CHINESE WARS IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY: INSIGHTS FOR NIGERIA

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Abstract
The work throws light on a few of China's wars and conflict in the twentieth century, ranging from internal civil war between the Chinese communists party and the nationalist government, to conflicts that resulted from the annexation of Tibet, the Vietnamese and Korean Wars. Employing the Realist school of thought this works analyses the China's rational in employing the instrument of war in the pursuit of its foreign policy and national interest in the twentieth century. These Wars embarked by China had some implications on China. What were the implications and what are the lessons for Nigeria to learn from China's war operation strategy in the twentieth century; these are the questions that would be answered by this work.
Keywords- War, Conflict, China, Nigeria, Twentieth Century

Introduction
Political realists see war as a means to an end, hence Aja Akpuru-Aja (2009) highlights that war involves the use of military force to achieve the ends of national security and national defence in a highly competitive and conflict ridden global environment. Therefore, it is an instrument for national security and defence. Nickerson (2003), defines war as the use of organized force between two human groups pursuing contradictory policies each group seeking to impose its policy upon the other. So here war is seen as a policy instrument, hence Clausewitz posits that war is the continuation of policy by other means. Ashworth (1968) notes that war is a type of armed conflict between nation-states in which populations and resources are rationally and extensively organized for conquest. This by implication means that war is for the purpose of conquest, therefore Deutsch and Senghaas (1971) regard war as a large-scale organized violence, prepared and maintained by the compulsion and legitimacy claims of a state and its government and directed against another state or quasi-state. Furthermore, Barringer (1972) states that war is a policy activity aimed effectively and favourably resolving an ongoing conflict of interest. So war is one of the processes of conflict resolution, others include- negotiation, mediation, conciliation, arbitration and adjudication, nevertheless how successful war can be as a conflict resolution process is debatable. However, war has remained a constant factor in human history. There is of course nothing new about the problem of war. Wars and rumours of war have filled the pages of history. In 1960 a Norwegian statistician with the use of a computer announced that in the 5560 years of recorded human history there have been 14,531 wars and of 185 generations of man's recorded experience only ten have known unsullied peace, (Nwankwo, 2002).

In the twentieth century the incidence of wars has not abated and potentially and sometimes actually, their scale has increased tremendously. Hence China's twentieth century history is filled with various wars some of which would be discussed in this work. These wars embarked upon by China in the twentieth century had various intents and motivations nevertheless their purpose and operational aims succinctly fit into the various definitions of war highlighted above.

The aim of this work is four pronged and they include: to highlight some of the wars embarked upon by China in the twentieth century, discuss the histo-political circumstances and dynamics of the twentieth century Chinese wars, the place of war in China's rise in the twentieth century, as well as the lessons that Nigeria can learn from the Chinese war and conflict experiences.

Theoretical Framework
The Realist Theory
Realism is one of the dominant theories in international relation and it has also been the dominant way of explaining world politics in the last one hundred years and more. According to Ekpe, Abasiattai and Akpan (2012), realism is the view that international politics is driven by competitive self interest. For the realist states are the main actors in the international system because they are legally sovereign actors. The principle of sovereignty means that there are no actors above the state that can compel it to act in a desired way. Thus these realist ideals have been the driving principle of China in its operations in the international system. China's competitive self-interest has been its singular motivation

in its dealings with other actors in the international system, this is mostly because China as a sovereign state and the sole actor in the international system that can determine its own destiny and not any other actor or international institution. China and the United States were allies both during the First and Second World War but after WW II when China's competitive self interest was no longer aligning with the United States posturing it had to take an opposing stance against the United States.

Furthermore, the realist school of thought posits that since there is no supra-national authority in the international system or sovereign body above the state, international politics is characterized by self-help, where states that make up the international political system rely extensively on their military resources to achieve their ends, (Dougherty & Pfaltzgraff, 1981). Therefore, in line with this realist school of thought China over the years has relied on war as a reliable means of self-help when necessary to pursue its foreign policies and achieve its national interest, hence it has fought a number of wars especially in the twentieth century.

Chinese Wars in the Twentieth Century
The military history of china in the twentieth century is quite robust and vibrant. Military conflict has played a key role in the shaping and making of modern China. The 1911 revolution in China ended the millennia-old imperial system in China and then led to a period of military separatism. This is because areas of the country went into the control and influence of some independent war lords/commanders who maintained both military and political control, (Worthing, 2023).

Two political parties known as the Guomindang (GMD)/Nationalist Party and the Chinese Communist Party rose in China in the 1920's. These political parties aimed at taking over political power thus they developed military forces to enable them implement their goals. This thus led to the Chinese civil war which lasted from 1927 to 1949. It was a long war which had a break at some point during the second world war and the war with Japan over the seizure of Manchuria. After the defeat of Japan in 1945 the Chinese civil war resumed which led to the ultimate victory of the Chinese Communist Party in 1949 and thus ushered in a new government in China led by the Communist Party, (Worthing, 2023).

The end of the Chinese civil war was not the end of wars for China rather it was more like foundation or preparation for more wars which China would embark on during the twentieth century. Hence some of the wars/conflict involving China in the twentieth century include the following-
- The Chinese civil war
- The Annexation of Tibet
- The Korean war
- The Vietnam war

Some of these wars were pivotal in positioning China as one of the major powers of the twentieth century.

Histo-Political circumstances and Dynamics of the Chinese wars
The Chinese Civil War
The civil war in China was a war that occurred within the period between August 1st 1927 and December 7th 1949, (Xiaobing, 2012). The communist party won the war and established the Peoples Republic of China. The war was between the Chinese communist party and the Nationalist government in China. The communist party was led by Mao Zedong while the Nationalist party was under the leadership of Kuomintang. The first phase of the war was from 1927 to 1937, during this phase the Nationalist party had the upper hand and controlled most part of China, (Christopher & Pak-wah, 2013). In between the first phase and the second phase of the Chinese civil war which was from 1937 to 1945 there were two key developments that temporarily halted the war, they were the Chinese war with Japan over Manchuria, a region of China and the second world war. Thus during this period China was into three areas, the Nationalist China under the control of the Kuomintang-led government, the Communist China led by Mao Zedong and the areas occupied by Japan. With the help from the allies of the Second World War the Chinese united front was able to defeat Japan and regain Manchuria in 1945, (Alvin, Nan & Dudley, 2001).

As Japan was defeated, the civil war in China resumed. The Nationalist and the communist fought to gain control of the vital resources and population centers in China. During this phase of the war the communists gained the upper hand and took control of mainland China and declared the Peoples Republic of China in 1949, (John King, 1994).

The Annexation of Tibet

Tibet is an autonomous region of China and its capital city is Lhasa. Tibet was to a great extent isolated from other parts of the world in the period before 1950 and not much was done to encourage development and facilitate communication with the rest of the world, (Jian, 2006).

According to Van Schaik (2013), the Chinese had always viewed Tibet as being part of China for centuries, hence after the Chinese civil war in 1949, the Chinese in 1950 declared a mission to liberate Tibet from a repressive regime. So on the 6th of October 1950 the Peoples Liberation Army of China invaded Tibet and having crossed the Jinsha River into Chamdo, an area controlled by Lhasa the army immediately captured the town of Chamdo which led to the total surrender of the Tibetan forces. Hence Tibet was successfully annexed by China, (Shakya, 2012).

Tibet's annexation by China has been subject to immense tension and controversy, as most Tibetans view China's action as a violation of the territorial integrity of a sovereign country, in other words they see China's presence in Tibet as a foreign occupation, (Jian, 2006).

Hence in 1959, Tibetans rose up in revolt against what they viewed as Chinese occupation. The revolt/protest took place in Lhasa the capital city of Tibet and was propelled by anti-Chinese propaganda and separatist agitations. It started as a peaceful protest but clashes quickly erupted allowing the Chinese People's Liberation army to employ the use of force to squash the protest. The ending stages of the revolt involved heavy fighting leading to civilian and military loses and the city of Lhasa was effectively retaken by the Chinese authority, (Van Schaik, 2013).

The Korean War

The Korean War was a war that erupted when North Korea invaded South Korea on 25 June 1950. Both North Korea and South Korea used to be a single entity and was annexed in 1910 by Japan. This annexation lasted for 35 years as the Japanese control over Korea ended in 1945 when Japan surrendered to the allied powers at the end of the Second World War, (Stueck, 2002).

Consequently, Korea was divided into two areas of occupation along the 38th parallel. The North was occupied and administered by the Soviet Union while the South was occupied and administered by the United States. But in 1948 due to the charged situations caused by the cold war the two occupied areas became sovereign states. In the North a communist state known as the Democratic People Republic of Korea was established while in the South a capitalist state known as the Republic of Korea was established, (Stueck, 2002).

According to Cumings (2005), although two states were established, each claimed to be the legitimate authority over all of Korea and therefore none acknowledged the border dividing them as permanent. This situation at their border encouraged volatile clashes between the two countries. It was under this circumstance that the North Korean forces on the 25th of June 1950 crossed the border between the two states thereby starting the war.

Robinson (2007), notes that the United Nation backed by the United States condemned North Korea's actions vehemently and gave an order for the constitution of the United Nations command which was sent to Korea to repel the North Korean Army.

After an initial set back the United Nations force and South Korean Army were able to push back on the North Korean Army and then invaded North Korea. The invasion of North Korea by the United Nations forces was rapid as they quickly moved towards the Yalu River which is at the border with China, this was at the point where China joined the war, (Whelan, 1991). The Chinese forces thus crossed the Yalu River and pressed against the United Nations forces, as a result the United Nationd forces retreated from North Korea. The Chinese along with their North Korean and Soviet allies pressed offensive attacks into South Korea but were subsequently pushed back to positions around 38th Parallel which is the border dividing the two Korean states. The war came to a halt on July 27th 1953 with the signing of the Korean Armistice agreement. The Korean war was a major conflict of the cold war and China's involvement to a great extent played a crucial role in determining its outcome.

The Vietnam War
The Vietnam war occurred for nearly 20 years between the 1950's and the mid 1970's. after Vietnam got her independence from France in 1954 the country was divided into two parts, North Vietnam under the control of Viet Minh while the United States took charge of the military and financial support for South Vietnam, (Eckhardt, 1991). According to Ang (2002), the war broke out when the Viet Cong which was a South Vietnamese common front under the direction of the North started a guerrilla war in the South. Hence, the war was primarily a war fought between North Vietnam and South Vietnam. China, Soviet Union and some other communist states supported North Vietnam. South Vietnam was supported by the United States and her allies. The United States was directly and heavily involved in the war. Thus the cold war was physically fought in Vietnam during those years. The United States suffered heavy losses in the war, according to American Department of Veteran Affairs about 58,220 United States service members died in the conflict. Through the effort of China and her other communist allies by the end of the war North Vietnam and South Vietnam became one country and Vietnam became a communist state.

The Place of War in China's Rise in the Twentieth Century
According to Lorge (2014), all Chinese dynasties were created through immense wars, yet unlike in the West some of those dynasties lasted for three or four centuries. Indeed, ancient Chinese history did prove that war was a key way in forming and sustaining dynasties. Likewise, the twentieth century Chinese history has demonstrated that when leaders skillfully apply the instrument of war they can expand and maintain their territories in the face of both internal and external threats. From 1917 when China joined the First World War it did position itself strategically for both regional and global dominance. Through wars China has both secured its territory, (as it fought and expunged the Japanese annexation of Manchuria) and has also annexed more territories like Tibet and other areas. Through the civil war China by the leadership of the communist party evolved itself, established a new system and asserted its will both in regional and global politics. China was strategic in its involvement in the various wars and conflicts within its region whether it was the Korean War or the Vietnam War, such that its position as a regional power was never eroded but was greatly secured and enhanced. On the other hand the United States involvement in the Vietnam War was filled with immense loses in terms of personnel and influence in the region, to the extent that that particular war has left a soar taste in annals of America's military history.

Although there are other factors that may have contributed to the rise of China in the twentieth century but definitely China's ability to effectively deploy military force remains a prominent factor in its emergence in the twentieth century. Surely the Chinese does not have a special power to wield political power without force and that has made all the difference.

Insights for Nigeria
Nigeria has all the potential and capabilities to become a formidable power within the African continent, just as China is in the Asia-Pacific region. Like China, Nigeria has been involved in a number of wars; however, unlike China, it has not utilized the instrument of war to its advantage.

China fought a civil war of which it utilized as an opportunity for nation-building. The Chinese communist party used the opportunity that victory in the civil war offered to build the Chinese nation in line with the ideals and principles of the communist party, even while contending with the opposition that the United States and the West threw at it. In the case of Nigeria after its civil war, the country entered into a period of oil boom which offered it an opportunity to utilize the enormous resources generated from the oil boom for the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the war torn areas in the eastern part of the country and by that kick start the process of nation-building instead much of the resources were diverted to unproductive ventures or even looted. This is in spite of the federal government's post civil war mantra of Reconciliation, Reconstruction and Rehabilitation. During the Nigerian civil war the slogan of the federal forces was "keeping Nigeria united is a task that must be achieved". The outcome of the war therefore offered the Nigerian government the opportunity to embark on programs and policies that would help heal wounds and unify the country but instead since the end of the civil war successive regimes in Nigeria have done little or nothing to unify the country. Today Nigeria is more divided than it has ever been since its history. Thus the divisive nature of the Nigerian state can never allow it emerge as a dominant power in the continent and the world at large. Therefore the lesson for Nigeria to learn is to ensure that it abides by the ideals and principles that the federal forces enunciated during the civil war which made them fight to keep the country as one, just like the Chinese communist party did after the Chinese civil war.

Furthermore, according to Burkitt, Scobell, and Wortzel (2003), one of the key lessons to be learned from Chinese military operations is their mental disposition toward war. They noted that China apparently lives by the motto, 'It's not whether you win or lose, but how you play the game.' While Western leaders focus on winning statistics and use quantitative data to measure military success, Chinese Communist Party leaders assess success through subjective and qualitative indicators. Effective military campaigns in China are measured by the impact on the Chinese communist party's ability to maintain control. Indeed, these indicators are what guided China in its involvement in wars both within and outsides its region. Truly China has not won all the wars it got involved in nevertheless it has never failed to maintain and sustain its control whether in geopolitics, economy or technology. For Nigeria, it has been involved in various wars in Africa for instance, in places like Sierra Lone, Liberia, Sudan, Congo etc., but its involvement in those wars have been more for showmanship and grandstanding rather than a strategic and calculated posturing for greater influence and control in regional and global affairs. Nigeria has invested heavily in most wars and conflicts in Africa and other places both financially and in human resources but there are no commensurate dividends to enhance it regional and global relevance and posturing. Thus the lesson for Nigeria to learn is to endeavour to use its military interventionist activities more strategically to boost its global relevance and also use it as an avenue to seek for economic opportunities to exploit. China has skillfully utilized its various military operations to assert itself as a global power; Nigeria should emulate such tendencies and try to at least assert itself as a regional power within Africa and the global South.

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