IMPACT OF CORONA VIRUS RESTRICTIONS ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS.
CASE STUDY: KENYA

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Abstract

This thesis aims to investigate the impact of Coronavirus restrictions on international relations. Precisely, this research explores how various strategies undertaken by different governments to control the spread of Covid-19 resulted in diplomatic tensions. The study uses Kenya as a case study. The research will use semi-structured interviews and collect views from ten participants spread in various Kenya’s embassies globally. This thesis relies on various theoretical concepts to help understand the reasons for nations’ decisions to institute Covid-19 restrictions. The major theoretical concepts are realism, Marxism, liberalism, postmodernism, and constructivism. The first section of this thesis provides an overview of the problem and the theories, and how they relate to the current problem. The second part summarizes and describes the operationalization of the theories. Then, the next section explains the study’s methodology, including participants, procedure, data analysis, and interview questions. Afterward, the following section incorporates a review of literature relating to major concepts and theories relating to international relations. Then, the next parts of the thesis present and analyses the findings. The main finding from this investigation is that most countries wanted to protect their populations from Covid-19. Finally, the last section concludes the thesis by noting the challenges encountered and identifying the implication of the investigation.
Key words

International relations, realism, Marxism, liberalism, postmodernism, constructivism, Covid-19 restrictions, diplomacy.
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1 Introduction

1.1 Impact of Corona Virus Restrictions on International Relations

Every global crisis affects international systems, norms, and actions of various countries differently. In this millennium, the September 11 attacks transformed international law and changed how countries relate to each other. The United States blamed Saudi Arabia for not doing enough to prevent the terrorist attacks and fell short of accusing the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia of supporting terrorism. This scenario resulted in a diplomatic spat between the two allies. Phillips (2019) supports the above reasoning by stating that global partners rely on each other to combat global challenges like terrorism and complacency hurts international relations. The financial crisis of 2008 saw the rest of the world blame the G20 countries for one of the financial messes of the millennium. Lastly, in 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic significantly disrupted global operations and caused different global tensions between nations.

After the Second World War, the recent Covid-19 pandemic has caused the most significant shock to global politics and the economy and has considerably impacted international relations. For instance, in trade and economy, the ongoing lockdowns and restrictions on the transportation of goods and people affected how nations conduct business (Socrates, 2020). One notable example is when the United States banned flights and some shipments from China. This situation created a tiff between these trade partners. Yang (2021) notes that this decision exacerbated existing trade issues between the two countries. Besides, the pandemic caused tense diplomatic tensions between states based on countries' response to the virus. Leaders of some countries accused others of not containing the disease effectively. For example, the United States government strongly accused the Chinese government of not stopping the virus, which began in the Wuhan province. In fact, the U.S. blamed China for spreading Covid-19 to the rest of the world. In Brazil, Eduardo Bolsonaro, the former president's son, created a diplomatic spat between Brazil and China when he reposted a
Tweet saying that the Chinese Communist party is responsible for the global pandemic (Sawicka, 2020). In response, the top diplomat in China tweeted that the Bolsonaro family is poisonous to Brazil. Overall, the Covid-19 pandemic resulted in a war of words between countries, causing severe diplomatic tensions.

The global pandemic significantly promoted the nation's first policy, a situation where every country looked out for itself, affecting the quality of international relations. Nearly all countries adopted realist practices, a situation where all governments prioritized looking after its citizens at the expense of international relations. For instance, Covid-19 adversely impacted diplomatic ties around the trade and transportation of medicines and other equipment required to combat the virus. Notably, during the early periods of the pandemic when medical supplies and vaccines were in limited supply due to challenges in supply chains, the United States took most of the world’s supplies (Gereffi, 2020). India banned the exportation of some drugs. Moreover, Germany and France restricted the exportation of vital medical supplies even to the European Union nations. These scenarios demonstrated how countries often adopt realist practices when faced with challenging situations like the one created by the pandemic.

Additionally, the pandemic exacerbated nations' tendency to champion self-interests at the expense of others. Countries closed their borders to neighbouring countries or those perceived to be at high risk of spreading the virus. According to Nguyen et al. (2021), each nation took necessary precautions to protect its citizens from the disease. Chen et al. (2021) and Huang et al. (2022) add that every country adopted protective mechanisms to safeguard its population; however, these strategies bordered on selfishness. For example, America banned flights from China, some E.U. countries, and select African states. In Africa, there were retaliatory actions between Kenya and its neighbours (Uganda and Tanzania) concerning the movement of goods and people and the requirements for negative Covid-19 tests. Each nation accused the other of not doing enough to contain the virus, leading to diplomatic tiffs between formerly good neighbours. Ideally, every
country was justified to implement cautionary measures to protect itself from the virus; nevertheless, Lim (2021) observes that these restrictions resulted in unfair treatment of some nations. The power play between countries affected the nature of conditions each country placed on each other. Notably, western countries adopted restrictive measures against developing states without any retaliation. In contrast, developing nation and developed countries retaliated against one another due to the proximity of their power indices. Overall, the inclination to push self-interests made countries change their association with their neighbours, seriously affecting international relations between states.

Concerning Kenya, the Covid-19 pandemic affected the relations between the East African nation and its regional and global partners. For instance, the U.S., the U.K, and some other western countries restricted flights and the movement of people from Kenya. Locally, Kenya's neighbours and primary trading partners, Uganda, and Tanzania, reacted to Kenya's move to restrict the movement of goods and people from the two nations by retaliating. Consequently, these actions seriously affected international relations between Kenya and its allies. The most notable reason provided by different countries was self-protection from the virus spread; however, the power play between wealthy and developing states equally contributed to the bans.

In this regard, this research aims to highlight the impact of Coronavirus restrictions on Kenya's diplomatic relations with her partners. The premise for this investigation is that international responses to combat and thwart the spread of the virus turned the world upside down and caused tension between countries that had previously had cordial relations. For instance, the European Union banned flights from African and Asian countries from reaching Europe (Suzumura et al., 2020). Moreover, Kenya experienced diplomatic spats with African countries, including Tanzania, Uganda, and South Africa (Munyao and Muturi, 2022). These restrictions created tensions between Kenya and her partners, resulting in serious diplomatic rows. Nevertheless, despite this information being public, no
empirical study has conclusively and comprehensively investigated how Covid-19 restrictions impacted international relations between Kenya and her diplomatic partners. Thus, this investigation aims to fill this gap and provide new insights into the topic and the impact of coronavirus restrictions on international relations between Kenya and her global partners. Although the need to protect internal populations from Covid-19 contributed to Coronavirus limitations, the economic powers of different states guided their restrictive actions against developing countries like Kenya, limiting Kenya's ability to access other foreign markets and causing diplomatic tensions.

1.2 Problem Formulation

The Covid-19 pandemic disrupted the global economy, travel, and security, thereby impacting international relations. As the number of cases and deaths continued to rise, almost all states introduced restrictions on travelling and commerce to contain the disease and slow its spread. Nevertheless, these measures were detrimental to the global and adversely affected international relations. Specifically, the pandemic worsened existing tensions between countries as some governments accused others of not doing enough to help control the virus. Moreover, the "our country first" policy, a situation where every state aimed to protect its citizens without thinking about other nations, created more strains between governments. Notably, countries accused each other of hoarding medical supplies and medicines. Additionally, some governments accused their allies of instituting unfair travel restrictions on them, causing more diplomatic tensions. Thus, the pandemic strained diplomatic relations between states and worsened existing difficulties.

Ideally, much existing literature and news coverage on this topic focuses on the ties between China and the United States and other western countries and neglects developing nations. For instance, no empirical study has uncovered how the pandemic affected Kenya’s relations with the United States. Therefore, this investigation will highlight how restrictive measures
adopted by various nations in response to the Covid-19 pandemic affected Kenya's relations with her international partners.

1.3 Project Objectives & Research Questions

1.3.1 Project Objectives

The Covid-19 pandemic significantly impacted international relations; however, there is limited information concerning the impact of the virus on diplomatic ties between developing countries and their partners. In this regard, this exploration focuses on Kenya and aims to identify the immediate and long-term impact of Covid-19 on its international relations and diplomacy. Simultaneously, this investigation intends to analyse how the pandemic affected trade relations between Kenya and its partners and its participation in international bodies and alliances. Specifically, this thesis will explore how Covid-19 restrictions caused tensions between Kenya and its international partners. Additionally, this study will investigate the diplomatic issues that arose between Kenya and its partners from the rules instituted by various countries during Covid-19. Lastly, this paper will explore how Kenya responded to restrictions placed on it by other nations. The investigation will use semi-structured questions with people with insights in Kenya’s diplomatic relations. The research questions are as below.

1.3.2 Research Questions

1. What were the immediate and long-term impacts of Covid-19 restrictions on international relations between Kenya and her partners?
2. What diplomatic issues arose between Kenya and her partners from the restrictions placed during the Covid-19 period?
3. How can the arising diplomatic tensions caused by Covid-19 restrictions be interpreted using theoretical perspectives such as realism, liberalism, Marxism, post-modernism, and constructivism?
2 Thesis Outline

The next section of this thesis discusses the theoretical framework. Precisely, this part summarizes different theories that will be used in the analytical section. Each theoretical perspective will be summarized in keywords that can be used in analysing the empirical material.

3 Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework helps establish the connection between theory and research findings. For instance, a conceptual model in this study helps explain the reactions of various governments to Kenya during Covid-19. The section below discusses realism, liberalism, Marxism, constructivism, and postmodernism as key theories relating to the topic.

3.1 Realism

Realism is a concept that observes that national interests motivate governments to take necessary actions to safeguard their security and maintain dominance over other nations. According to Gros and Fung (2019), this philosophy focuses on how states interact and perceives global politics as a struggle between countries. Moreover, it can explain various countries' reactions to Covid-19. Realists focus on the constraints on politics resulting in human selfishness or egoism and the lack of a global government (anarchy) (Heywood, 2014). Therefore, the combination of anarchy and egoism and the resulting impact on international politics explains the basis for realism. In short, rationality and state-centrism are core realist ideologies explaining this concept. According to Heywood (2014), globalization is at the centre of realism in explaining its impact on international politics. This author observes that globalization and global systems interconnect to impact how nations relate with each other, affecting the nature of their diplomatic relations. Specifically, realists state that the erosion of Westphalian values like territories and boundaries effects caused by globalization affects the ability of states to wield supreme power. Therefore, according to realists,
globalization influences nations' capacity and ability to maintain dominance over others.

Famous historical thinkers and realists like Niccolo Machiavelli and Thomas Hobbes add that human desires vary widely, affecting their engagement in diplomacy (Heywood, 2014). These realists argue that selfish elements of human nature influence how nations engage in diplomatic relations. Specifically, every government is innately selfish and primarily pushes its own interests and those of the people it serves. Thus, according to the realist viewpoint, people will do what it takes to satisfy their desires, and countries will go to war to defend what they believe is theirs. Overall, individual desires influence how countries relate to each other internationally.

With reference to the Coronavirus restrictions, realism helps us understand the reasons for limiting shipments of air travel from countries regarded as covid-19 hotspots. This concept equally helps us understand why developed countries initially kept all medical supplies for their population. These were protective actions guided by selfish interests. For example, America's move to divert shipments of medical equipment meant for Europe and Canada demonstrated the country's egoistic tendency. Similarly, the U.K.'s ban on flights originating from Kenya was a selfish move swayed by the need to protect its population. Overall, different countries used realism to justify their restrictive policies. Key words: Nations first, national interests, egoism, state-centrism.

3.2 Liberalism

Liberalism is a political theory that can be used to explain international relations and how countries interact with each other. Liberalism is essential in international relations since it stresses the value of personal rights, liberties, and democracy. In essence, this theory looks at how nations collaborate in instituting a global society that ensures wealth and security for all, irrespective of nationality (Gros and Fung, 2019). Moreover, this concept champions limited government involvement and promotes scientific
rationality by believing people ought to be independent of illogical state control (Heywood, 2014). As such, this theory advocates personal and political freedom, constitutionally guaranteed rights, autonomous markets, and democracy. Liberalism also supports individual competition in society and champions market capitalism as the best strategy for promoting people's welfare.

Additionally, liberals advocate for peace, and any action threatening stability is anti-liberal. Burchill et al. (2020) use Kant's argument to reason that laws of nature dictate that people should collaborate in society to attain peace, a state desirable to liberalists. As such, war is irrational and unnatural and goes against the basic principles of human nature. Burchill et al. (2020) use a thread from Rousseau, Kant, and Cobden to Schumpeter and Doyle to reason that undemocratic and militaristic governments create wars for their interests. In other words, the ruling class engineers’ wars to extend their power and wealth and preserve the power of the government. Lastly, wars allow governments to raise taxes and expand control over their citizens.

Liberalism inspires collaboration between states; however, the countries must share legitimate public structures and democratic principles. The mutual recognition of the shared ideals, including the commitment to the rule of law, protection of individual rights, and equal treatment of people, implies liberal democracies have little interest in conflicts. For example, the United Kingdom and the United States have similar ideals and interests, indicating they are unlikely to confront each other. Notably, the two states have collaborated to end terrorism globally and share intelligence on possible sources of terrorist activities. The two nation's involvement in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars and the current support of Ukraine in the battle against Russia is a perfect example of cooperation to achieve common objectives. In general, liberalism advocates collaboration between states, allowing them to achieve common goals.

Regarding the Coronavirus restrictions, liberalism helps show that many countries had a common goal of slowing down the spread of the virus. Countries in Asia, Europe, Africa, and the Americas adopted almost similar
strategies to prevent the virus from spreading. Nations that share borders collaborate to prevent transferring infections from one side of the boundary to the other. For instance, Kenya and Uganda mandated Covid-19 testing at the border points to regulate people's movement. Nevertheless, these restrictions inadvertently interfered with people's rights and freedoms. For example, restricting Kenyan flights from landing in the United Kingdom limited people's independence and affected their ability to participate in free markets. Overall, liberalism highlights an ideal situation of international relations; nevertheless, Covid-19 impacted global cooperation and reduced collaboration between nations, interfering with individual liberties. Key words: democracy, collaboration, autonomy, political freedom, free markets.

3.3 Marxism

Marxism is a theory that highlights economic and power struggles between classes in society. This conception believes that capitalism is society's primary source of conflict (Gros and Fung, 2019). Marxism highlights social conditions and class struggles that influence a country's economic status and actions in international relations. According to Burchill et al. (2020), Marxism, a theory fronted by Karl Marx, that has been at the centre of international politics for a long time and has revolved around competition for resources between independent states and will continue to impact how nations interact. However, some realists like Kenneth Waltz challenged the existing perceptions on impact of Marxism on international relations by saying that there is a need for a more empirical approach to understanding social dynamics and political action. Waltz's work suggested that Marxism and its theories cannot be properly understood without careful examination and analysis of the historical context in which they arose. Overall, this view is sensible, nevertheless, the struggle for power and security between countries has supported the argument fronted by Marxism (Baylis, 2020).

According to Karl Marx, capitalism, a key concept of Marxism, promotes the unchecked exploitation of the proletariat to the benefit of the
bourgeoisie. The proletariat do all the work while the bourgeoisie take all the 
profits. As such, according to Marx, capitalism is the root course of 
inequality and alienation of some people in society, whereby the proletariats 
are at the mercy of capitalistic structures (Burchill et al., 2020). Specifically, 
Marx believed that the forces of production and relations of production 
(those who own means to production and individuals who have to work to 
survive) adversely affect the welfare of low-class members of society. Thus, 
through capitalism, Marxism emphasizes the significance of class struggle 
and economic inequality as significant influencers of international relations. 
Marxist governments focus on perpetuating class struggle and economic 
inequality and often reject the notion of a "capitalist world order" and aim to 
dispute it. Specifically, many nations have attempted to promote economic 
equality and challenge capitalism. Moreover, Marxist governments have 
championed international solidarity between countries to challenge the status 
quo created by capitalism; however, capitalistic ideologies often reign 
supreme.

The core aspect of Karl Marx's materialist ideology is that people 
must first satisfy their most pressing physical and material desires before 
they can help others or do anything else. In principle, this scenario has meant 
that the majority of humanity has had to give up the control of its labor 
power to groups that control production to survive. Besides, due to the 
fundamental reality of relations between the bourgeoisie and the proletariats, 
dominant groups constantly exploit subordinate groups, resulting in class 
conflicts. In fact, Marx noted that class struggle had been the primary source 
of conflict in human history. Consequently, political revolutions have been 
the direct response to injustices created by capitalism.

Regarding the Coronavirus restrictions, the behaviours of capitalistic 
states exposed class differences between wealthy and emerging countries. 
Notably, rich western states could prevent movement from poorer states, yet 
these less-wealthy countries could not reciprocate. Moreover, goods from 
certain developing countries were restricted from moving to the United 
States and other E.U. nations; however, developing countries could not
retaliate, primarily due to a lack of power and capacity. Thus, just as Marx explains, the proletariat (developing countries) were at the mercy of the bourgeoisie (wealthy governments). Therefore, in this study, Marxism helps understand more underlying reasons for the restrictive decisions taken by western nations against Kenya during the Covid-19 pandemic. In short, western countries instituted Covid-19 restrictions against developing states like Kenya because they have the economic and political power to do so.

Key words: capitalism, proletariat, bourgeoisie

3.4 Constructivism

Constructivism is a more modern concept explaining how various characteristics of shared beliefs impact international relations. According to Burchill et al. (2020), constructivists reason that systems of shared ideas and opinions have structural features, and these values influence social and political action. The primary reason constructivists attach importance to structures is that material resources are only meaningful to humans based on the framework of shared knowledge they contain. For example, Cuba and Canada exist next to the United States; however, Canada has a closer relationship with the United States while Cuba is a sworn enemy. The primary explanation for this difference is that conceptions regarding identity, ideology and existing systems of friendship and hostility between America and Canada and Cuba and America result in different meanings. This example shows constructivists prioritize normative and ideational structures because aspects shape political actors' identities. For instance, in the period of Absolutism, Christian monarchies were the primary foundation of practices in European societies. Overall, structures of beliefs, values, and ideas shape the nature of international relations.

Additionally, constructivists reason that comprehending how non-material elements shape actors' (states or governments) identities is critical because individualities create interests that influence actions. In other words, constructivists argue that knowing how actors gain interest in an issue helps explain several international political occurrences that rational theorists
ignore. This process involves understanding the structures of meaning that actors use to orient themself in the world. Also, constructivists accept that agents and structures are mutually interconnected. In essence, normative and ideational frameworks may determine actors' interests and identities; nevertheless, these structures may not exist if the actors lack the know-how on particular subjects. Overall, non-material things equally shape actors' behaviour in international relations.

Constructivists add that normative and ideational structures shape the interests and identities of actors via imagination, communication, and constraint (Burchill et al., 2020). Concerning imagination, constructivism opines that nonmaterial systems influence actors' perceptions of how they should act, their limitations, and the strategies they can embrace. For instance, a leader of an established democracy like the United States will only imagine approaches to promote his power; however, the established norms of democratic governance within the country will determine whether he achieves his expectations. Regarding communication, actors use established forms of communication to justify their actions according to the existing norms of conduct. For instance, a prime minister may abide by the established conventions of executive government, or a government may justify its actions by referring to the established norms or sovereignty. Besides, the government may refer to existing international guidelines if the issue is global. Lastly, even if normative and ideational frameworks fail to impact actors' behaviours by shaping their imagination or influencing their communication, constructivism observes that these structures can constrain their conduct. In general, normative, and conceptual systems significantly impact the interests and identities of actors.

In summary, constructivism is a relevant theory in international relations because it shapes states' beliefs, actions, and values through structures. In other words, this philosophy explains how structures (normative and ideational) on different aspects like power, security, or economic cooperation influence international relations (Gros and Fung, 2019). Concerning this study, this theory helps explain the primary
reasons for partial restrictions against African countries like Kenya. Simultaneously, this theory helps elaborate on differences in collaboration levels between western countries and developing states. In short, western nations limited contact with developing countries simply because the existing ideas, beliefs, and values had different characteristics compared to prevailing associations among Westerners. Key words: structures, ideational, normative.

3.5 Postmodernism

Postmodernism is a theoretical perspective that began in the later stages of the 20th century as a reaction to previous theories. Postmodernism rejects absolutes and focuses on the subjectivity of issues. In other words, there is no single explanation for every situation and each action is subject to different interpretations. This concept emphasizes ambiguity and celebrates the diversity of ideas and choices. According to Burchill et al. (2020), postmodernism criticizes Enlightenment values like reason and truth and instead promotes the significance of the individual experience. In short, postmodernism challenges the idea that there is only one truth or one approach to understanding issues. Instead, it creates multiple perspectives for comprehending a problem.

In international relations, postmodernism helps explain reasons for actions by various states. Specifically, postmodernism challenges the modernist (realism) perception of international relations as the personal pursuit of power, control, wealth, and security. Instead, it challenges people to examine how aspects like culture, identity, and shared values influence how nations interact. Postmodernism emphasizes the importance of comprehending different cultures and identities and incorporating dialogue and negotiation to resolve conflicts between states. Additionally, this concept considers the role of global civil society, which can outdo conventional diplomatic channels to achieve the desired global change. For example, if there is a conflict between China and the United States over Taiwan, involving the United Nations in resolving the dispute is one strategy the two
parties could adopt. Nevertheless, under postmodernism, it would be prudent for both countries to comprehend the cultures and identities of each other to solve the issue. Overall, postmodernism promotes a holistic approach to international relations by noting that it is impossible to resolve international issues through a defined strategy, and one should address any global problem on multiple levels.

This theory helps explain different reasons for restrictions imposed on Kenya by western states during Covid-19. Instead of relying on the other four concepts, postmodernism will provide different perspectives on the problem. For instance, the difference in culture could have influenced the selfish actions of western countries. In general, postmodernism offers unique views into possible problems contributing to the problem under investigation.

Key words: culture, shared values, identity.

4 Operationalization of Theories

This part operationalizes the theories and explains how they relate to the problem under investigation. Besides, the operationalization of theories helps formulate questions for the semi-structured interview. Overall, this part explains how the theories relate to how different countries adopted various Covid-19 restriction measures.

4.1 Realism

Concerning realism, realists argue that states are the major players in the international arena and are often interested in their own security. As a result, governments often pursue their own national interests and struggle for dominance. In other words, national interests and the human nature of selfishness significantly influence governments' actions in international relations. Nevertheless, the pursuit of power usually results in unethical practices and abuse of position. The primary rationale for this scenario is that unlike national politics, where there is authority and law, there is no global government, and international politics is characterized by injustice and
conflict among states. Chrisman (2019) notes that the human nature of being egoistic and self-serving pushes a government to consider its own needs at the expense of another. For example, former United States president, Donald Trump, campaigned on the slogan of "putting America first." Although the primary objective of this catchphrase was to prevent the United States from economic exploitation in the international markets, it was a self-serving statement that pushed other nations' needs to the periphery. Notably, during the Covid-19 period, the United States banned Airlines from several Asian and African countries, including Kenya, to protect its citizens.

However, the existing power imbalance between developing and developed states, Asian and African countries could not retaliate. Moreover, countries like Kenya and other developing states could not demonstrate realism with regard to protecting themselves from Covid-19 originating from "powerful" countries. For example, despite China being the epicentre of the Coronavirus, flights from China were still landing in Kenya at the height of the pandemic, exacerbating the risks of the infection spreading (AA.com, 2020). The above illustrations show that realism is a self-serving concept in international relations. It allowed some states to protect themselves from the virus while others remained vulnerable throughout. Thus, this theory will shape the questions regarding the participants' feelings about the unfair restrictions placed on Kenya by its more powerful and influential allies.

4.2 Liberalism

Liberalism is a social school of thought in international relations that helps explain how Covid-19 restrictions interfered with people’s liberties. Besides, this theory observes that international law prioritizes peace and opposes any action threatening goodwill among states. For example, governments that have agreed to the authority of the International Court of Justice established by the Charter of the United Nations must abide by the Court's determinations even if they disagree with the verdict. Such a situation ensures that peace prevails. Thus, with proper diplomacy, liberalism is a powerful concept that states can adopt to cooperate and attain prosperity.
For example, all members of the United Nations collaborate to ensure that all parties follow international laws. As such, if one country violates existing rules, for instance, by flying a military plane over another country without authorization, the member states must find a proper resolution to the problem.

Additionally, institutional liberalism ensures that states collaborate and engage in activities beneficial to all partners, including trade and exchange of information (Simmons and Goemans, 2021). However, countries must share similar ideals, like commitment to the rule of law and the protection of individual rights, for such an arrangement to work. For example, trade under the European Union is profitable to all parties as member states gain from favourable taxation or free trade. Nevertheless, the restrictions placed by different governments to curb the spread of the Covid-19 virus significantly eroded liberalist practices, limiting individual nations' freedom. Specifically, goods could not move freely and speedily from one region to the other. Moreover, some governments banned passenger flights from areas categorized as "hot zones," thereby limiting people's freedom. For example, the United States' decision to bar flights originating from China from landing in America heightened diplomatic tensions between the two countries. Similarly, the United Kingdom's resolution to restrict passenger flights from Kenya significantly impacted Kenyans' international freedom. All in all, it is worth noting that international collaboration quickened vaccine development and distribution.

In general, applying this theory to the context of the Covid-19 pandemic and international relations reveals that the ensuing restrictions adversely impacted the liberalist ideology, resulting in people being unable to enjoy their freedoms. However, it equally highlights possible cooperation among nation states and global organizations such as WHO. Overall, this theory helps shape questions relating to the impact of Covid-19 restrictions on people's freedoms. Simultaneously, this concept helps explore how limiting liberties affect international relations.
4.3 Marxism

Marxism is useful in explaining the role of capitalism and materialism in global cooperation and how it could have influenced Covid-19 restrictions. Historically, Marxism asserts that the material conditions that humans reproduce dictate the nature of their relationships (Moir, 2019). Thus, from a Marxist point of view, international relations is not just about a government's foreign policy or politicians' actions. Instead, it revolves around the need to survive, reproduce, and develop technologies. As such, Marxism questions the practicality of realism in international politics and observes that such a concept is problematic because they create an illusion that does not exist. Notably, realism argues that each nation's priority is to protect itself, while liberalism supports freedoms in the international arena. The rationale for this argument is that liberalism and realism ignore the realities of regional inequalities and structural imbalances between states. Additionally, the two previous theories overlook the influence of the capitalistic power of different countries on international relations. The interpretation of this scenario is that governments cannot gain equally from international cooperation due to capitalistic differences between them. The social conditions and class differences between individuals in different countries (caused by capitalism) dictate individual country's engagement in international relations and determine how much it benefits.

Concerning the restrictions instituted by different countries at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, nations’ individual interests could have influenced governments' decisions. More prosperous and more economically powerful nations like the United States and OECD states restricted movement from developing states like Kenya. Notably, due to their global influence and economic might, western countries could limit contact with developing countries without fear of repercussions. In contrast, poorer countries could not reciprocate. The rationale for this situation is that retaliating would antagonize their traditional "big brothers" and probably interfere with future access to foreign aid. Marxist perspective supports the above reasoning by stating that unchecked exploitation of the proletariat
states by the bourgeoisie countries results in a skewed association in global engagement. Thus, capitalism induced Marxist ideas during the Covid-19 period and influenced the implementation of the restrictions. In essence, this theory helps develop questions regarding the fairness of Covid-19 conditions and how it impacted international relations between Kenya and its partners.

### 4.4 Constructivism

Concerning international relations, constructivism perceives the world as socially constructed and argues that systems of shared ideas and beliefs have structural features, and these values impact social and political action. Constructivists reason that governments can have several identities and structures; however, these individualities develop through interactions with other actors (Jung, 2019). The identities describe an actor's understanding of self-identity, which shape their interests. For example, the political relationship between the United States and China has been frosty for several years; however, since the two countries share economic interests, they have developed a working arrangement. In developing this working formula, the two countries created shared ideas with unique structural features. Therefore, despite the importance of material resources to both countries, they developed a common framework of shared knowledge, allowing them to overcome their differences and trade. In general, existing structures about shared values, ideas, and beliefs influence the nature of international relations.

Although common interests shape the nature of international relationships, according to the constructivist theory, differences in values and objectives between nations could harm some governments. Notably, a small state's interests significantly differ from that of a large state. Moreover, realist, Marxist and capitalistic beliefs could adversely affect the nature of relations between two states. For example, in the relationship between Kenya and the United States, the two nations share the common idea of promoting prosperity among their people and protecting their citizens; however, the pandemic shifted the nature of their association. Notably, Kenya primarily
focused on its survival and is concerned about providing essential commodities to its people. In contrast, the United States focused more on dominating international political and economic affairs and protecting its people at any cost. Kenya prioritized receiving financial assistance from America, while the U.S. considers Kenya crucial to military stability in the East African region. Although one might view such a relationship as mutually beneficial and constructed along shared beliefs, it raises the problem of anarchy in the international system. Specifically, the structure of shared beliefs changes whenever there is a strain on the relationship between two states.

For instance, at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, large countries did not care about the economic interests of smaller countries and restricted access. For example, passenger flights from the United States were allowed to land in Kenya; however, African airlines could not ferry passengers to America. Besides, upon reaching America, passengers were subjected to strict quarantine rules, while Americans landing in African airports walked to their destinations without taking Covid-19 tests. In essence, the structure of shared beliefs changed during Covid-19, and each country adopted policies and views that favoured it. These examples show that international relations are constructed to benefit the major actors, and poorer nations are at the mercy of their wealthier partners. This theory guides the formulation of questions regarding the role of national interests in Covid-19 restrictions.

4.5 Postmodernism

Postmodernism is a theoretical concept that rejects absolutes and looks at the subjectivity of issues. In international relations, postmodernism refutes claims presented by the liberalist, Marxist, realist, and constructivist theories and argues that every case is different. As such, it would be incorrect to adopt a similar explanation to explain relations or issues between two states. For example, according to the postmodernist view, it would be wrong to assume that the pursuit of power, control, wealth, and security influenced the United States and Canada to limit contact with China at the
height of Covid-19. While the United States may have aimed to establish dominance over its Asian rival, Canada was only interested in securing its people's safety. Therefore, postmodernism allows a person to look at issues in international relations from different viewpoints.

In this study, postmodernism is essential in explaining the reasons for the restrictions placed by other countries on Kenya and seeing the reasons from each nation’s viewpoint. Similarly, this theory helps explain Kenya's own response to Covid-19 and how it impacted international relations. Overall, postmodernism offers more than one explanation for Covid-19 restrictions and how they affected international relations.

5 Previous Research

The analysis below will establish a background of Kenya's association with its regional and global partners. This section will explore how the above theoretical concepts influence Kenya's relations with its international partners. Although the review of each concept will provide a unique picture of international relations, they each conclusively explain the basis of the interactions before the Covid-19 period. The review will examine how various authors have explored these theories to explain how Kenya interacts with its regional and global partners to explain different behaviours in international affairs. This part will also address how these theories have developed as international relations change. Thus, this review will analyse the major ideas of international relations defined above, including realism, liberalism, Marxism, constructivism, and postmodernism. The rationale for this section is to offer background information on existing structures of international relations between Kenya and its neighbours, allowing one to understand the reasons surrounding the Covid-19 restrictions.

5.1 Realism

Available evidence supports the role of realism in explaining Kenya’s relations with its global partners. Otele (2020) investigated this issue by
evaluating the basis of China's relations with African countries, including Kenya. According to this author, discussions on China versus the West, trade with Africa, and foreign direct investments (FDIs) in the continent show a realist viewpoint (Otele, 2020). This view argues that China's economic and geo-strategic interests drive its involvement in Africa. Precisely, the pursuit of natural resources to fulfil its financial objectives and attain security are the major driving factors for China's participation in Africa. For example, China has undertaken massive infrastructural development in Kenya and built thousands of kilometres on loan terms (Wang & Wissenbach, 2019). Besides, China has set up manufacturing plants in Kenya, which form FDIs. While one may look at these actions as beneficial to Kenya, it can be interpreted that China is looking out for its own economic interests. Otele (2020) summarizes this argument by noting that China has an insatiable desire for resources to drive its economic engine as it competes with other global economic powerhouses to assert dominance. Subsequently, China pursues an aggressive foreign policy plan in Africa. For example, China classifies Africa as an "all-weather friend" and respects each nation's sovereignty. As such, China promotes cordial relations with African states all the times without interfering in their internal issues. Lieven (2020) supports the realist viewpoint as the basis of international relations by noting that the United States' relations with African countries like Kenya only serve America's self-interests. Thus, available evidence supports the role of realism in international relations between Kenya and its major partners. 

Juma & Odhiambo (2021) expanded the above discussion by analysing the geo-political factors impacting Kenya's regional foreign policy since 1967. The study used Neoclassical Realism as one of the theories guiding the investigation. The research argued that realist viewpoints have largely influenced Kenya's relationship with her regional neighbours like Egypt and Sudan. Particularly, Kenya has noted that Egypt and Sudan have enjoyed an unfair advantage of the Nile River for decades, and Kenya wants changes to the treaties. The unfair treaties formulated during the colonial era gave Egypt and Sudan exclusive rights over the use of the Nile River water
are a source of concern for states attached to the Nile, including Kenya. This example shows that each nation focuses on serving its own interests, and realism affects Kenya's interactions with its neighbours.

Realism affects how Kenya relates with its international partners in terms of receiving foreign aid and restructuring debts. Amuhaya & Degterev (2019) investigated this concept by examining how foreign assistance acts as a foreign policy tool determining the apportioning of project aid to Kenya between China and Japan. The authors noted that the idea of giving and receiving foreign aid is experiencing notable evolution, prompted by changes to international cooperation. Precisely, some South countries like Japan and China have emerged as new donors, competing with Western nations. These new donors have transformed the previous classical foreign aid approaches by granting assistance with low conditionality, thereby challenging traditional donors (Amuhaya & Degterev, 2019). For example, in Kenya, Japan and China have competed against each other in pursuing development projects as part of their foreign policy approaches. This competition has inadvertently enhanced Kenya's bargaining power and allowed Kenya to access more credit from both countries. Ideally, this example indicates a win-win situation for all countries involved and shows that national interests drive international relations. Each party wants an arrangement that Favors it and allows it to gain more from the association.

Overall, realism shapes Kenya's relations with its international partners. Githii (2021) expanded the relationship between Kenya and its partners by adopting the realist perspective to explore Kenya has historically interacted with Britain. The author undertook a desk study review approach and reviewed relevant literature to note inherent themes. The study found that Kenya and Britain set up diplomatic relations to pursue their individual interests, thereby supporting the realist viewpoint. In fact, the two counties have signed various treaties and conventions to cement the basis of their diplomatic relations. Besides, the two nations periodically redefine their national interests to ensure they get the best out of their interactions. For instance, Kenya's public officers, including doctors, have received training in
Britain, equipping them with skills needed to improve public health. Additionally, Britain has retained its economic interests in Kenya since the colonial era. For instance, Githii (2021) notes that Britain was Kenya's most significant export partner by the end of 2012, accounting for at least 10% of Kenya's total export. Overall, the realist viewpoint explains the nature of relations between Kenya and Britain, a scenario where each party champions its national interests.

5.2 Liberalism

The liberalist perspective also explains how Kenya relates with its international partners through having common goals. In essence, in international politics, liberalism promotes global cooperation between states to ensure each party achieves its material and security objectives while respecting each nation's freedom and democracy. Otele (2020) notes that the liberal view helps explain China's relations with various African states, including Kenya. Precisely, China collaborates with Kenya on matters of peace and security, trade, debt, and FDI (Otele, 2020). The liberal perception of China's involvement in Africa originates from its internal domestic modernization project that sees Africa as a market for China's products. As such, China exports products to African states, including China, to satisfy the demand for manufactured goods. In essence, this arrangement denotes a structural imbalance captured in Marxism; however, since the relations are unconditional, this association meets the criteria of classical liberalism. In short, this instance shows the application of liberalism, whereby China and African countries engage in commerce in a free market to benefit each party. Ideally, the liberal perspective argues that Chinese corporations in the continent can better the markets via the "spin-off effect," a scenario where international firms give business to local corporations, thereby linking them to the global supply chain. Moreover, robust China-Kenya economic ties influence peace initiatives in the continent. The rationale for championing peace is that a stable environment would allow both parties to attain
economic growth. Therefore, liberalism perfectly explains the existing win-win engagement between Kenya and China in pursuing common goals.

Reuben et al. (2022) expanded the discussion on liberalism by studying how Kenya collaborates with its international partners in promoting peace in the region. In the article, Border Security Challenges: a Case Study of Kenya and Somalia Border Relations (1991-2017)," Reuben et al. (2022) explore the security challenges between Kenya and Somalia and note how Kenya has demonstrated commitment to liberal ideals of peace and security. Ideally, Kenya hosts thousands of refugees from Somalia at the Dadaab refugee camp, a region closer to the KenyaSomalia border. The refugees have created suspense among local communities, resulting in high levels of violence targeting this group. Additionally, members of the terrorist groups periodically cross into Kenya to commit atrocities, including abductions and terrorist attacks. These activities can cause tension between two nations.

Nevertheless, Kenya has collaborated with Somalia and its Western allies, including the United States, to pursue regional peace. For example, after repeated abductions by the terrorist group, Kenya's military invaded Somalia to pursue the extremists who had taken over Somalia (Al-Bulushi, 2019). While this decision might appear to be serving self-interests, it equally helped stabilize the civilian government in Somalia and promote democratic ideologies. Thus, this example shows that Kenya has previously adopted liberalist ideologies to engage its regional and international partners.

Additionally, Kenya and the United States have long-standing mutual interests in the East African region and regularly collaborate on economic and security issues. The United States views Kenya as the most dynamic economy in East Africa and sees it as a financial and transportation hub (U.S. Department of State, 2022). Notably, the U.S. – Kenya strategic trade and investment partnership is a valuable aspect of the relationship between the two countries. Besides, the United States often supports Kenya's military, Kenya Defence Forces (KDF), in its war against the terrorist group in Somalia (al-Shabaab).
Overall, the convergence of goals explains the nature of America's relations with Kenya.

5.3 Marxism

Marxism, and its primary key element, capitalism, equally explain Kenya's relations with its international partners. Ngendakurio (2021) used the case study of Kenya to understand barriers to fair economic development in Kenya and how power and globalization caused by capitalism affect Kenya's relations with its international partners. The researcher's interest in the subject was sparked by a lack of interest in understanding why poor nations do not benefit much from the global market compared to the dominant partners. The primary explanation for this phenomenon was unregulated capitalism that only benefits the elite few. Okumu & Fee (2019) support this reasoning by stating that unregulated capitalism in the international market adversely harms players with limited financial capacity. For example, China and India have progressively expanded their influence in Africa; however, they have gained more from trade engagements than their African partners. Ngendakurio (2021) notes that Chinese investment in Africa quadrupled between 2005 and 2015. Precisely, China's export to Kenya in 2015 was $919 million, a 30% increment from the previous year (Okumu & Fee, 2019). Similarly, India made huge profits from the boom of Kenya's telecommunication industry, beginning in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Dube (2019) highlights the disparity in trade between African countries and the major foreign players in the continent (U.S. and China). Precisely, Dube (2019) noted that America's gross domestic product (GDP) is fifteen times more than the GDP of all African states. Besides, China's GDP is seven times more than all African countries. Overall, Marxist perspectives on international relations theory explains unfair trade engagement between Kenya and her global partners.

notes that globalization and the spread of capitalism have significantly increased workers' economic vulnerability. Specifically, exploiting local workers by providing low wages and excluding local corporations from the international market substantially contributes to unequal access to wealth and resources in global trade. Overall, the issues of exploitation and inclusion are interlinked, and capitalism is the primary source of inequality.

In essence, one might expect economic globalization to enhance international competition and boost global productivity, resulting in high wages; however, the lack of regulation makes this dream impossible. Specifically, the absence of an active and effective civil society capable of monitoring global organizations and ensuring they distribute profits fairly with their workers means the proletariat will continue being exploited to benefit the bourgeoisie. Zafirovski (2019) notes that unregulated plutocratic capitalism results in exploitation in contemporary societies. For example, in the Kenyan context, local businesspersons find it challenging to engage in high-level commercial activities because they cannot compete with wealthy and technologically advanced foreign traders (Ngendakurio, 2021). The rationale for this assertion is that wealthy international corporations continue to be profit-driven and can easily attain their fiscal objectives at the expense of the weak in the same industry. This kind of inequality of opportunity expands the class divide and polarizes vulnerable actors. Such a situation is not ideal; nevertheless, it is the reality, and Kenya is a victim of unfair economic practices in international engagements with its trade partners. Therefore, from this review, it is correct to conclude that Kenya has been a victim of unfair capitalistic practices in its engagement with its international partners. Overall, capitalism exacerbates existing hegemonic and antagonistic relations between proletariat and bourgeoisie states.

5.4 Constructivism

Kenya's relations with its international partners can be studied/understood in a constructivist perspective. Jureńczyk (2022) exposed how constructivism influences Kenya's relations with the United States.
through historical elements and convergence of strategic objectives in the East African region. Jureńczyk (2022) wanted to know if the connections are friendly and durable or if they are essential for both parties. Additionally, the author wanted to determine if good governance and the promotion of democratic values influence the interaction between these states. The findings revealed that the convergence of democratic ideologies and goals in the East African region construct the relations between Kenya and the United States. For example, both nations aim to ensure the region is stable by fighting terrorist groups in Somalia, especially al-Shabaab. Overall, constructivism shapes Kenya's international relations with its global partners like the United States. A publication by the United States Department of State affirmed the role of democracy in constructing America's relations with Kenya. The United States established diplomatic ties with Kenya in 1964; however, the two countries became closer after Kenya's 2002 democratic handover and improvement of human rights (U.S. Department of State, 2022). Notably, the two countries often hold an annual dialogue focusing on many issues, including democracy and governance. Ideally, tribal-based political divisions in the country, corruption, and disregard for the rule of law have undermined Kenya's democracy; nevertheless, the United States is still willing to retain Kenya as a critical partner in the region (U.S. Department of State, 2022). Overall, democracy is the primary construct of Kenya's relations with the United States.

5.5 Postmodernism

The postmodernism viewpoint equally explains how Kenya connects with its regional and international partners. Ideally, the postmodernist outlook challenges people to examine how culture, identity, and shared values impact how countries interact. Were (2022) stressed this point by looking at how shared identity influences infrastructural development in East Africa. Were (2022) postulated that the infrastructural development in the East Africa Community (EAC) region involving Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania
demonstrates postmodernism that aims to fast-track regional integration to achieve connectivity. The countries have a shared identity of seeking development. In essence, the renewed Vigor by the EAC leaders to implement high-impact infrastructural development projects is essential in promoting national development and interconnectivity between the three states. Were (2022) notes that the energized program of action is part of the recovery plan that aims to propel Africa to further heights of development. Overall, postmodernism helps shows how Kenya and its neighbours pursue infrastructural projects to improve their connectivity.

Were (2022) adds that infrastructural development in the EAC original states promotes transport synergy between the three nations, allowing them to match some global standards. In other words, the leaders' deliberate investment in large infrastructures is part of the region's renaissance, allowing the three countries to take their correct position on the neoliberal global scene (Were, 2022). Besides, by focusing on constructing massive infrastructures, Kenya and the other nations will overcome the inherent "Afro pessimism" narrative, a negative perception of Africa by Western countries. Therefore, from a globalist viewpoint, a well-functioning infrastructure in East African economies will enhance Kenya's participation in the global market. This approach is a normative way of thinking, and it deviates from the realist viewpoint by focusing on the shared identity between the three countries. Ideally, past neo-colonial forces have ensured little coordination between Anglophone and francophone countries in Africa. Moreover, the lack of connectivity between neighbouring nations has reduced collaboration between African countries. Overall, a postmodernist viewpoint focusing on shared identities explains how Kenya interacts with its regional partners.

In summary, the theories of international relations offer a valuable framework for comprehending the dynamics of international politics. The above analysis has established a background of Kenya's association with its regional and global partners. Although the review of each concept provides a unique picture of international relations, they each conclusively explain the
basis of the interactions before the Covid-19 period. Thus, comprehending these interactions in the review offers a comprehensive understanding of the restrictions during the Covid-19 period.

6 Discussion

The findings show that realism played a key role in influencing Kenya's formulation of its Covid-19 response policy. The answers revealed that countries emphasized protecting their self-interests and they implemented the “us first” policy to protect their citizens. Besides, the same theoretical concept explains the reasons for the restrictions placed by other countries on Kenya. Simultaneously, realism explains the reasons for Kenya's reactions and the need to maintain diplomatic relations even in the face of these issues. Kenya realized that all countries had a right to protect its own people. Thus, even if these restrictions seemed unfair, Kenya’s officials understood the underlying reasons. One participant said, “We did not like it (the travel ban), but we understood.” “Moreover, they are our good trade partners and good friends, and overreacting to this issue would impact the existing bilateral relations.” In essence, realism argues that national interests motivate how governments relate internationally, as each nation takes the necessary steps to maintain its security while dominating other countries (Gros and Fung, 2019). Thus, according to the data, some countries adopted strict Covid-19 restrictions to prevent travellers from Kenya from spreading the virus. Similarly, Kenya imposed its own versions of movement restrictions to control the disease locally. Moreover, Kenya did not appreciate the travel bans imposed by its international partners since it wanted its people to continue engaging in international trade. Lastly, Kenya ensured it maintained diplomatic relations with its international partners irrespective of the travel bans to protect its previous economic interests. These examples imply that countries' national interests were the primary motivation for instituting Covid-19 restrictions. Baylis (2020) supports this reasoning by stating that a nation's private interests often trump other needs in international relations and is usually the focus of most bilateral
discussions between states. Overall, realism influenced governments' behaviour during and after the Covid-19 period.

The liberalist perspective explains the impact of Covid-19 restrictions on Kenyans' freedoms. This theory champions personal freedom and democracy and pushes for collaboration between states on common public structures (Simmons and Goemans, 2021). Data from the study reveals that the Covid-19 restrictions interfered with Kenyans' liberties as they could not travel to some countries for business or personal reasons. Some respondents reason that the guidelines were unjustified. Nevertheless, some participants support the restrictions since they helped contain the virus. Additionally, regardless of the Covid-19 restrictions placed on Kenya, Kenya still maintained constructive diplomatic relations with its international partners. Simultaneously, Kenya collaborated with its global allies to resolve issues arising from Covid-19. These instances imply that despite the impact of Covid-19 restrictions on people's freedoms, existing public structures allowed Kenya and its allies to maintain diplomatic relations during and after the pandemic. In essence, the participants argued that maintaining diplomatic relations was more important to Kenya than retaliating because it guarantees future collaboration on diverse issues. Retaliating would have strained the relations.

Marxist ideologies, including capitalism and the unequal relationship between proletariat and bourgeoisie, were at play during the Covid-19 period and partly contributed to the formulation of Covid-19 restrictions against Kenya. According to this philosophy, dominant groups can exploit subordinate groups without any serious repercussions (Burchill et al., 2020). The findings from the study revealed that wealthy Western countries could impose travel bans on Kenya without any consequence; however, Kenya could not reciprocate. Some respondents believed Kenya's low socio-economic status made it vulnerable to travel and trade restrictions from Western states. In contrast, other respondents did not believe Kenya's economic status made it vulnerable to travel restrictions. While this argument points to the role of national interests and realism in shaping the
formulation of Covid-19 restrictions against Kenya, it equally implies that countries instituted Covid-19 restrictions against a developing state like Kenya because they have the economic and political power to do so. The findings reveal a limited impact of culture on the institution of Covid-19 restrictions against Kenya. The only cultural aspect inherent in the study is the friendly attitude of Kenya towards its international partners. Additionally, the data shows that diplomacy and negotiations could have helped resolve the diplomatic tensions that arose during the Covid-19 period between Kenya and its partners. In fact, most respondents stated that Kenya would employ similar strategies in the future to address any arising diplomatic challenge. Thus, from a postmodernist viewpoint, it is correct to conclude that Kenya's cultural identity partly influenced its reactions to Covid-19 restrictions. Moreover, from a constructivist perspective, it is right to conclude that culture and diplomacy shaped how Kenya related with its global partners. In short, the research revealed Kenya to be a friendly country that prioritizes maintaining diplomatic relations even when its global partners.

7. Design, Method, Material, & Data Analysis

7.1 Research Design

This qualitative investigation will use semi-structured interviews to collect data from selected participants. The study will have ten participants who will be purposefully sampled from the embassies. Precisely, the investigation will target individuals holding senior positions, including consular and diplomatic attaches. Data collection will occur at the embassies or public locations chosen by the respondents. The sections below describe these aspects in more detail.

7.1.1. Participants

This exploration investigates the impact of Coronavirus restrictions on Kenya's diplomatic relations with her partners. The participants for the semi structured interviews to be part of the study will include purposefully
selected participants from individuals working in diplomatic installations, including embassies, high commissioners' offices, consulates, and Kenya's foreign affairs ministry. The primary inclusion/exclusion criteria is that the participants must have been at work during the Covid-19 period and have valuable insights on diplomatic relations. This targeting will allow the researcher to collect rich information answering the research questions. The study targets 10 participants. The rationale for having a small sample size is to allow the researcher to have a close relationship with the respondents, allowing the investigator more time to engage in deep conversations and collect high-quality data (Klar & Leeper, 2019). Thus, a sample size of ten persons from different embassies will be sufficient and allow the researcher to gain deeper insights into the impact of coronavirus restrictions on diplomatic relations between Kenya and her partners.

7.1.2. Sampling

The investigation will employ a purposive sampling technique and target individuals in the diplomatic sphere. Precisely, the research will recruit participants from Kenya’s embassies in the U.K., the U.S., China, Uganda, Tanzania, and South Africa. Additionally, the researcher will collect data from senior representatives in Kenya's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The primary reason for employing purposive sampling is that it allows the researcher to target individuals with rich information concerning the issue under investigation (Klar & Leeper, 2019). For example, targeting senior persons in these embassies will allow the study to collect relevant approaches and in-depth information about the intrigues of the restrictions during the pandemic period. Overall, purposive sampling will enable the researcher to gather appropriate information concerning the problem under investigation.

7.1.3 Data Collection Procedure

The investigator will employ pilot interviews to identify the most appropriate representatives from the diplomatic institutions to include in the
investigation. The investigator will aim to map out persons with background knowledge concerning diplomatic relations between Kenya and her partners. This process will also capture the participants' awareness of their countries' restrictions towards Kenya and the impact of these limitations.

The study will incorporate two primary inclusion criteria to select the final participants. First, the candidates must be part of the larger diplomatic community and be attached to the embassies, high commissioners' offices, consulates, and Kenya's foreign affairs ministry. Secondly, they must have been working during the Covid-19 period. For instance, the study will avoid participants who were on annual or parental leave because they might have missed some critical information. Additionally, the study will aim for an equal number of men and women; however, obtaining gender balance is not a high priority since this investigation primarily focuses on diplomatic relations, not gender. In essence, these inclusion criteria will ensure the study focuses only on information-rich participants. Overall, ten individuals will participate in the research and answer the semi-structured interviews.

The semi-structured interviews will take place between April and early May 2023. The data collection activities (semi-structured interviews) will occur at the participants' workplaces or locations they prefer. For instance, the researcher will be okay with open places like open restaurants and parks. Each interview will require between 20 to 30 minutes to complete. After the investigator shall have selected her ten preferred participants, no extra candidates will be included in the study, even if some people decide to leave. Moreover, even if the researcher is unable to locate some participants to clarify a statement, she will not recruit more candidates. Instead, the researcher will assess the validity and value of the collected information to decide if it is essential to the investigation.

The interviews will primarily occur in English; however. The researcher will guide and moderate all the interviews and write all the proceedings. Next, the investigator will verify the notes to ensure they are accurate.
7.1.4 Summary of Findings/Presentation of Informants

Concerning the demographic questions, majority of the participants are Kenyans and work in Kenya's foreign embassies. Most respondents are older than 35 and hold senior positions at the embassies. For example, the participants work in consular, cultural, economic, trade relations, administration, and legal affairs departments. Additionally, all the respondents were in their countries of posting when Covid-19 first broke out in 2020. Lastly, all the participants indicated that Kenya's policy in response to Covid-19 was to protect the local population from contracting the virus.

Regarding coronavirus restrictions placed on Kenya by other countries, all the respondents stated that travel bans were the main policy adopted by Kenya's international partners. Additionally, some noted that some countries insisted on negative Covid-19 tests before travelling and subsequent quarantine upon arriving. The majority of the participants stated that the need to protect local populations from the virus was the primary reason for the restrictive policies. For example, one respondent said, “Covid-19 was killing people and the government had to swiftly intervene to save lives.” However, some respondents said these restrictions were malicious because they selectively targeted developing countries like Kenya. Notably, one participant said, “Although some countries wanted to protect their populations, they were unfair towards Kenya because some European nations like Italy had more Covid-19 cases than Kenya, yet they were not subjected to restrictions.” Simultaneously, the above data reveals that Kenya was unimpressed by these restrictions and publicly denounced them while privately asking the respective countries to reconsider their decisions. Precisely, Kenya viewed these restrictions as disrespectful since it had instituted any restrictions against these countries. Moreover, the respective countries did not inform Kenya before imposing the bans. The main reason for Kenya's reaction, according to the data, was to allow Kenyans to continue traveling outside the country freely. Nevertheless, despite Kenya's reactions to these restrictions, there was no damage to existing bilateral relations because normal contact resumed once the worst phase of the
pandemic had elapsed. One participant said, “These restrictions were unjust; however, the two countries have good relations, and there is no need to damage our association over this issue.” Lastly, all the respondents said that Kenya embraced diplomacy and negotiations to maintain diplomatic relations with countries that had imposed Covid-19 restrictions on Kenya. These strategies were effective and helped maintain and improve ties between Kenya and its partners. The participants believed that Kenya would gain more from maintaining bilateral relations instead of retaliating and risk escalating the tensions.

Concerning the impact of Kenya's socio-economic status on the decision to impose travel bans on Kenya, there were mixed responses. Some participants believed that Kenya's low economic position in comparison to Western countries influenced the restrictions. Others believed that this aspect did not influence the restrictions, and countries just wanted to protect their populations. Simultaneously, some participants believed Kenya's low economic status made it vulnerable to travel and trade restrictions from Western countries, while others reasoned that this aspect was not applicable during the Covid-19 period. For instance, the participant from Kenyan embassy in the United States alluded to differences in economic power as an influencing factor to the Covid-19 restrictions, while the one in China did not consider this issue applicable. Perhaps the respondents were influenced by resident’s countries views of bilateral relations.

Regarding the impact of the Covid-19 restrictions on Kenya, most of the respondents stated that the travel bans limited Kenyans' freedom of travel, and the control measures were unjustified. Nevertheless, a few participants reason that the restrictions were justified because they helped contain the virus. Besides, since the world was under lockdown, Kenyans did not need to travel, hence the justification. Nevertheless, despite the different opinions on the justification of the guidelines, all participants agreed that the restrictions did not adversely harm or change diplomatic relations. Lastly, all the respondents stated that Kenya actively collaborated with its global partners to solve issues arising from Covid-19. For instance,
one participant said, “Kenya cooperated with South Africa to limit the spread of Covid-19 between the two nations.”

Concerning the effect of culture, all participants denied the role of culture in influencing the formulation of Covid-19 restrictions against Kenya. Instead, the majority noted that the desire to protect internal populations from the virus was the primary reason for imposing travel bans on Kenya. Additionally, most participants observed that Kenya’s friendliness was the dominant cultural identity element that shaped how it related with its global allies during the Covid-19 period. Lastly, all the respondents agreed that the need to protect citizens from Covid-19 was the primary reason for the restrictions.

Lastly, all the participants agreed that Kenya's international partners should have adopted more diplomatic practices to address challenges arising during the Covid-19 period. Instead of imposing travel bans on Kenya, the countries should have had discussions with Kenya on the best way to resolve the issues. Finally, all the participants stated that diplomacy, negotiations, and arbitration where the most useful systems Kenya would employ to address international disputes similar to the one caused by Covid-19.

7.1.5 Ethics

The researcher will voluntarily recruit participants into the project by informing them of the study's aims and processes. The investigator will tell them their options to opt out of the interview at any time and require them to sign informed consent forms. Finally, the researcher will seek authorization from the institutions before collecting data from the authorized selected individuals. Before starting the discussions, the interviewer will brief the participants about the study's objectives and require them to sign consent forms. Afterward, the researcher will assign a unique numerical code to each participant before starting the interviews to ensure anonymity during the entire process. These approaches will ensure the study abides by research ethical standards.
7.2. Method

The primary data collection material for this investigation will be interviews with open-ended questions. The quizzes will focus on various aspects relating to the Covid-19 restrictions on Kenya. The above theories will guide the formulation of the questions. Besides, the researcher will follow the methodology recommended by Galletta (2013) to design the questions. These steps include identify the interview’s purpose, develop a list of topics to investigate, create open-ended questions to elicit detailed responses and structure the questions in a logical order. Next, the investigator will cross-check all answers to ensure they relate to the issue under review. For instance, if some responses do not correspond to the questions or Covid19 restrictions, the researcher will consider them outliers and omit them.

7.3. Data Analysis

This investigation will adopt the constructivist grounded theory approach. This strategy is founded on the constructivist philosophical model, whereby a researcher collaborates with the participants to find meaning to a phenomenon (Metelski et al., 2021). This approach's primary benefit is allowing informants to share their experiences. For instance, through this methodology, the researcher will discover issues relating to diplomatic relations before Covid-19 he was unaware of. Additionally, the investigator may identify newer issues that may impact diplomatic ties in the future.

Data analysis in this study will be thematic, whereby the researcher will identify inherent themes in the investigation and discuss them step-by-step. The theories in the theoretical framework will help shape the themes. For example, if the findings reveal that countries’ self-interest shaped their Covid-19 policies, the researcher might arrange similar ideas under the theme of realism. Moreover, to determine the common ideas, the investigator will write down the data and employ line-by-line coding to arrange the findings. Line-by-line involves reading the research text line-by-line and coding each line or paragraph with a brief description or label that captures
the key theme or idea of the text (Hall & Steiner, 2020). This method allows researchers to identify patterns and themes that can help them develop a better understanding of the data. The coding process will make it easy to arrange the fragmented data and compare the participants' answers. Besides, the researcher will rely on prior knowledge of diplomatic relations, including how personal interests shape international interactions, to identify and arrange themes. For example, the global power imbalance between developed and developing states will help develop the theme of "unfair restrictions." Overall, a thematic analysis will allow the author to make sense of the participants' responses international partners treat it unjustly.

8. Thesis Writing and Conducting Interviewing Challenges

8.1 Writing Thesis

My primary challenge while writing this thesis was choosing the target population for my investigation. In essence, selecting the appropriate participants is critical to an investigation as it helps find the right information to answer the study questions. Nevertheless, I found it challenging to decide which group of participants would help me to investigate the impact of coronavirus restrictions on diplomatic relations. The rationale for this reasoning is that Covid-19 restrictions did not affect all countries equally, and I had to select the one which bore the worst brunt of the restrictions. Besides, I had to select a country with several representations globally to have diverse views. Moreover, since international relations and diplomacy are sensitive topics and not many people would openly discuss issues affecting their relations with other countries, I had to choose an accessible country whose representatives would openly talk about the topic. Lastly, choosing who to interview was equally difficult because not diplomatic attaches have the right information, and not all were at work during the Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, I had to brainstorm and conduct extensive research, which was extremely tasking. Overall, narrowing down my target
country and population and selecting the right group of respondents was a significant challenge during the thesis writing process.

8.2 Conducting Interviews

As you know my interview was both physical and online, the primary challenge I encountered while preparing and conducting the interviews was contacting the participants and ensuring they remained committed to the project. Selecting the right respondents is more important in qualitative research studies, where the researcher seeks a deeper understanding of an issue. The rationale for this assertion is that the investigator only has a few individuals to collect data from, and if some drop out or do not commit, the quality of the study will be compromised. Moreover, it would force the researcher to look for other respondents, which would slow down the entire thesis writing process. For example, it was important in this study to choose individuals with the right information on how international relations work and how banning flights from another country could cause a spat. As such, it was prudent to focus on senior individuals in Kenya's diplomatic installations in different parts of the world. However, getting this class of employees to participate in the research was challenging, as many declined my interview requests owing to the sensitivity of the discussion. Nevertheless, I remained persistent and managed to persuade ten senior officials to participate in the project.

The other notable challenge I experienced when conducting the interviews concerned having a short time to conduct the interviews and the unavailability of the respondents. My participants were found in different parts of the globe, and many of them were busy and could not create more time to discuss the issues deeper. Besides, due to time differences, I had to effectively plan with the participants and ensure we agreed on the right time. However, even after agreeing with the respondents on the appropriate time, some postponed the meetings. This process was tedious and time-consuming because I had to stay up at night to reach the participants. For example, I had to wait for over two weeks to speak to senior Kenyan embassy officials in
China and in South Africa because they had tight schedules. This process was tiresome; nevertheless, I persevered and collected the data. In general, the unavailability of the respondents and the short time to conduct the interviews were other notable challenges encountered during the interview process.

Conclusion

The Covid-19 pandemic was a life-threatening virus that caused a lot of deaths and disruptions globally. In response, many countries instituted movement restrictions internally and internationally to protect their populations. However, controlling people's movements adversely impacted other nations, affecting international relations. Kenya was one of the many countries affected by travel bans imposed by some of its Western and Asian allies. The "our country first" policy meant that Kenyans could not freely move around the world for business. For example, the United States and the U.K. instituted strict movement restriction measures against selected countries, including Kenya. This situation caused tensions between Kenya and its global partners because Kenya perceived such measures as extreme and unwarranted. Nevertheless, Kenya prioritized maintaining diplomatic relations and downplayed these restrictions. This paper has explored the impact of Coronavirus restrictions on Kenya's diplomatic relations with her partners using five major international relations theories: realism, Marxism, liberalism, postmodernism, and constructivism. With realism as a theoretical perspective, we can see how national interests and the need to maintain dominance over other countries influenced Kenya's international allies to ban passengers from Kenya. Simultaneously, realism has helped explain Kenya's decisions to impose its own Covid-19 restrictions and reactions to the bans. Through the lens of liberalism as a theoretical concept, we can see how the Covid-19 restrictions limited people's freedoms and how Kenya collaborated with its global partners.

Using Marxism as a theoretical concept, we can see how differences in socio-economic statuses impacted the decision by Western states to ban
flights from Kenya and limit trade. Simultaneously, this theory has focused on the political and economic powers of bourgeoisie countries over proletariat countries in formulating Coronavirus restrictions. Notably, some participants believed that Kenya was a victim of economic inferiority during the pandemic period. Postmodernism has focused on the impact of culture on Covid-19 restrictions on Kenya, while constructivism has looked at different structures or systems that shaped Kenya's international relations during the Covid-19 period. The findings reveal that national interests were significantly at play during the Covid-19 era, and most countries instituted coronavirus restrictions to protect their populations. Also, the results indicate that realism and the need to put countries’ interests first shaped Kenya's reactions to Covid-19 restrictions. Additionally, the data reveals that Kenya's low socio-economic status partly influenced the decisions by its Western allies to impose travel restrictions against it. Moreover, the findings reveal that the coronavirus restrictions adversely interfered with Kenyans' freedoms; however, they did not damage existing relations. In fact, Kenya collaborated with its international partners to find solutions to the issues caused by Covid-19 restrictions. The data also revealed that culture played a small part in shaping Kenya's reactions to the Covid-19 restrictions, allowing it to maintain diplomatic relations. Lastly, the findings revealed that Kenya has a well-defined system of diplomacy that it can use to resolve similar issues in the future.

This investigation has answered all the research questions. First, the research has shown that the restrictions created tensions during the Covid-19 period; however, these impacts did not last long. Additionally, this investigation has revealed that international relations theories, including realism, liberalism, Marxism, post-modernism, and constructivism, can help interpret the tensions caused by Covid-19 pandemic. However, this thesis has shown that developing countries are vulnerable to “bullying” from developed states due to economic differences between them. Thus, future
research should investigate how developing nations can overcome this issue and enhance the quality of their relations with their international partners.

The implication of this study is that diplomacy is an important tool for resolving diplomatic tensions caused by calamities like the Covid-19 restrictions. In essence, international disputes can damage international relations between countries; however, by engaging in diplomatic processes, countries have an opportunity to identify the root causes of the tension, develop a shared understanding of the situation, and work together to find mutually beneficial solutions. Moreover, through diplomacy, countries can also build trust and foster collaboration to create a long-term cooperative relationship that can prevent future tensions. Furthermore, diplomacy and constant negotiation can help countries avoid the risks associated with more aggressive approaches, such as economic sanctions or ending diplomatic contacts. Ultimately, diplomacy is an effective way to promote peace, stability, and economic prosperity in an increasingly interconnected world, allowing all parties to gain.

The impact of COVID-19 restrictions on international relations in Kenya has been significant. Here is a summary of some key points: Travel Restrictions: The Kenyan government imposed strict travel restrictions to control the spread of the virus. International flights were suspended, and borders were closed, leading to a decline in the number of people traveling to and from Kenya. This had an immediate impact on international relations as it limited the movement of people and disrupted business and diplomatic engagements. Economic Impact: The restrictions resulted in a decline in tourism, which is a major source of foreign exchange in Kenya. With the closure of national parks, hotels, and other tourist attractions, many international tourists cancelled or postponed their trips. This, in turn, affected the country's overall economic growth and strained its foreign relations. Diplomatic Engagements: The pandemic forced the cancellation or postponement of many planned international conferences, summits, and meetings that Kenya was scheduled to host or participate in. These events
serve as platforms for diplomatic engagements and cooperation between countries. The disruption of such events hindered Kenya's ability to engage with international partners effectively and slowed down progress on various agreements and initiatives. Aid and Assistance: Internationally, Kenya received aid and assistance to combat the effects of the pandemic. However, the restrictions made it challenging to coordinate and distribute this assistance effectively. Travel limitations and logistical challenges posed hurdles in receiving and distributing medical supplies, equipment, and financial support from international partners. This highlighted the importance of efficient international cooperation and coordination. Regional Collaboration: Within the African continent, Kenya actively participates in regional collaborations and organizations such as the East African Community (EAC) and the African Union (AU). The pandemic has emphasized the need for closer collaboration among member states to address common challenges. However, with restricted mobility and limited physical meetings, the ability to engage and contribute effectively has been hindered.

Overall, the COVID-19 restrictions have impacted international relations in Kenya by limiting travel, disrupting economic activities, hampering diplomatic engagements, and highlighting the importance of international cooperation. However, efforts are being made to adapt to the new normal and explore alternative means of engagement such as virtual meetings and digital diplomacy.
9 References


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Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview Questions

1. What is your country of birth?
2. How long have you stayed in this country?
3. How old are you?
4. How long have you worked in this position?
5. What department do you work in?
6. Were you in-country when Covid-19 first broke out?
7. What was your country’s policy in response to Covid-19?
8. What coronavirus restrictions did other countries place on Kenya to curb the spread of Covid-19? In your view, what motivated these restrictions?
9. How did Kenya react to the restrictions? In your view, what motivated these reactions?
10. How did Kenya's reactions to Covid-19 restrictions placed by other countries impact the dynamics of global relations between Kenya and its partners? In your view, what motivated these reactions?
11. What measures did the Kenyan government take to maintain diplomatic relations despite the Covid-19 restrictions? In your view, were these strategies effective in improving ties between Kenya and its partners?
12. In your view, did the differences in socio-economic powers influence the decision by Western countries to institute restrictions on Kenya? If yes, please explain. If yes, please explain.
13. Did Kenya's low economic status make it vulnerable to travel and trade restrictions from Western nations?
14. In what ways did the travel restrictions placed on Kenya by other nations affect Kenyan citizens' freedoms? Were the guidelines justified?
15. Since Kenya’s Covid-19 restrictions limited regional movement of goods, was there a change in diplomatic relations between Kenya and other countries due to the implementation of Covid-19 restrictions?
16. Were there attempts by your country to collaborate with its global partners to solve problems arising from Covid-19? If yes, please explain. If no, elaborate why not.
17. In your view, were there any cultural elements that made other countries institute Covid-19 restrictions against Kenya? Please explain.
18. In your opinion, did Kenya’s cultural identity influence its formulation of Covid-19 policies and shape how it related with its international partners? Please explain.
19. Other than the need to protect their citizens against Covid-19, were there any other reasons for travel restrictions against Kenya?
20. Apart from placing total travel ban on Kenya, do you think Kenya and her international partners could have used different structures or avenues to resolve emerging challenges during this period?

21. What systems does your country have to respond to international disputes like the ones arising from Covid-19 restrictions? Please name them and explain how they could have been effective.