
CONFLICTS IN AFRICA AND MAJOR POWERS: PROXY WARS, ZONE OF INFLUENCE, OR PROVOCATING INSTABILITY

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The article analyses the different nature of conflicts that have occurred in Africa since the end of Cold War. A special attention is given to the role of external factors in the process of conflict evolution and the escalation of violence on the African continent. In effect, this paper demonstrates through a critical examination of the meaning of proxy war as, zone of influence or provocation of instability as a strategy and an analysis of its employment by the United States and China, France etc. in Africa. The new potential confrontation between the United States and China as in Sudan, France in its former colonisation not only based on a clash of world views about the structure and nature of international relations and security but largely over the control of strategically vital energy resources based in Africa. The authors conclude that this ultimately creates permanent tensions or bitter conflicts between the actors and African populations as a factor that have negative impact on the peace and stability of continent.

According to the context of superpower conflict strategies, this paper critically examines, zone of influence, provoking of instability or proxy war as a viable national strategy of nuclear armed great powers in advancing and/or defending their global national interests in a bipolar/multipolar international system.

Key words: provocative instability, cold war, proxy war, zone of influence, conflicts, major powers, rebel groups, Africa, natural resources, China.

During the Cold War, war by proxy was a key strategy of indirect conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union. The purpose of these proxy wars was to either maintain or change the balance of power between the superpowers/great powers in conflict areas outside the central front in Europe. Within the condition of Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD), both the United States and the Soviet Union sought to avoid direct confrontation between their conventional military forces in regional conflicts out of fear that it would escalate to an all out nuclear war. In this condition, both powers engaged minor powers rather than each other directly. This entailed limited, indirect war via proxy forces to minimize the threat of direct confrontation between the superpowers for fear of escalation. Close to two decades after the fall of the Berlin Wall there has been very little discussion about proxy wars between major international powers that possess nuclear capabilities. The Soviet Union no longer exists and Russia is not the existential threat to the United States that the Soviet Union once was. The international focus has shifted towards Western state intervention in small local conflicts and away from Cold War strategies under the umbrella concept of Peace Support Operations. The United States and the Soviet Union used foreign governments and international organizations as proxies, such as during the United Nations operation in the Congo in 1960 and the Angolan Civil war in 1975, to influence and alter the outcome of a local conflict to suit its national interests and alter the regional balance of power.

Today, there is a new potential great power on the international arena, based on patterns of China's growing economy and military capabilities and China's regional and global strategic intentions that American and Chinese interests seems to clash in Africa generating conditions for the return of the strategy of war by proxy. Africa has become a main venue for United States — China strategic competition, as it was to some degree during the Cold War struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union.

Table 1

African exports to China 2012

Exporting countries	Value total export to China	Main products
South Africa	44,653,737	CNES (65%), iron (12%), Platinum (5%), coal (4%), diamonds (3%)
Angola	33,561,897	Crude oil (99%)
Congo	4,555,407	Crude oil (94%)
DRC	3,527,095	Copper (55%), crude oil (21%) and cobalt (21%)
Zambia	2,686,560	Copper (92%)
Sudan	2,053,732	Crude oil (97%)

Источник: [Lugt 2014]

From the table above we can see that, China has significantly altered the strategic context in Africa and Beijing's motives have become more transparent. China's growing industries and middle class demand new energy and raw material suppliers and Africa is also crucial to meeting these demands. Since China has become ever more intertwined in the global economy, China is acquiring vital interests in more and more regions around the globe. As vital interests increase China is attempting to shape the international order in a way favorable to its political interests even if they are counter to United States vital interests [Alden 2004: 9—10].

The United States' and China's involvement in Africa is resulting into a potential conflict. Direct conflict between the two major powers is highly unlikely however, mainly due to the advent of nuclear weapons and the economic and human cost of a direct war between two major nuclear powers. The danger of beginning a catastrophic major war between the United States and China will limit the two to local theatres. The strategy of war by proxy is been utilized to preserve the "peace" between the two powers directly [Bills 2010]. This has now become a viable national strategy of nuclear armed great powers in advancing and/or defending their global national interests in a bipolar/multipolar international system. Violence was and still present itself in most countries in Africa, example in Central African Republic, Ivory Coast, Nigeria, Eritrea, Libya, Mali, Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, Rwanda, Burundi, Sudan. This main trend of chaotization of Africa present itself in form of proxy war, provoking instability or zone of influence¹. Which is however viewed as the second scramble of the continent's natural and mineral resources².

¹ Mark O.Y., 2011. Bipolarity, Proxy wars, and the Rise of China, Strategic Studies Quarterly. URL: <http://www.au.af.mil/au/ssq/2011/winter/yeisley.pdf> (accessed: 30.08.2016).

² Okpe E., 2014. World Great Power as Facilitator of Conflicts in Africa. Modern Ghana. URL: <https://www.modernghana.com/news/584703/world-great-power-as-facilitator-of-conflicts-in-africa.html> (accessed: 30.08.2016).

PROXY WAR IN POST BIPOLAR PERIOD IN AFRICA AND FOR IT'S NATURAL RESOURCES: SUDAN AS A CASE STUDY

Proxy wars are relatively low risk to the superpower compared to direct intervention or traditional war. With direct intervention there are risks of defeat, loss of resources, ostracism from the international community and resistance from one's own citizens, at least in democratic states [Loveman 2002: 46]. Given the structural impediments to direct conflict, this is another factor that has made proxy wars a prevalent strategy in the nuclear age. Failure in the strategy of proxy war is relatively inconsequential as compared to failure in direct intervention [Loveman 2002: 46]. This method helps the superpower advance its interests in foreign territory while keeping aloof from the warfare allowing it to better cope with any international consequences of its involvement. The Soviet Union and the United States suffered from direct involvement in Afghanistan and Vietnam respectively during the Cold War and both found their international prestige considerably tarnished.

The supply of arms and military relations with a foreign government or insurgent group with the intent of influencing the affairs of a foreign conflict is one of the factors that facilitate indirect conflict via proxy between superpowers. The supply of arms does not automatically lead to direct involvement by a superpower in a conflict as was thought prior to WWII. On the contrary, it is usually a substitute for direct involvement because it allows a superpower to back one side in a conflict to fulfill national interests without becoming embroiled itself [Loveman 2002: 21]. By keeping the proxy sufficiently well armed and trained, the superpower can avoid committing its own military forces.

The most discernible difference between proxy wars and other forms of external power intervention [Nye 1990: 177—178] is that there is no direct armed military intervention by the superpower. proxy absorbs the majority of risk by engaging in the conflict directly. Another component of proxy wars is the provision of military aid, training, and/or advisors by the superpower to the proxy resulting in some level of conflict escalation. The supply of material aid, such as weapons or other military equipment and logistical support, is the most significant support the superpower can offer, short of covertly dispatching its own troops. The transfer of military equipment aims to elevate the proxy's military capabilities with the hopes of influencing the outcome of the conflict itself. This is considered the most accepted and recognized aspect of proxy war [Loveman 2002: 31].

This is the crystal case in Sudan involving the United States and China.

SUDAN AS A CASE STUDY

For record purpose it is important to note that, oil in Sudan had been discovered by the United States company "Chevron" but because of the insecurity in the country due to the beginning of war in 1983, Chevron gave up to the oil exploitation project in Sudan in 1984. After the abandonment of oil exploration project by the United States Company Chevron, the Sudanese government contacted the Chinese company (China

National Petroleum Company) in order to continue the project of oil exploitation, and finally in 1999 the oil exploitation was completed.

China National Petroleum Company (CNPC) was Sudan's largest foreign investor, with some \$5 bln in oil field development. Since 1999 China has invested at least \$15 bln in Sudan. Similarly, China National Petroleum Company (CNPC) built an oil pipeline from its concession blocs 1, 2 and 4 in southern Sudan, to a new terminal at Port Sudan on the Red Sea where oil is loaded on tankers for China. China takes up to 65 % to 80 % of Sudan's 500,000 barrels / day of oil production³. Unfortunately, this perfect cooperation between China and the government of Khartoum was not profitable for United States of America, as this cooperation it was not possible for US to control the big oil potential of Sudan. However, to weaken the power of Khartoum' regime, United States decided to finance and support firstly the rebel groups of South Sudan during the second Sudanese civil war, by training and arming the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army headed by John Garang until his death in 2005⁴. In the process of realization of this strategy of destabilization of Sudan, Chad had played an important role. The Chadian territory was used for the training of Sudanese rebel groups. In April 2005 Sudan's government announced that it had found oil in South Darfur which is estimated to be able when developed to pump 500,000 barrels / day⁵.

The announcement of oil discovery in Darfur by the Sudan's government, explains the renewed agitation of United States government. If the oil of Darfur was controlled by the regime of Khartoum only, China would be the privileged partner of oil exploitation in this region, and this situation will affect considerably United States interests in Sudan. The region of southern Sudan from the Upper Nile to the borders of Chad is very rich in oil⁶.

This, therefore explain Washington's different strategies — diplomatic, political, military. According to this geopolitical reality, China has always supported the power in Khartoum, in order to protect its oil interest in Sudan. Arguably the struggle for natural resources of Sudan is the real cause of indirect confrontation between Beijing and Washington. However, it's based on these realities, it can be possible to assert with some assumptions that the conflict in Darfur it is some kind of proxy war between China and United States.

SUPER POWER PROVOCATING INSTABILITY: LIBYA AS A CASE STUDY

The role of the international community in African crisis has been of a mixed debate. Major powers have engaged with military forces and economic resources in African armed conflicts in the twenty-first century. The non-African actors have intervened in

³ F William Engdahl China and USA in New Cold War over Africa's oil riches. Global research. May 20, 2007. URL: <http://www.globalresearch.ca/china-and-usa-in-new-cold-war-over-africa-s-oil-riches/5714> (accessed: 03.10.2016).

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

violent conflicts on the continent, inadvertently provoking an already intense conflict to achieve their aims.

During NATO's war in Libya (2011), France and Qatar under the UN's watch delivered weapons in large quantities to the rebels which the Western press often referred to as 'activists' and 'revolutionaries'⁷. In addition to the weapons, the rebels also received communication equipment which facilitated and coordinated their movements.

But the fact remains that the British, US, France governments (with the abstainace of Russia and China) has been one of the main destabilizers of Libya, as well as other African countries. In Libya, Britain, US as well as its NATO allies were the main factor that created the anarchy which still remains, with two rival governments, as well as other warring militias, and the ever-expanding presence of the sinister Daesh / ISIL (prohibited in Russia), which is now reported to be a significant presence in Libya, there is not even one nationally recognized currency in the country, with rival banknotes being printed. Britain's 'Special Forces' it said to have also been operating secretly without the knowledge or sanction of parliament. The military intervention of the British, U.S and French government has created this dire situation in what was once the most developed African country. It has facilitated the refugee crisis, which also included thousands of Libyans⁸. It is significant that Nigeria, Africa's largest economy, is also one of the largest producers of refugees, not least because of the activities of Boko Haram, which have also been facilitated by military intervention in Libya. Nate Madden tagged it "How Hillary's and Obama's recklessness led to Jihadist chaos in Africa"⁹.

Halting the global crisis will not be possible or successful which is a consequence of worldwide instability and poverty caused by the intervention of Britain, US, France and NATO and the other big powers in Libya. Adding to this explosive mix is the rise of and the increase in (cross-border) criminal activity, including human trafficking. Recently the UN Special Representative to Libya described the situation as 'festering' and the momentum for peace talks as 'rapidly diminishing'. IS hit in Libya twice in an unprecedented way, first with the execution of 21 Egyptian Copts and later with the bombings in Al-Qubba killing over 40 people¹⁰.

Years before the ousting of Muammar Gaddafi he dealt with Western powers, he decided to change the orientation of Libyan foreign policy, by which he signed several

⁷ Ghanaian chronicle. Rebel groups in Africa: how are they funded? 15 January 2013. URL: <https://www.modernghana.com/news/439652/rebel-groups-in-africa-how-are-they-funded.html> (accessed: 03.10.2016).

⁸ Stop Foreign Intervention in Africa: The Major Powers Responsible for Global Crisis. News Agency. June 28, 2016. URL: <https://libya360.wordpress.com/2016/06/28/stop-foreign-intervention-in-africa-the-major-powers-responsible-for-global-crisis/> (accessed: 11.10.2016).

⁹ Madden N. How Hillary's recklessness led to Jihadist chaos in Africa: PART 1. Conservative Review. August 10, 2016. URL: <https://www.conservativereview.com/commentary/2016/08/how-hillarys-recklessness-led-to-jihadist-chaos-in-africa-part-1#sthash.Jpkw7ux4.dpuf> (accessed: 10.10.2016).

¹⁰ Clingendael. Understanding instability in Libya: will peace talks end the chaos? // Netherland Institute of International Relations. 17 March, 2015. URL: <https://www.clingendael.nl/publication/understanding-instability-libya-will-peace-talks-end-chaos> (accessed: 08.10. 2016).

arms contracts with Russia¹¹. This shift by Gaddafi was not acceptable by western powers. The western powers never wanted a cooperation between Gaddafi and Russia, with the possibility of China with his tie with Russia could gain a considerable influence in the Northern part of Africa. Tragically the western campaign against Muammar Gaddafi was launched, and the result is drastic and ultimately instability is concrete fact in the region of Northern Africa. The Libyan rebel group known as National Transitional Council (NTC) was supported funded and recognized by western powers and United Nations¹². Since the death and ousting of Gaddafi, and the regime change in Libya, the instability in Libya and ultimately in Africa through Sahel region to Lake Chad Basin and West Africa has become worst, which inadvertently leading to Europe and the number of terrorist attacks, death and destruction has as a result increased, and security and stability of the region and the world is been threatened.

According to former French President Charles De Gaulle that, “in international affairs, there is no friend only interest”. This statement seems true and very justified in the major powers readiness to destabilize regimes where their vital interests seems threatened.

MAJOR POWERS ZONE OF INFLUENCE: FRANCE AS A CASE STUDY

The 21st Century chaotization of the Africa continent birthed the abstract strategy of conflictology in the region. The zone of influence of major powers in the continent and the subsequent fight for influence has either led to an intervention of a major power in a country that is within her influence. Through political, security, economic and cultural connections, France has attempted to maintain a hegemonic foothold in Francophone Africa, both to serve its interests and maintain a last bastion of prestige associated with a legacy of past mastery. Through a bilateral defense and military cooperation treaties to maintain a permanent military presence on the continent with it's former colonies (see reference and details below).

Presenting itself as the benevolent patron, an altruistic power that simply wants to help Africa get back on her feet. However, it becomes clearer that the powers and spirit that colonized Africa is very much alive and well. The Lake Chad Basin has an estimated volume of 2.32 bln barrels of oil, 14.65 trillion cubic feet of natural gas, and 391 mln barrels of natural gas liquids¹³. In total these are worth billions of dollars. The port of Le Havre is the final destination for the unrefined oil and it belongs to France. France stake in Niger's Uranium extraction, its dependent on 75 % sources of energy “nuc-

¹¹ Russie-Libye: cinq contrats de livraisons d'armes. Sputnik. 2009. URL: <https://fr.sputniknews.com/defense/20091007123394422/> (accessed: 03.10.2016).

¹² Nations Unies, L'Assemblée générale permet au Conseil national de transition (CNT) libyen d'occuper le siège de la Libye. 16 Septembre 2011. URL: <http://www.un.org/press/fr/2011/AG11137.doc.htm> (accessed: 03.10.2016).

¹³ Assessment of Undiscovered Oil and Gas Resources of the Chad Basin Province, North-Central Africa // U.S. Geological Survey's (USGS) World Oil and Gas Assessment. 2010. URL: <http://pubs.usgs.gov/fs/2010/3096> (accessed: 07.10.2016).

lear” brings an understanding of her great dependency on Niger for uranium. France ownership of 87 % of Areva and owned majority of the shares of three out of four uranium mining companies in Niger. With Niger’s recent produce of 5,000 tonnes of uranium per year will help make Niger the second largest uranium producer in the world [Sam Piranty 2014].

In a research paper written by Melly and Vincent Darracq in 2013 asserted that, “France wields a level of influence in sub-Saharan Africa that it cannot command anywhere else in the world. In crisis situations, it is still seen as a key source of diplomatic, military or even financial pressure on or support for the countries in the region”. France two foreign and interior ministers, Jean-Marc Ayrault and Bernard Cazeneuve to the West African country less than 48 hours after the attack in Ivory Coast on 13 of March 2016. The French forces in Burkina Faso. Together with Ivory Coast, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger, Burkina Faso hosts 3,500 French troops who are part of Operation Barkhane — France's counter-terrorism operation¹⁴.

RWANDA A CASE STUDY OF ZONE OF INFLUENCE

For decades France viewed post-colonial Africa as an exclusive sphere of influence, or *précarré* [France White Paper 2008]. France still maintains military influence and stations thousands of its troops [Griffin 2015] across the continent, from western Senegal to the Horn of Africa. And still maintains its cooperation with the former colonies, eg. Chad, Niger, Mali, Cameroon¹⁵, Central Africa Republic etc. with the bid of retaining its influence. But changes in its strategic priorities have this posture since its unhappy experience in Rwanda in 1994, which demonstrated an attempt of France to maintain it’s influence, but ultimately lost it’s control. According to “The Guardian (2007)” English is flourishing in Rwanda and France is widely talked of as the enemy. In some quarters, French is thought of as the language of death; of those who killed and those who stayed to be murdered in the genocide of 1994¹⁶.

According to Al Mckay, the Rwanda genocide’s unfolding was watched by the world (major powers) and yet little was done by leaders to alleviate the suffering. It is this aspect of the genocide that Daniela Krosiak (2007) contests that France was not only involved in events through passivity, but actually enabled the genocide through its support for the Hutu regime before, during and after the killing¹⁷.

In an analysis of a British journalist Linda Melvern, documents recently released from the Paris archive of former president François Mitterrand reveals when and how

¹⁴ What is France's role in West Africa? URL: <http://www.dw.com/en/what-is-frances-role-in-west-africa/a-19121271> (accessed: 10.10. 2016).

¹⁵ For many years the treaties were secret, especially regarding clauses for intervention in internal crises until the Sarkozy government decided to publish them openly after 2008.

¹⁶ McGreal Ch. France's shame? The Guardian. 11 January 2007. URL: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2007/jan/11/rwanda.insideafrica> (accessed: 07.10. 2016).

¹⁷ Al Mckay. The Role of France in the Rwandan Genocide. Sep 28, 2010. URL: <http://www.e-ir.info/2010/09/28/review-the-role-of-france-in-the-rwandan-genocide> (accessed: 05.10.2016).

the RPF invasion in October 1990¹⁸ was conducted. In the same analysis Melvern further stated that most of Rwanda's arms deals were negotiated through the Rwandan embassy in Paris. After the genocide was over, extensive records were found in the embassy, the documents had been said to have been systematically destroyed by Colonel Sebastien Ntahobari, Rwanda's military attaché in France [Melvern 2004].

According to Gerard Prunier, the operation Amaryllis launched by France, assisted by the Belgian army and UNAMIR at the beginning of the genocide, the military operation which involved 190 paratroopers to evacuate expatriates from Rwanda, was a “disgrace”, this is because those who boarded the evacuation trucks were separated (Tutsi spouses, their children, expatriates and foreigners) and Rwandans were forced off the truck and killed at a Rwandan government checkpoints [Prunier 1999].

As was pointed out by Kinzer, Stephen (2008), the French military presence effectively helped the perpetrators [Kinzer 2008]. In July 2008, Kagame threat to indict French nationals over the genocide if European courts did not withdraw arrest warrants issued against Rwandan officials by Spanish judge Fernando Andreu¹⁹.

However, Paris has repeatedly denied the accusations and insists that French forces had worked to protect civilians. Although relations between both countries were completely frozen from 2006 to 2009. A French parliamentary enquiry set up to try to establish the truth about the French role declared that “France was in no way implicated in the genocide against the Tutsis”. But the two rapporteurs, one of whom was Bernard Cazeneuve who is currently France's interior minister, however admitted that the French authorities made “serious errors of judgment”. The announcement of the declassification of the Rwanda papers came on the 21st anniversary of the outbreak of the genocide on April 7, 1994. The procedure of releasing the documents is separate from some 20 ongoing judicial cases over “crimes against humanity” which have been launched in Paris²⁰. According to a BBC report, the French Foreign Minister, Bernard Kouchner, denied French responsibility in connection with the genocide but said that political errors had been made²¹.

This ambition and power tussle of major powers is crystal clear in the battle of France for influence and control of strategic minerals and markets in its zone of influence. As evidence in French government policy paper entitled A partnership for the future: 15 proposals for a new economic dynamic between Africa and France, which evidently portray France ambition in the region.

¹⁸ Nicolas Sarkozy admits Rwanda genocide mistakes. BBC NEWS, 25 February 2010. URL: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/8535803.stm> (accessed: 30.09.2016).

¹⁹ Wilkinson T. Spain indicts 40 Rwandan officers. Los Angeles Times. February 07, 2008. URL: <http://articles.latimes.com/2008/feb/07/world/fg-rwanda7> (accessed: 08.10.2016).

²⁰ France declassifies Rwanda genocide documents. The Telegraph. 07 Apr 2015. URL: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/rwanda/11521100/France-declassifies-Rwanda-genocide-documents.html> (accessed: 10.10.2016).

²¹ Report to the Minister for the economy and finance. A partnership for the future: 15 proposals for building a new economic relationship between Africa and France. URL: <http://www.tresor.economie.gouv.fr/File/399236> (accessed: 10.10.2016).

In conclusion, from the aforesaid it is vivid that most of the violence exacerbation in Africa is been birthed out of provoking instability, zone of influence or a kind of proxy war major powers, which may not really be a proxy war as during cold war period. It's a new type of proxy wars in the post bipolar period when there is no ideological struggle. In other word, the quest for oil interests, other natural resources and maintaining zones of influence are the roots causes of conflict in Africa. The civilian populations on the continent are the victims, including the rebel groups. To put an end of the conflicts in Africa, the only solution is the sincere cooperation between the super powers. It is true that there are no friends in international relations, but the respect for human life must motivate any action in human relations.

Finally, the state of Africa today, has made the continent to be synonymous with conflicts. Until the world great powers are willing to serve the interests of long-term peace and stability, rather than short-term profit and politics, insecurity as is witnessed in Nigeria, in Mali, Central African Republic, DRC, Eritrea and Ethiopia and other parts of Africa will continue unabated²².

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²² Okpe E., 2014. World Great Power as Facilitator of Conflicts in Africa. Modern Ghana. URL: <https://www.modernghana.com/news/584703/world-great-power-as-facilitator-of-conflicts-in-africa.html> (accessed: 03.10.2016).

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Received: 30.08.2016

For citations: Tafotie, D.J.R., Idahosa, S.O. (2016). Conflicts in Africa and Major Powers: Proxy Wars, Zones of Influence or Provocating Instability. *Vestnik RUDN. International Relations*, 16 (3), pp. 451—460.

КОНФЛИКТЫ В АФРИКЕ И ВЕЛИКИЕ ДЕРЖАВЫ: ОПОСРЕДОВАННЫЕ ВОЙНЫ, ЗОНЫ ВЛИЯНИЯ ИЛИ ПРОВОЦИРОВАНИЕ НЕСТАБИЛЬНОСТИ

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В статье анализируются конфликты, вспыхнувшие в Африке после окончания холодной войны. Особое внимание уделяется роли внешних факторов в процессе эволюции конфликтов и эскалации насилия на африканском континенте. Рассматриваются стратегии великих держав, используемые ими для продвижения своих интересов в Африке. Анализируются соперничество между США и Китаем в Судане, а также влияние Франции на бывшие колонии в сфере установления контроля над стратегически важными энергетическими ресурсами.

Авторы приходят к выводу, что влияние ядерных держав в конечном итоге создает постоянную напряженность, вызывает острые конфликты, оказывает негативное влияние на мир и стабильность континента. Установлено, что конфликты в Африке, как внутригосударственного, так и межгосударственного характера негативно воздействуют на положение африканских стран на международной арене.

Ключевые слова: провокация нестабильности, холодная война, прокси война, зона влияния, конфликты, великие державы, повстанческие группировки, природные ресурсы, Китай.

Дата поступления статьи: 30.08.2016

Для цитирования: Тафотье Д.Д.Р., Идахоса С.О. Конфликты в Африке и великие державы: опосредованные войны, зоны влияния или провоцирование нестабильности // Вестник Российского университета дружбы народов. Серия: Международные отношения. 2016. № 3. С. 451—460.

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