

BOOK REVIEW

Olumuyiwa Babatunde Amao. *The Foreign Policy and Intervention Behavior of Africa's Middle Powers: An Analytic Eclecticism Approach*. London: Lexington Books, 2023. 270 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$105.00. Hardcover. ISBN: 978-1666939927.

The Foreign Policy and Intervention Behavior of Africa's Middle Powers by Olumiyiwa B. Amao is a timely contribution to an academic discourse that has traditionally focused on the interventionist policies of superpowers like the United States, Europe, and China. The central argument of this book is that conflicts in African nations such as Sierra Leone (1991–1998) and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) (1997–2005) created opportunities for regional powers like Nigeria and South Africa to intervene and assert their influence across the continent. While interventionism provides middle powers with opportunities to enhance their image and pursue their interests, it is not without challenges that hinder the realization of these goals. In this book, which is divided into seven chapters, Amao employs diverse theoretical frameworks—ranging from realism and social constructivism—to analyze state behaviors within the African context.

Amao begins by analyzing intervention in international politics, drawing on Terry Nardin's definition: actions by one state within another's jurisdiction without permission, which becomes armed intervention when force is used. He highlights the complexity of intervention due to varying interpretations and identifies key elements such as objectives, power imbalances, and scope. He, however, points out that humanitarian intervention, which is the most popular, is defined as the use of force to address widespread civilian rights violations, with examples including Haiti, Somalia, and South Sudan. He, therefore, closes this chapter by emphasizing the principles and practices of humanitarian intervention through the United Nations and other subregional frameworks.

He further examines the theoretical perspectives on which his study is anchored, contrasting structural realism and social constructivism. Drawing from various scholars like Jackson and Sorenson, Waltz, and Morgenthau, Amao argues that structural realism views state interventions as power-driven strategies to ensure survival and security, rooted in economic strength. On the other hand, social constructivism emphasizes the influence of shared identities, institutional practices, and historical contexts on state behavior. He illustrates this through Nigeria's intervention in Sierra Leone, shaped by ECOWAS solidarity rather than purely power-driven motives, offering a nuanced understanding of state actions.

In Chapter Three, the book addresses Nigeria's foreign policy, highlighting principles such as respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity, and noninterference, rooted in United Nations charters. He noted that Nigeria recognizes African

states' right to self-determination and sovereign equality—a set of ideals that were instrumental in determining its intervention policies. The chapter emphasizes Nigeria's humanitarian-driven interventions, using military force to end tyranny and protect civilians in conflicts like Liberia (1990–1997), Sierra Leone (1991–1998), Guinea-Bissau (1998–1999), and the Gambia (2017). Internal factors, including leadership, economic and military capacity, and global strategies, shaped Nigeria's interventionist behavior.

In Chapter Four, Amao delves into Nigeria's intervention in Sierra Leone's civil war (1991–1998), beginning with its origin and causes. He highlights factors such as the spillover from Liberia's conflict, autocratic rule under the All People's Congress (APC), internal power struggles, economic decline, and the rise of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF). The RUF, characterized as a militant group engaged in guerrilla warfare, looting, and trading diamonds for arms, received external support from Liberia under Charles Taylor, further escalating the conflict. Despite peace accords, Nigeria intervened through ECOMOG, shelling Freetown from offshore despite opposition from ECOWAS states like Ghana and Burkina Faso. Amao argues that Nigeria's intervention was driven by political interests, including addressing sub-regional fragmentation caused by colonialism, ensuring regional stability to strengthen economic ties, and reducing reliance on France for military and economic support. While scholars debate Nigeria's motivations, Amao concludes that both structural realism and social constructivism best explain the factors behind its actions.


In Chapter Five, Amao examines South Africa's foreign policy and interventionist behavior in Africa, emphasizing its growing role within the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and its peacekeeping efforts since 1998. South Africa's interventions in the DRC (1999) and Burundi (2004) highlighted its commitment to Pan-Africanism, internationalism, and poverty alleviation. Leadership styles shaped its approach: Nelson Mandela prioritized negotiation and humanitarianism, Thabo Mbeki emphasized Afrocentrism and the African Renaissance, and Jacob Zuma balanced national interests with continental welfare, supporting institutions like the African Court of Justice. Despite controversies, South Africa sought to assert its leadership while addressing its apartheid legacy.

Chapter Six focuses on South Africa's intervention in the DRC (1997–2005) and its alignment with foreign policy. The DRC conflict stemmed from postindependence crises, internal power struggles, ethnic tensions, and Belgian interference. Mobutu Sese Seko's oppressive regime and subsequent violence exacerbated the crisis, leading to a failed state. The First and Second Congolese Wars (1996–2003) caused extreme violence, including the genocide of 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus. Despite ceasefire efforts, the conflict remained resource-driven. South Africa's intervention, rooted in "Peace Diplomacy," began in 1997, mediating between Mobutu and Laurent Kabila. Under Thabo Mbeki, South Africa facilitated the 2002 Sun City Agreements, but the exclusion of Rwandan-backed rebels led to their collapse. The chapter contrasts South Africa's diplomatic, Pan-Africanist approach with Nigeria's military-driven peacebuilding efforts.

In closing, the author argues that Nigeria's and South Africa's interventions in Sierra Leone and Congo blend structural realist and constructivist approaches.

Nigeria's foreign policy, shaped by leadership idiosyncrasies like Gowon's severing ties with Israel and Babangida's intervention in Liberia, focused on Afro-centric interests and regional stability. South Africa, aiming to assert leadership post-1994, engaged in interventions driven by both hegemonic aspirations and historical ties with neighboring states. The author suggests combining both theories to explain how leadership, regional stability, and ideals influenced interventions in Sierra Leone and Congo.

The book's strengths lie in its accessible writing style, the author's depth of analysis, and the application of theories supplemented by case studies. These strengths reflect intellectual rigor and a strong grasp of the subject. The book is highly recommended for students of history, international relations, and related disciplines, as well as general readers seeking to understand how foreign policies and multifaceted factors shape the behavior of state actors in Africa, especially within the context of interventionism.

Nnaemeka Emmanuel Enemchukwu 
Southern Illinois University
Carbondale, IL, USA
nnaemeka.enemchukwu@siu.edu
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