitigate the economic fallout on its member states, which is a clear national interest. Nebo Sr (2023) asserted that the focus of the African-led peace initiative

mission to Kyiv and Moscow is to ensure food security by encouraging them to “smoke from the peace pipe”.

Staeger (2023) highlighted that one of the significant challenges faced by the AU has been the difficulty in having a unified stance among its member states, this disunity is often due to varying national interests (Political and economic etc) and the external influence of both the West and Russia. He further noted that the war has strained the AU's internal cohesion among member states who are divided in their responses based on personal economic, political, and historical ties with Russia and Western countries (Staeger, 2023). Hence the AU's aim of mediating in the Russian invasion of Ukraine has been affected by the internal self-interest of member States which represents a mixture of national, regional, and even in a wider sense continental separate agendas (Nwaezeigwe, 2023). Abrahamsen et al in their analysis collaborated with Nwaezeigwe's argument when they noted that the AU strategic positioning in resolving the conflict shows the conflict of interest which is collective AU action and the State's national interest (Abrahamsen et al., 2023).

Secondly, AU strategically positioned itself as a Non-aligned group in the conflict, advocating for peace talks and avoiding siding totally with either Russia or the West. Staeger noted that this mediation strategy was heavily influenced by their colonial history and postcolonial international relations where AU and African nations have been subjected to as passive and peripheral actors in the International scene (Staeger, 2023). He acknowledged that the war has a wide range of effects on the goals slated by the AU, but on the flip side, it has given the AU the opportunity to push for an African agency and pronounced role in the global arena which stresses the need for mutual respect of international law and sovereignty of member states.

Finally, Pan-Africanism was put into play when the AU sought to intervene in the Russia-Ukraine crisis. Pan-Africanism focuses on all states' collective self-reliance and unity in overcoming any issues related to development as a union. This Pan-Africanism considers their ideologies, identity, and where they are coming from while taking a stance on anything that would jeopardize it. The AU's peace missions and diplomatic endeavors in response to the Ukraine crisis are examples of this Pan-African strategy. The AU hopes to strengthen African nations' ability to engage and interact with other global players on an equal basis by building a cohesive front based on their ideologies, and not just susceptible to Western pressures (Abrahamsen et al., 2023).

By effectively communicating this position to both parties and fostering opportunities for future engagements, Africa's voice is being heard which focuses on achieving long and lasting peace as the impact of the war affects the African continent. It also provided more opportunities for increased bilateral engagements between Africa, Russia, and Ukraine, and reshaped the perception of Africa as a significant player in the war's outcome. The engagement with the parties was for a peaceful resolution that would further reduce the impact of the war in the African continent which is perceived as having the intent of national interest of African States. Staeger (2023) and Nwaezeigwe (2023) noted that many African governments perceived the war as a power contestation between the West and Moscow and perceived the need for “equidistance” from these powers in order to have space to pursue African agency which translates to what is of utmost interest to them and their identities while upholding international norms.

Finally, as a way forward, many scholars recommended that in order to achieve consistency and make progress toward peace, it is crucial for African states to adopt a unified strategic approach that allows them to effectively utilize their collective influence on the global stage (Leal Filho, et al., 2023; ISS, 2023; Bhattacharya, 2023).

4.3 African States: South Africa, Nigeria, and Eritrea.

4.3.1 South Africa and its Strategic Positioning: National Interest and Identity

South Africa serves as the biggest economy in Africa and has kept close relationships with both Russia and the West. The UN voting witnessed South Africa abstaining from all the votes which is not surprising because of the close ties it enjoys from both parties. According to Okafor (2022) Since 1994, South Africa’s foreign policy has been “robust”, “developmental”, and principled, without being “isolationist”. Often explained as being a “middle-ranked power”, South Africa has been able to “punch above its weight” to possibly affect global politics. According to Orderson, the relationship between South Africa and Russia is a surprising one, especially for governments in the West and the US (Orderson, 2023). However, the colonial liberation movement epoch was a great period that I believe that must

have shaped their identity. The ANC party is still in power today and serves as the majority party across South Africa's legislatures.

Orderson argued that Russia does not have a major trade relation with South Africa, rather the United States joined with the UK and the European Union takes up to a third of South Africa's imports, while Russia struggles for barely 0.4% (Orderson, 2023). Despite this, South Africa has maintained a close relationship with Russia, and this dates back to the Cold War when the Soviet Union supported the African National Congress (ANC) during its struggle against apartheid (Nzuki, 2023; Eligon 2023). This support has fostered a lasting bond between the two nations, influencing South Africa's foreign policy decisions up to the present day. In other words, the identity formed, shaped, and constructed during the apartheid era still plays a major influence in South Africa's actions as the ANC still remains an active and current political party in power.

The ANC's ties with the Soviet Union included significant military and financial support, which was against the Western stance at the time, and entities such as the ANC were marginalized or labeled negatively by the West (Orderson, 2023). Nzuki (2023) asserted that after 30 years of the Apartheid movement, the ANC still dominates South African politics. According to the Premium Times report, despite South Africa's subtle support for Russia, South Africa managed to initiate a nation committee comprising of other representatives from other seven African countries to mediate and call for the cessation of fire, negotiations, dialogue, respect for sovereign territory according to UN charter and opening up of borders and black sea movements (Okafor 2022)

To this effect, the White House has voiced its criticisms towards South Africa's decision to maintain relations with Russia. In January 2023, South Africa held joint military exercises with Russia and China which got the interest of the West especially the US (Mohamed, 2023; Nzuki 2023). South Africa was further accused of shipping weapons and ammunition to Moscow from her dock which was later debunked by the South African Government after a proper investigation (Eligon, 2023; Imray & Biesecker 2023). To the US, all these seem like evidence that negates the South African stance in the ongoing war. As it is, the United States has concerns about any country exercising with Russia as Russia wages a brutal war against Ukraine (Mohamed, 2023; Congress of the United States, 2023). Nzuki (2023) in the CSIS reports noted that historical ties and all these recent activities have thrown her neutrality into doubt. Being part of BRICS which comprises Brazil, India, China, Russia, and South Africa is

another major point to note that affects South African strategic choice as it involves political alignment of certain countries with economic benefits against some of Western Organisations. The partnership focuses on mutual trade and security interests among the member states and all these complicate South Africa's position in global geopolitics (Nzuki, 2023).

Brosig (2023) further mentioned that South Africa's choice in the war is affected also by their commitment to non-alignment, and thus the response should be generally expected to be a non-Western response to the conflict. A non-aligned country refers to a state that does not formally align itself with, or against any major power bloc or military alliance (Alam, 1977; Čavoški and Mičić, 2022). As a non-aligned state, South Africa condemned the invasion and requested a more robust way to handle the conflict for reconciliation (Ryder and Kebret, 2022), abstained from all the resolutions in the UNGA, led the African Peace Initiative mission and at the same time entertained close political relations with Moscow and the West. Brosig (2023) noted that despite the wide geographical gap, South Africa's strategic position could impact the global narratives surrounding the invasion. His arguments surround the fact that South Africa can influence and rally the support of non-Western countries, and the way they choose to react to the conflict, especially in Africa. This was made evident when the President of South Africa organized the Moscow and Kyiv peace missions.

However, amidst all the UN votes, South Africa showed different framing and interpretation. South Africa denounced these resolutions because they do "not create an environment conducive for diplomacy, dialogue, and mediation" (Brosig, 2023; DIRCO, 2022). According to DIRCO, South Africa agreed to calls for mediation and cessation of hostilities within the resolutions but was against the choice of languages and defamatory terms used in presenting Russia in the UN assembly. Alternatively, South Africa suggested some resolutions that were not accepted as it suggested avoiding mentioning Russia but calling for a ceasefire but not for the withdrawal of the troops (Brosig, 2023; Seekings and Saunders, 2022:117).

Furthermore, Brosig (2023) argued that South Africa did not depict the war as an example of Russia's unilateral brutality on Ukraine. Instead, South Africa used terms that show "all sides", indicating a two-side conflict that might require one of the parties to compromise. In a speech by South African President Ramaphosa, he stated that branding Russia as an aggressor is ineffective and not fair to the country. According to him, it is ineffective because it could ultimately "drive a deeper wedge between the parties" and is also not fair, especially because the causes of the war are "related to the parties' security concerns" (Brosig, 2023; DIRCO,

2022). Thus, the war started as Western countries failed to recognize Russian security concerns and worries about Ukraine as a new NATO base, rather than terming it Russia's aggression. In the words of Ramaphosa, quoted in Tim Cocks' (2022) article:

"The war could have been avoided if NATO had heeded the warnings from amongst its own leaders and officials over the years that its eastward expansion would lead to greater, not less, instability in the region" (Cocks, 2022).

In furtherance of their claims, Clayson Monyela, South Africa's head of public diplomacy in his Twitter post accused the EU and the West of double standards appearance over the decades. Stressing the need to condemn other aggressors in other countries. He said,

"Do you wanna engage here Amb? I assume you saw the Vote Explanation. Thoughts? #whataboutism Let's not forget the People of Palestine, Yemen, Syria, Libya, Somalia etc. The EU shud "condemn" aggressors in these cases as well. Consistency in our Diplomatic endeavors is critical" (Monyela 2022).

Hathaway (2023) corroborated his view when he said that the US has been over the last several decades one of the greatest offenders and greatest defenders. Botchway, (2023) further supports the view in his analysis by focusing on the Western so-called "interventions" in certain countries in the past, especially in Libya since it is within the African context.

On that note, the DIRCO (2022) policy analysis paper portrayed the conflict as a "proxy war" in which the West uses Ukrainians to achieve their means. The majority of countries in the UNGA kicked against the invasion of Russia. South Africa in their own way accused some delegates of lying about humanitarian concerns and supporting geopolitics (Brosig, 2023; DIRCO, 2022). When South Africa's viewpoint is challenged for aligning with Russia rather than Ukraine, there was no response (Brosig, 2023; Mills & Hartley, 2022). The generic response is always a reference to Western double standards regarding involvement in Iraq 2003, Libya 2011, the Yemen war, or the Palestinian situation (Monyela, 2022).

The effects of South Africa's non-alignment abound. The significant effects of South Africa's strategic positioning is its contribution to crafting a non-Western response, and the ability to retain and strengthen diplomatic ties with a variety of nations. South Africa frames a discourse by striving to balance power and speak for themselves rather than being influenced, controlled, and coarsed by the dominant West. This strategic approach demonstrates South Africa's

commitment to an equitable global governance framework that works for the interest of the West (Davis, 2022). Orderson noted that South Africa avoids alienating Russia, a major participant in global energy markets and fellow BRICS member because they might be of nationalistic interest to them as it navigates “global economic turbulence” and pursues foreign investment from a variety of sources (Orderson, 2023). Thus, the South African position not only aims at being neutral but also to check the consequences of joining forces against one another and its implications in global politics. In a bid to stay afloat, they have displayed a high level of diplomacy and relations with the West and Russia in their own capacity.

However, this position is not without criticism and repercussions. It may be regarded as sitting on the fence, particularly by the West, and it is interpreted as a lack of commitment to democratic norms and human rights. Mohamed noted that this view may strain relations such as trade, humanitarian aid, and investment with the Western nations, who are crucial commercial partners and investors in South Africa (Mohamed, 2023).

4.3.2 Nigeria and its Strategic Positioning: International norms, identity, and national interest

Nigeria is regarded as the second-largest economy in Africa as of now. In the 1970s and 1980s, Nigerian foreign policy was perceivable and clear-cut, because of that, it was conferred the “Big Brother” position in Africa, as her policy was Afro-Centric towards total emancipation of Africa (Okafor, 2022)..For instance in South Africa and Angola where they supported minority rules, financial and diplomatic backing, etc. Recently, this role has been taken over by South Africa according to Premium Times news (Okafor, 2022). This is because in Nigeria, square pegs are put in round holes and diplomatic decisions are greatly and currently affected by complex diversities comprising of social, religions issues which should probably stay apart from diplomacy

The UN voting witnessed Nigeria voting in favor of 3 resolutions and abstaining from two votes. However, practically, Nigeria has maintained a position of neutrality in the Russia-Ukraine conflict, referencing the position of non-alignment in global politics. Moreover, this position avails Nigeria the opportunity to navigate its relationships with the West and Russia

without significant commitments that could jeopardize its strategic interests. The aim is to preserve its sovereignty and decision-making powers by avoiding getting entangled in a global power tussle. (White et. al., 2023).

According to the Premium Times news which is one of the leading news media in Nigeria, the Nigerian government never condemned the invasion of Russia in Ukraine at the initial stage but mentioned that it “received with surprise reports of the invasion of Ukraine by Russia (Okafor, 2022). This was communicated in a press release from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which their first line of action was for the evacuation of Nigerians and Nigerian Students in Ukraine. The Nigerian mission confirmed that Russia’s Military actions and attacks have been limited to Ukrainian military installations which was also explained by the Kremlin (Nigeria Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2022). This was another display of personal interest amidst the war which is expected of every country to evacuate her Citizens in case of an outbreak of War

According to the Premium Times report, South Africa initiated a seven-nation committee composed of representatives from other seven African countries to mediate and call for cessation of fire, negotiations, dialogue, respect for sovereign territory according to the UN charter, and opening up of borders and black sea movements (Okafor 2022). This was an important representation of AU which Nigeria appears to be missing out on or chosen to be silent on the issue and further shows their neutral stance in different forms by avoiding being in the limelight. This could be a deliberate means of asserting their position for the greater good of the country.

These diplomatic strategies employed by the Nigerian government all aim to help it maintain strategic partnerships without having to jeopardize its economic and political links. it is important to note the implications of the stance taken by Nigeria. The neutral stance can be considered in the economic benefit that comes with it. Nigeria, a major supplier of liquefied natural gas (LNG) to Europe, has a lot to benefit from the diversification of its gas to Europe’s energy supplies. The US and the West have imposed sanctions on Russia which affects its energy supply in Europe (Agbelusi, 2022). Nigeria can step up and diversify its natural resources to Europe for economic gains as a replacement for Russia’s gas. If Nigeria were to side with Russia in its aggressive war against Ukraine, the West and the US would probably boycott Nigeria’s energy resources. Agbelusi noted that if these benefits were to be lost, the effects would lead to a supply chain disruption which would likely affect oil prices, and transportation costs and contribute to inflation within the country (Agbelusi, 2022).

However, there have been pushes from the West for Nigeria to support and align with Ukraine, for instance, in an interview with the Premium Times 2022, by Ukraine's minister of foreign affairs to Nigeria Bohdan Soltys. The interview was made available to the public, he condemned Nigeria's neutrality as condoning evil (Premium Times, 2022). In the same interview, Soltys concedes that Ukraine-African-Nigerian relations have the potential to flourish because, according to him, "*Ukraine has a lot to offer Nigeria and Nigeria has a lot to offer Ukraine.*" (Premium Times, 2022). Further into the interview, when asked how he rates Nigeria's stance in the UNGA resolutions and what he would like to see Nigeria do differently, Soltys implied that Nigeria should vote against Russia and boycott Russia to show that they (Nigeria) disapprove of Russia's aggression against Ukraine (Premium Times, 2022).

From the foregoing, he asserted that Nigeria's aligning with Ukraine can foster stronger relations with the West and even bring about certain diplomatic and economic benefits. As indicated by Soltys, there is great potential in a Ukraine-African-Nigerian relationship (Premium Times, 2022). However, adopting such a realignment can bring about serious repercussions for Nigeria. First of all, it could lead to the development of a rift with Russia who are equally offering beneficial relations like the existing military and economic cooperations. Thus, taking a definitive stance in condemnation of Russia could destroy Nigeria's carefully maintained image of non-alignment and could potentially provoke a response from Russia in the form of diplomatic or economic disruptions.

In the wake of the UN resolutions, many African countries, including Nigeria were pulled from opposite sides. Nigeria, like most other African countries, abstained from voting in the UN resolution to exclude Russia from the Human Rights Council despite Russia's open threat (Okafor, 2022). It could be recalled that Russia asserted before the votes that any form of Neutrality or vote in favor of expulsion on HRC would be seen as an "unfriendly gesture" which has repercussions for bilateral relationships. Speaking on the decision to abstain, Nigerian Ambassador to Germany, Jide Osuntokun noted that Nigeria's decision to abstain was a wise policy decision especially due to Nigeria's trade ties with Russia (Okafor, 2022). According to Osuntokun,

"I think abstaining, when you put it side by side with previous condemnation, I think it is a policy in the right direction, do not forget that we have quite reasonable economic ties with Russia, we import wheat from them."

This goes further to highlight the importance of national interest in international relations. Furthermore, in trying to emphasize the importance of preserving the national interest of Nigeria and abstaining, the ambassador goes further to imply that supporting the West is far less beneficial to Nigeria, hence the importance of not severing ties with Russia or Ukraine. He said:

“Both Russia and Ukraine were helping us with the Ajaokuta steel company and the Ikot Abasi aluminium complex, whereas the serious economic ties we used to have with the United States where they bought a lot of our oil, now they hardly buy anything from us. In terms of economic ties with the U.S., it is almost zero” (Okafor, 2022).

Therefore, Nigeria’s stance can be seen as a calculated effort to avoid unwarranted confrontations and maintain strategic autonomy without directly opposing either Russia or the Western Bloc. As Owei Lakemfa, former secretary general organization of the African Trade Union Unity (OATUU) puts it,

“Nigeria has no business supporting one group or the other” (Okafor, 2022).

Thus, the most important thing for Nigeria is to maintain continued engagement between all parties. Furthermore, Nigeria’s cautious and calculated position aims to protect its national interests ensuring a continuation of beneficial trade agreements and partnerships. However, it should be considered that this strategic stance can equally potentially limit Nigeria’s leverage in future diplomatic negotiations.

4.3.3 Eritrea and its Strategic Positioning: Security concerns, identity and survival tactics

Eritrea, which is not considered a major power in terms of economic, political and military might in Africa came into the limelight after the first UNGA vote to condemn Russia’s action in Ukraine. The pattern of their response to the voting showed how they positioned themselves in the war against Ukraine. Eritrea has always had a pro-Russian stance, often siding with Moscow on international matters. This convergence is due to Eritrea's foreign policy that lays emphasis on sovereignty and non-interference from Western countries (Ghebrezghiabher and

Gerhelase, 2022). According to them, they argued that Eritrea has always voted against all resolutions and decisions by America and generally by the West both in UNGA and Human rights-related issues, which is perceived as a shared identity. Ryder and Kebret (2022) noted that this is because of the perceived numerous sanctions by the UN backed by the Americans. According to the Aljazeera report, Eritrea's vote is seen as a continuation of its foreign policy aimed at blocking Western hegemony(Aljazeera, 2023). This policy, according to the report, is deeply intertwined with Afwerki's internal governance styles, coupled with his one-party system and dictatorial military control. Afwerki justifies his authoritarian government by constantly mentioning “external threats” as a way to oppose the resolutions (Aljazeera, 2023).

More so, the president of Eritrea Isaias Afwerki is known for his strong anti-Western agenda, notably against the United States, and has pushed Eritrea to align with Russia (Ghebrezghiabher and Gerhelase, 2022). The anti-Western agenda is a shared belief and identity of Eritrea as not to associate themselves with anything that has to do with the West. The US sanctions target the Eritrean army, Eritrea's single political party (the PFDJ), and, mostly, the Red Sea Trading Corporation (RSTC). Ghebrezghiabher & Gerhelase (2022) noted that the sanctions have had an effect on the Eritrean populace as it has worsened their economic hardship due to financial isolation from the developed countries. Due to the high level of authoritarian regime, the citizens have fled the country and sought refugee status around Europe. The refugee number has risen up to 580,000 according to the Human Rights Watch Report (HRW, 2022). However, his regime and his media outlets have presented this situation as the outcome of hostility from the West.

With low levels of security or economic links with Moscow, Eritrea has maintained pro-Russia views on a variety of subjects (Ghebrezghiabher and Gerhelase, 2022). Ghebrezghiabher and Gerhelase (2022) and Rozanskij (2024) noted that after Russia seized Crimea, Eritrea was the first to send a country's representative over there. This is to show the level of hatred for the West and desperation to associate with Russia for mutually shared interests. Ghebrezghiabher and Gerhelase noted that in a bid to show Afwerki's intention to preserve hatred towards the West and prevent foreign involvement in his harsh internal policies, he offered Russia a facility at the port of Assab after the United Arab Emirate (UAE) troop's withdrawal in April 2021. Despite this sweet offer, Putin rejected the offer and focused on gaining a base in Sudan which is strategic because of the geographical location of Sudan (Ghebrezghiabher and Gerhelase,

2022). Yet another form of desperation to align with fellow authoritarian regime towards advancing its cause.

In the spring of 2023, the Foreign minister of Russia Larov Sergey visited Eritrea and his speech was focused on “multipolarity”, which is here to stay, and the urge to resist the West and its hegemonic intent in the global economy (Lavrov, 2023). More about the diplomatic mission centered on the discussion of the dynamics of the war in Ukraine and the enhancement of bilateral ties in energy, mining, information technology, education, and health sectors (Tekle, 2022; Aljazeera, 2023). He and President Putin urged the Eritrean president to attend the summit of Russia-African in July 2023. Thus, president Afwerki reciprocated the visit after four months when he traveled to Moscow to strengthen their diplomatic relations with Russia. President Afwerki made reference to the dangers of unipolarity and how it has resulted in a high level of crises and beckoned on Russia to intervene with “peace and justice” so people can transition into “civilized international order”(Eritrea Ministry of Information, 2023)

Eritrea's strategic positioning is a political tactic. According to the Eritrean Research Institute for Policy and Strategy (ERIPS), Eritrea's decision to align itself with Russia, shown in the UNGA votes demonstrates that Afwerki’s government is not done with his abuse of human rights and meddling with regional affairs (ERIPS, 2022). According to the ERIPS president Tomas Solomon, he said that

“The Eritrean regime is desperately searching for allies to evade U.S. and Western sanctions and to secure arms supplies to help it continue disturbing peace and security of the entire Horn of Africa with callous disregard for its own people and the future of Eritrea” (ERIPS, 2022).

Delving further into the analysis, ERIPS highlights that there were four major reasons believed to have led the Isaias Afwerki regime to vote in favor of Russia. Firstly, the ERIPS’s report noted that it should not be seen as a surprise to link the country’s history of violations of human rights to Eritrea's vote in favor of the UNGA resolution and against the establishment of a commission to investigate Russian human rights abuse in Ukraine. Thus, it seems like brothers who know themselves in arms, and support a regime against the international world order set up.

Eritrea's administration is notoriously authoritarian, without a legislature, independent judiciary, and media outlets (HRW, 2023). The Human Rights Watch noted that Afewerki’s unelected regime closed all the independent press and arrested 10 journalists in 2001 and no

information about them has been heard. The government is also known for denying liberty of region, indefinite military conscriptions, detentions torture, etc (HRW, 2023). So it is perceived that Eritrea's moves are in a bid to support its fellow authoritarian counterpart as their foreign policy is generally against the Western states. Referring to records of 2016, the institute noted that the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHR) established that the Eritrean government had committed several war crimes against humanity. The report noted that Eritrea has had military clashes with her neighbors which include Ethiopia (Tigray war) and had led to violation of its own people's human rights (ERIPS, 2022).

Furthermore, according to the article, the Eritrean government aims to gain favor and have access to advanced weapons in order to continue its deadly military clashes in the Horn of Africa. The report mentioned that Russia is the leading provider of military equipment to African nations, including weapons like; T-90SA major battle tanks (MBTs), modernized BMPT-72 (Terminator 2) infantry combat vehicles, Su-34 attack aircraft, and Su-35 air superiority planes (ERIPS, 2022). The favor transcends to the personal interest which guides Eritrea's foreign policy and interest.

Again, the Eritrean government views Western nations, particularly the US, as "archenemies" and cited the reason for the action is for its critics of human rights violations and placing sanctions on Eritrea's military, governing party, and key leaders. The point is that the regime is all out to frustrate the efforts of Western governments, particularly the United States, by weakening the efficacy of the UNHRC. The report noted that the Eritrean administration has long harbored hostility against the UNHRC for convening a Commission of Inquiry to probe the widespread abuses of human rights in Eritrea. (ERIPS, 2022).

Finally, the report noted that the Eritrean government's vote was an aspiration for Russia to utilize its veto power in the UN Security Council to avoid investigations and charges against them for human rights crimes (ERIPS, 2022). According to the report, Eritrea is banking on a reciprocal vote and backing from Russia at a time when the country is accused of expanding human rights violations beyond its boundaries and into Ethiopia (Ghebrezghiabher and Gerhelase, 2022), and investigations are being sought into suspected war crimes committed by Eritrea and other combatants in the Tigray conflict (ERIPS, 2022). Tawat (2022) and Gebreamlak (2022) supported this view when they noted that the authoritarian regime supported Russia for survival or "insurance policy". Noting that Eritrea does not want to close its doors for assistance in case they have an issue of "existential threat". This point correlates

with President Afwerki's mission to Moscow where he requested Russia's assistance in ensuring "civilized International order" (Ministry of Information Eritrea, 2022).

All these shaped Eritrea's response towards considering what is good for their national interest, based on perceived identity. Anti-western policies seem to be their focus and they are out to frustrate the West and particularly the USA because of the perceived sanctions.

4.4 External Perspectives on Africa: The Western and Russian Perceptions

Dandolov (2023) noted that the emergence of the war has shown a disconnection between the Western countries and the global South because they avoided taking a clear-cut stance. In his analysis, he noted that Africa's neutrality will be counterproductive based on an established argument. Firstly, he argued that it would compromise the ability of African countries to "project and yield soft power" to the Western world even though he acknowledged that it has never been utilized in Africa (Dandolov, 2023). He mentioned that Africa's insistence on sitting on the fence can be likened to a mere silent approval of the Russian war. Djilo and Handy collaborated on the view and said that the West perceives African neutrality as a "Russia-leaning neutrality" (Djilo and Handy, 2022). That's why for example the President of the Republic of France, which happens to be one of the vocal points of the Western allies mentioned in his trip to West African countries, that African nations have displayed some level of hypocrisy since the onset of the war by not condemning Russia. He further said that...

"too often African leaders have failed to call a war a war and say who started it, because there are diplomatic pressures — I'm no fool," (Peltier & Breeden, 2022).

All these are in a bid to link Africa's strategic position to the benefits or advantages they are getting from Russia. Siegle noted that countries like the Central African Republic, Mali, Gabon, Zimbabwe, Congo, and Libya amongst many African countries benefit from Russia and African trade relations in terms of military supplies via Wagner groups, "elite cooptioning", economic benefits and trades on food and other resources (Siegle, 2023; Siegle 2021). As defined by Siegle (2023) elite cooperation is an asymmetric means by Russia, which does not

involve “broad-based popular engagement”, matched with resources Russia brings to Africa and with the capacity to influence leaders at the top of the power structure in Africa.

Macron also noted while addressing the UNGA in New York and in another set up with the New Global Financing Pact summit in Paris that Russia is destabilizing Africa and the influence in the region is not beneficial to Africa. Sighting the level of Human rights abuse and undermining of democracy in Africa by the Wagner group which had received several sanctions from the European Union. Also referring that such mistakes have repercussions in history.

“I want to say things quite clearly today: Those who want to mimic the struggle of the nonaligned in refusing to express themselves clearly are making a mistake and this will carry a historic responsibility,”

“This is a destabilising force in Africa through private militias who come to prey on and commit abuses on civilian populations,”(Aljezeera, 2023)

The US on its part has expressed its opinion concerning African positions in several ways, some of which will be analyzed. Firstly, I will start from a specific country to a general expression of their perspectives on African countries. South Africa for instance has been criticized severally. Washington has voiced its criticisms towards South Africa’s decision to keep up ties with Russia. One of such criticism came recently in January 2023 when South Africa decided to hold joint military exercises with Russia and China as the war in Ukraine rages on (Mohamed, 2023; Nzuki 2023). South Africa was further accused of shipping weapons and ammunition to Moscow from her dock which was later debunked by the South African Government after a proper investigation (Eligon, 2023; Imray & Biesecker 2023). Even though the US envoy refused to comment on the outcome of the investigations. All this information is contained in the Congress of the United States letter addressed to the US secretary, National adviser and Representative of US trade requesting them to shift the location of the AGOA forum scheduled to be held in South Africa. They cited the above-mentioned cases with a scheduled meeting with BRICS in August 2023. The letters says

“South Africa's government has formally taken a neutral stance on Russia's unlawful invasion of Ukraine, but has deepened its military relationship with Russia over the past year. Late Last Year, a Russian cargo vessel subject to U.S.sanctions docked in South Africa's largest naval port, and intelligence suggests that the South African government used this opportunity to

covertly supply Russia with arms and ammunition that could be used in its illegal war in Ukraine....We are seriously concerned that hosting the 2023 AGOA Forum in South Africa would serve as an implicit endorsement of South Africa's damaging support for Russia's invasion of Ukraine and possible violation of U.S.sanctions law...If South Africa continues to demonstrate support for Russia in its unlawful invasion of Ukraine, then hosting the forum in another country in Sub-Saharan Africa would send a clear and important message that the United States continues to stand with Ukraine and will not accept our trading partners provision of aid to Russia's on going and brutal invasion” (Congress of the United States, 2023).

According to Fabricius (2022), he noted that the US House of Representatives passed a bill that will have implications for African countries for supporting Russia. The bill was H.R.7311 - “Countering Malign Russian Activities in Africa Act” was passed on 27th April. According to the bill, section 2 focused on the US accessing Russia’s actions and influence in Africa to determine if it is undermining its national interest and also to hold Moscow and African governments accountable for aiding such influence (Meeks, 2022). Gregory Meeks noted that the bill was in an effort to arrest Moscow’s effort to manipulate and exploit parts of Africa to undermine US interests and avoid sanctions. Though he presented the bill as a benefit for Africa as it will protect all the people victimized by Putin (Fabricius, 2022).

On the other hand, Russia considers African neutrality or ambiguous support as a significant triumph in its wider global narrative against Western power. This text appreciates the diverse reactions of African countries to UN resolutions as the chance to highlight the multipolar nature of the present global system, indicating that not all states accept the Western viewpoints on international law and standards. In the foreign ministry report, The Russian foreign minister Lavrov granted an interview after the BRIC conference and asserted their perspective when he mentioned that they have penetrated Africa despite the Western’s agitations. He said

“We are now in Africa. Just look at the way the Americans have been pressuring African countries by literally imposing their will on them” (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2023).

According to experts, Moscow is seeking the face of Africa to demonstrate that Russia is not considered to be alone in the international community, irrespective of the numerous sanctions imposed on them (Ferragamo, 2023). Moscow’s plan from a diplomatic standpoint is to gain

more support from the global south, especially the African continent for the support of her multipolar world order (Fabricius, 2022). That's why Russia has been lobbying African allies to get a favorable response on issues relating to the Ukraine crisis. The foreign minister Larov has had several tours in Africa rallying for support of Russia by African governments and also doubling up their already existing investment and trade relations. He shared his reflections after visiting several African countries and asserted that Russia has no grudge or control over African states, unlike their counterparts. The foreign minister noted that Russia treats with respect the right of Africa to determine their fate and accord to their problems inherent in the system with solutions from the system and not by imposing another country's solution on them. He noted that...

“At the same time, I would specially emphasise: our country does not impose anything on anyone or tells others how to live. We treat with great respect the sovereignty of the States of Africa, and their inalienable right to determine the path of their development for themselves. We are firmly committed to the "African solutions to African problems" principle...differs from the "master – slave" logic imposed by former metropolitan countries, which reproduces the obsolete colonial model” (Lavrov, 2022).

He further addressed specific countries in Africa and recognized their stance with respect for neutrality. For instance, in Mauritania, he expressed his respect and further asserted that the strategic positions taken by Mauritania will not prevent them from taking part in addressing Africa's problems that affect the country's interest like the issue in the Sahel region and deadlock break in the western Sahara settlement process. He said,

We expressed our respect for the position of neutrality that Mauritania adheres to in all areas. We received assurances that this policy would continue into the future. We respect this choice of the Mauritanian leadership, especially since neutrality does not prevent Mauritania from playing a strong role in addressing Africa's problems which affect that country's interests (Lavrov 2023).

Finally, from the foregoing, we can see that the Western countries were displeased with the African State's strategic responses and were willing to double up their plans to thwart that agenda. This can be seen in the released US strategy report for sub-Saharan Africa which mentioned Russia seven times along with China and reasons why African states should not be fooled by Russia and China. The article referred to the instabilities and harmful activities

geared by Russia towards strategic and financial benefits from Africa and how Russia is solely responsible for worsening COVID-19 and food insecurity. It also stated the plans for more investments and diversification in order to improve US-Africa relations (The White House, 2022). Russia on the other hand embarrassed Africa on their strategic position with an understanding of their choices as it relates to their national interest and issues relating to their identity. While responding to the content of the report, Lavrov (2023) mentioned that the report might be targeted at those who do not know or recount history which is an insult to African states considering their historical experience.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

This thesis has posed and answered research questions which are; What are African strategic positioning on Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine? How and by what means is the African Union, Nigeria, South Africa, and Eritrea communicating their strategic positioning on the Russia-Ukraine war? What are the implications of the African strategic positioning on the Russia-Ukraine on international relations?

In this research, by making sense of the strategy positioning from an African perspective, the study considers the state as the primary actor and the African Union as secondary actors. Actors act in a particular way as a strategy in their relation in the international scene. Thus, several concepts relating to IR have been used as an analytical tool to justify and make sense of the strategic positioning. The concepts are national interest, norms, and identity. I had further drawn on IR theories of constructivism and realism to explain why state behaviors or decisions are the way they seem to be.

National interest is seen as the main driver of nation-state and as such has affected the decisions and responses of states. As the realist perspective sees it, they put into consideration their existence, survival, security interest, and economic interest. The constructivist see it as being produced and reproduced as a result of social interaction. On the other hand, international norms are those expected or shared values in the international scene where actors are expected to conform to them. Norms are dynamic in nature as they involve social interaction considering the cultural, belief system, and regional context of the environment. These norms have an internal process of socializing before it is accepted and internalized by actors. It also performs different roles such as management of inter-state relationships and conflict management based on the established rules and expected practices. Identity relies on how states see themselves in relation to other states in International politics based on their origin or perception, and how this changes determines what is a state's identity as it produces and reproduces. These concepts aided in answering the research questions posed in this study and further into the analysis, which gave an in-depth understanding of responses by various actors. More so, it noted that strategic positioning is dynamic in nature as it is not fixed or confined, but rather the interaction with the system shapes and modifies it. Finally, I have learned that these concepts are interlinked and related as one needs the other to function. For instance, there is no way a state knows what it wants (national interest) without first focusing on trying to know who he is and what norms and belief shapes what he wants.

The methodological chapter outlined the research design which includes the sources of data to be used from secondary sources as source of data, and validity, relevance, ethics, and access to sources. Reasons for making those choices were justified in the chapter.

Analyzing the African states' strategic positioning in UN resolutions revealed to us that the view that African States' choices were divided ranging from those in favor of the votes, to the ones that abstained and chose to remain neutral, the ones that backed Russia's aggressive oppression and the ones that boycotted the votings. Hence these voting patterns account for firstly, condemning Russia's act which is support for international rules-based order (norms). Countries like Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, Libera and Gabon among many other countries fall under this category. Secondly, it focuses on the interest of the state in terms of trade and economic relationships, access to food, etc. The majority of the countries fall under this category as they were abstaining from the votes, eg Namibia, Burundi, Algeria, and many others. Thirdly, shared identities for instance the colonial legacies, and apartheid era, shaped their votes. South Africa, Uganda, and some other southern African countries are under this group.

Most importantly the dominant security concerns of some states, such as; Mali, Central African Republic, Eritrea, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe etc, were highlighted as they see Russia as an ally that will help in ensuring their survival in the international system where they are constantly questioned for their system of authoritarian or hybrid government and issues relating to Human Right. That goes without mentioning that other states have security concerns, e.g. Sudan, Libya, Guinea, DRC, and Burkina Faso, but these previously mentioned countries stood out as the security concerns reflected greatly in their choice of national interest, norms and identity. It is also worth mentioning as an observation that some countries had the same vote all throughout the analyzed five votes like South Africa, Namibia, Seychelles, Malawi, Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire.

The AU's strategic positioning was more of a mediator and calling on all the parties involved to respect one another sovereignty. They stressed their positioning by informing that they should not be involved in the conflict of choosing sides among the war party but focus on maintaining just and lasting peace. The peace mission shows how Africa went on their own capacity to foster African agency, considering international norms and also putting themselves in the forefront of politics as active participants in deciding and playing geo-political games. More so, it shows that African states are upholding the African identity agenda of 2063, and

its constructed norms and identity of pan-Africanism which focuses on unity and solidarity. The pursuit of self-interest was also visible in AU's response as the agenda has a focus on the economic repercussions attached to the war. Thus, while ensuring that the international norms are upheld, they also focus on their national interest with their identity in check.

The analysis of three different countries gives an overview of how each country strategically positioned itself in response to the resolutions, despite the pressures from the West and Russia. South Africa has been unarguably noted for being pro-Russia despite abstaining from the UN votes and leading a group of delegates to Moscow and Kyiv. The point is, that South Africa is carefully navigating through several turbulence of political diplomacy while trying to have close ties and relationships between the West and Russia. This communicative language suggests neutrality in order to have benefits from both sides and not be sidelined considering interests like BRICS and shared identities like apartheid aid, fight against colonialism, and colonial legacies among many other things. Even though Washington accused South Africa of showing signs of solidarity with Moscow.

Nigeria's strategic positioning was communicated through UN votings where 3 votes were in favor and the remaining ones were abstinence. Abstaining from the vote that requires suspension of Russia in the UNHRC and repatriation by Russia suggests some level of neutrality in the response. Hence, Nigeria's response was based on the best interest of the nation for instance having great leverage in the energy market, its shared international norms, and its identity of colonial legacies. Avoiding the AU mission to Moscow and Kyiv was an example of their ability to avoid being in the spotlight and still assert their agenda.

More so, Eritrea's response in kicking against the votes shows signs of complete solidarity with Russia. Even though they abstained from one vote, it is still evident that they are against Western ideology or Western activities. This could be linked to the various sanctions melted on them by the UN which were actively influenced by the US. Thus, their strategic positioning focuses on siding with Russia and hoping Russia extends favor to them and backs them on any issues relating to them at the UN and at the global level. To them, this serves as an "insurance policy" in case they have issues with "existential threat" as noted by some scholars in my analysis. Thus, they focused on maximizing their security concerns, and alliances through military and power formation while responding to the Russia-Ukraine war.

Generally, the West expressed their grievances on how African states' neutrality transcends to condoning Russia's aggressive act in Ukraine. The US was specific in expressing its concerns when it referred to the activities of South Africa which were more pronounced. In addressing the issue, they released a new U.S strategy report for Sub-Saharan Africa in order to improve the relationship with Africa and draw them closer to them. According to the report, it will aid in maintaining the political alignment. Russia on its part accepted the African's neutrality as a sign of positive response and urged them to take the developmental part that is beneficial to them, reminding them of history and how U.S strategy should not be an option for developmental goals.

Finally, this thesis has contributed to knowledge by arguing that African states though might have the intention of maintaining the International world order based on rules and norms, they also have their primary aim of considering what is of utmost importance for their national interest like security and economic concerns while focusing on other issues like constructed historical legacies and identities that has shaped them in the past. Hence, these factors while interacting with each other affected their strategic projection in the international scene.

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